

SDG 14

CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Sustainable Development Goals seen from a feminist approach

The degradation of marine resources and the reduced fertility of the ocean floor affect habitats. This degradation makes, on the one hand, the coasts more vulnerable to natural disasters leading to migration and potential conflicts, and, on the other, results in species redistribution that produces changes in small-scale fisheries. Women are the ones most affected by these consequences.

How does pollution of the sea violate Women's Human Rights?

Sea and ocean pollution is a chronic global problem that, together with the speculative urbanization of coastal areas, results in the loss of **coastal and marine biodiversity**, and poses a threat to human health and the ecosystem. The new dangers of deep-sea mining and the concentration of plastic caused by household waste, tourism, commercial vessels, and other maritime operations, have disastrous consequences on natural habitats and their inhabitants, specifically for the poorest populations and for women.

In many coastal areas, women-led associations play a key role in waste management and plastics recycling. Social and economic factors greatly influence the amount of chemical exposure women face throughout their lives. Women depend on both natural assets and their environment. They are, therefore, along with children, the first to be impacted by the effects of **pollutants**. As such, their right to health in general and **reproductive health**, in particular, is violated.

Ecofeminism has long demanded more participation from women in decision-making in order to fight for climate, social, and gender justice.

Does sustainability of marine resources affect Sexual and Reproductive Rights?

In many parts of the world, due to **climate change** and the increase of soil and water salinity, men often leave their villages to find temporary jobs, while women stay to carry out unpaid work: additional productive activities, as well as all reproductive and **care** work.

Generally, in impoverished coastal areas, health, education, and social rights services are often limited. This affects the guarantee to **Sexual and Reproductive Rights** (SRR) for both women and the LGBTI+ community due to the lack of access and information. This limitation also directly affects children and the elderly, who are usually under the care of women.

Climate change and the different ways natural disasters manifest affect small fishing communities around the world, directly impacting women who lose their livelihoods and who are too often forced to migrate, making them even more vulnerable to **sexual violences**.

What role do women play in the fishing sector?

More than 80 years ago, oceanographer Anita Conti denounced the impact of **industrial fishing** and the ways it has contributed to the destruction and pollution of the marine ecosystem, along with the destruction of resources that aquaculture was supposed to produce. Consequently, **neoliberal policies** threaten traditional fishing. We are faced with the elimination of the **logic of life** by the **logic of profit** (Mariarosa Dalla Costa, 2009). In order to reverse this situation, both the voice and action of feminisms are essential.

There are approximately 90 million women worldwide involved in the fishing and aquaculture sector. Despite these figures, women are made **invisible** by public po-



licies that presuppose this field is dominated by men and has, therefore, historically focused on their needs and priorities. This is likewise true for other traditionally male-dominated sectors.

The role of women has been ignored, underestimated, and rendered invisible in a sector in which they primarily undertake **temporary** and manual labor positions with **low wages**: net menders, vessel owners, the ones who sell catches, shellfish gatherers or those who perform administrative tasks, all of them on land. Women also pack and work for the large-scale processing industries, many of them **transnational, neocolonialist** and exploitative, located in the Global South, especially in Central America.

It is the sexual division of labor and space that responds to the **land-sea dichotomy** characterized by **androcentrism**: masculinity is associated with the sea in extractive activities, while femininity is connected to the land and takes charge of familial survival (Esmeralda Broullón Acuña, 2009).

Around the world, women are **undervalued** for the work they do in every way. They are underrepresented in official statistics and public policies as well as in their creation and implementation. In Catalonia, women represent 2.5% of the fishery and aquaculture sector, only 1.1% are members of the fishers' associations and are not included in the Special Social Security Scheme for

Sea Workers. Despite the data, women's **associativism** is increasing in this sector, both in Catalonia and in the Spanish state.

In many countries in Africa and Asia, artisanal and commercial fishing —both coastal and continental— are the responsibility of women, even though they generally do not have access to either materials, training, economic resources, nor decision-making. In some small-scale **fishing cultures** —such as the mussel culture in India, traditionally managed by women—, once they become profitable, are monopolized by men.

It is necessary to recognize and respect traditional and local knowledge as well as the practices of small-scale fishing communities, in particular those of **indigenous peoples** and **ethnic minorities** (FAO, 2015), by following the international Women's Human Rights framework provided by both CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action.

The maritime and fishing sectors are another example of **patriarchal culture**. Women suffer inequalities that, together with other forms of oppression and discrimination —such as social class, ethnic-racial origin, age, functional diversity, sexual choice or gender identity, among others—, place them in an even more vulnerable position when exercising their rights in general and their SRR in particular.

Legislation in Catalonia

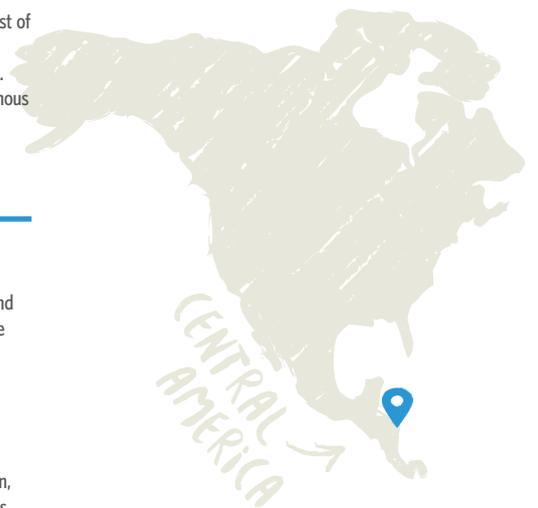
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- ILO's Maritime Labor Convention (MLC), 2006.
- European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2012 on small-scale coastal fishing, artisanal fishing and the reform of the common fisheries policy.
- Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 2006.
- Law 17/2015, of 21 July, on effective equality between women and men.
- Law 22/2002, of 12 July, on fisher's associations.
- Law 2/2010, of 18 February, on fishing and maritime action.
- National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, 2019.

Legislation in Nicaragua

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169), 1989.
- ILO's Maritime Labor Convention (MLC), 2006.
- Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador", 1988.

- Montevideo Consensus, First session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development, 2013.
- Autonomy Statute for the Regions of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua; Law No. 28, 1987.
- Law 648 on Equity of Rights and Opportunities, 2008.
- Law 445 of Communal Property Regime of the Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Communities of the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and of the Rivers Bocay, Coco, Indio and Maiz, 2002.

In **Nicaragua**, 40% of the territory is indigenous and coastal. In the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast —traditionally fishing areas—, afro-descendent and indigenous women bear the burden of working the triple shift: doing productive, reproductive, and community work. Territorial and women's bodies sovereignties have historically been violated. There are many cases of sexual violence, particularly against adolescents, and go unpunished. On the island of Miskito Cays, the word "pikineras" is used to refer to Miskito indigenous women, to whom divers offer seafood in exchange for sex. This is a type of historical sexual violence that is not reported.



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