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Mapping gender roles in dried fish value chains: Case study in Kalpitiya Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Mapping gender roles and gender analysis in value chains are essential in understanding different roles and involvement of men and women in dried fish industry. However, women's contribution to dried fish value chains are frequently overlooked, and the true advantages of their participation are seldom quantified. Therefore, this study designed to explore the level of gender involvement, different roles performed by men and women, and to determine the pay disparities between men and women. A mixed method approach was adopted employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods including in-depth interviews (n=8), and questionnaire survey (n=30). A convenience sampling technique was used to select processors (n=20) and traders (n=15) from *Kalpitiya*, highest dried fish producing area in Puttalam District, appropriately representing men and women. Data were analyzed using descriptive method. Women and men involvement at the processor segment is 20% and 80% respectively. In contrast, the values are 5% and 95% respectively for wholesaling and retailing. De heading is mainly practiced by men (90%). Cleaning (60%), de-scaling (90%), salting (75%), washing (85%) and drying (70%) are largely done by men. Women's activities include de-skinning, degutting, cutting and drying fish. At the wholesaling segment, sorting and grading is mainly accomplished by men (70%). Male involvement is prominent in processors and traders segments of value chain in *Kalpitiya* where as women participation is marginal may be due to the Muslim dominating socio-cultural background. Yet, women engagement is substantial in small-scale pelagic dried fish processing (30%). Accordingly, men received highest daily payment LKR 1750 -2000 and LKR 1200 for women. Despite the total numbers of working hours are same for men and women, a daily pay gap of LKR 550 – 800 is noticeable, discriminating women hard work. In fact, it is concludable that the roles and tasks performed in the dried fish value chains are gendered. Despite the literature iterated a female dominating dried fish industry, the level of involvement depends on the socio-cultural context of the community. However, women labor has been discriminated by paying lesser daily wage.

Keywords: Dried fish, Gender involvement, Gender roles, Pay gap, Value chain

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