Gender in fisheries: Lessons from Zanzibar and West Africa

E. Torell
University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center, United States
elintorell@uri.edu

Fisheries management is essentially about changing people’s behavior to sustain fish stocks for future generations. To encourage behavior change and manage any fishery, we need to know how people engage in fisheries and understand what motivates them to do what they do. The fisheries sector is often regarded as male dominated. However, in Africa women are engaged in virtually every step of capture fisheries, except going out on boats. Women's participation is “invisible” and their roles are not equal to men's: Women and men tend to do different work in the fisheries sector Women tend to have less access than men to formal decision-making authorities and are less involved in local decision-making structures. Women and men have different access to, and control over fisheries resources. Women and men have different spheres of traditional knowledge and leadership. Women and men have different domestic responsibilities, including financial expenditures. The University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center has worked with the "invisible fisheries" in Eastern and Western Africa for over twenty years. This presentation will describe what we have learned from gender mainstreaming in fisheries – working to bring women and men into a position where they participate as equals in fisheries management. The presentation will provide an overview of two different approaches: 1) working with women bivalve gleaners on Zanzibar and in the Gambia to add value to their gleaning activities and sustainably manage intertidal and wetland resources and 2) working with female-led post-harvest processing associations in West Africa to ensure that both men and women participate in fisheries management decision making and that their interests are adequately represented.