

WOMEN IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES: GLOBAL IMPACTS: LOCAL EXPERIENCE

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Feminist researchers in marine and natural resource management or fisheries research face two kinds of exclusion. On the one hand, they must continue to insist that a gender lens is applied to all such research, and that women's specific interests and concerns are taken seriously in both policy making and research. On the other hand, they find that in mainstream Women's Studies and feminist thought there is an increasing tendency to marginalise issues of Natural Resource Management and women's place in fishing and other coastal communities. It is vital that we both bring feminist concerns to the centre of debates about fisheries and coastal communities and integrate these concerns with substantive and theoretical work done by feminists in other fields.

This paper will first present the beginnings of such an integrated understanding, as it was developed at a workshop in Tromso, Norway in 2007. It will then draw on data collected recently in two fishing communities in Tanzania to illustrate both the global nature of the issues that women and coastal communities face, and the diversity of actual experience and women's responses to their experience. Finally, I will argue that feminists, researchers, activists and policy makers need to collaborate in existing and new networks so as to address issues in both a more profound and collaborative way and to develop new research agendas.

Globalisation, or 'interactive restructuring' (environments, industrial, social and policy change) takes many different forms, and coastal areas, such as the ones in Tanzania, are often resource and export dependent. They demonstrate and suffer disproportionately from processes of interactive restructuring triggered by environmental and economic changes. We know that global fisheries are under particular stress, with traditional fish stocks in decline, new and aggressive harvesting techniques and a global market. All these developments affect whole communities - not just the individuals engaged in the fishery. With inshore fisheries under threat households must find alternative economic strategies to survive. We do not yet understand the gendered relationship between the macro processes of restructuring, environmental degradation and local experience.

A network of "Gender and Global Coasts" would examine two fundamental questions: "What are the gender, class, ethnic and generational dimensions of interactive restructuring in global coastal areas?" and "How are diverse groups of women and men in global coastal areas shaping strategies and options in the context of interactive restructuring?"