

Women in Fisheries

Final Report

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Women's Focus Group, Newlyn, Cornwall, 4 March 2010 (WIF Archive)

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Executive Summary

Background

1. Women play a wide range of roles in the fisheries industry making significant contributions across sectors. However, there is a significant gap in knowledge about women in English fisheries today, as identified in our literature review conducted at the early stage of this study.
2. This study aims to help close this knowledge gap and to inform policy making with evidence-based information collected and analysed by the Women in Fisheries (WIF) Team from Greenwich Maritime Institute, The University of Greenwich and IRIS Consulting between January and April, 2010.
3. The primary data used for the analysis here was gathered through our fieldwork in selected coastal areas in England, where we conducted a significant number of face-to-face and telephone interviews with women and men in several sectors of the industry. Geographically, our fieldwork has covered 12 fishing ports in Southern and Northern England.
4. A total of 83 people were interviewed. Fifty-four (65%) were conducted face to face and 29 (35%) were over the telephone. These were made up of 70 (84%) women and 13 (16%) men. All the participants are involved in fisheries playing a range of roles across sectors of the industry, from fisherwomen, fishermen and their wives/partners, traders and owners of businesses, workers in processing factories and women and men in decision making positions.
5. Contacts were also drawn from other areas including London, Northern Ireland, Newcastle and Aberdeen as a result of the snowball effect. Most of these interviews were conducted over the phone, with the exception of two, which were carried out face-to-face.
6. In order for the voices of those who participated in the study to be heard, we have included significant quotes from our fieldwork notes and the interview transcripts, as shown in the main body of this report.
7. We have separated our findings into key issues for 5 main groups in our study:
 - 1) Women in the Catching Sector
 - 2) Fishing Families and Communities
 - 3) Women in Processing
 - 4) Women in Business
 - 5) Women Regulators, Managers and Administrators

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Women in the Catching Sector

8. Four main issues are addressed during this part of the report. These are: access and opportunities for women, barriers to involvement in the sector, attitudes of those working in the sector and perceptions of future roles.

Access and Opportunities

9. In the catching sector, the number of women engaged in ship board production is tiny. We found a handful of women who have experiences of working on board fishing vessels, co-owners of boats or, in some cases, as cockle pickers. These fisher-women tend to come from fishing families or communities and they tend to play active parts and multi-roles in both the production and the running of their family businesses.
10. We have also received reports of young women who volunteered for training with fishing training schools and who, as part of this course, worked as trainees on board local skippers' vessels in the region. However, we were told that they did not stay in the industry very long. Their departure may well have been for a number of reasons but the possibility that they had negative experiences, linked to the harsh work and living conditions and the social conditions on board the vessels, has to be considered. This has clear implications for retention and other relevant issues in the capture sector.
11. The perception of a rapidly ageing workforce at sea and of the difficulty in recruiting young fishermen was a shared concern for many contributors although a small number said that they had not identified a problem in this regard. The suggestion during the interviews that women could be used as a source of labour for this part of the industry was met with a mixed response.
12. There was evidence of a clear increase in the numbers of foreign workers employed as crew members in the English fleets, but no women in this category were identified during the course of this study.

Barriers to Involvement

13. Women in this sector reported on the obstacles preventing them from joining or continuing as crew members. These obstacles include lack of support from their families, difficulty in finding vessels for work placement, lack of facilities on board to accommodate women's needs, isolation as a result of being in an extreme minority, negative attitudes and behaviours and even bullying or harassment from

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some male crew members. Old ideas of superstition are still alive in some communities blocking women from going on board vessels.

14. However, those women who had worked on boats said it was possible to gain respect - so long as the women proved that they knew what they were doing. It was generally agreed, though, that women needed to be “twice as good to be taken seriously.”

Attitudes of those working in the Sector

15. Nonetheless, there were a significant proportion of women participants who had working experiences in the capture sector who said that they enjoyed working at sea and felt proud of their achievement. It should be noted, though, that these were mainly women working on small family boats. Nevertheless, the women viewed themselves as ‘strong women’ who had ‘made it’. They emphasised, in particular, the importance of qualities not stereotypically associated with women such as toughness or tenacity. At the same time, a number wanted to see change, ‘to make things easier for other women who want to go fishing at sea’.

Perceptions of Future Roles

16. Some of the men interviewed were firmly of the view that working on board fishing vessels was not for women. While most expressed their views carefully, clearly aware of equality policies and legislation, a few were more explicit :
17. Most of the women we met expressed reluctance when asked if they would like to join the capture sector. Their reluctance was typically associated with their perception of the tough working and living conditions as well as the dangers involved. There also seemed to be a clear linkage between them not wanting to work on board vessels and their concerns about the decline of the industry and the lack of any future prospects in the capture sector.
18. A number of women also felt strongly that this part of the industry should remain the prerogative of the men, many of whom liked working in all male environments
19. The report concludes that there is possibly not a strong business case for widening participation of women in the catching sector, in so far as there remains overcapacity within that sector. The driver for action therefore comes down to fairness and equal access to opportunities. Legally it would be difficult to justify refusing a job to a woman on the grounds of her gender.
20. However, the real issues are the lack of women wishing to enter the sector or even knowing that such opportunities exist as well as the social and environmental conditions when on board. Again there are legal protections in place against harassment but taking action in a nearly all male environment

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would be difficult. In these circumstances change will only take place if a programme of awareness raising takes place within fishing communities. This should be a topic for discussion with the Commission for Equality and Human Rights with the aim of ensuring that those women who want to go to sea do not face unnecessary barriers and prejudice.

Fishing Families and Communities

21. Under this heading we looked at the multiple roles taken on by women to add value to fishing, the lack of involvement of the majority of women in any formal decision making activities, concerns about the future of the industry and perceived and real barriers to involvement.

Multiple Roles

22. In fishing families and communities, women, as wives, partners, or mothers do not have formal employment status. However, these women take important and multiple responsibilities as accountants or book keepers, administrators, crew, cooks, drivers, representative for meetings, community organisers and so on. Their contribution to their households, their communities and to the industry is significant, although largely invisible and unrecognised.
23. The invisibility of these roles is such that, in some cases, even women themselves are unaware of their contributions. Interestingly, most fishermen and men with fishing experience recognised their 'wives and partners' contribution in this respect. At the same time, however, the majority of these men consider the traditional gender division of labour (i.e. men catching fish at sea and women playing supporting roles ashore) as efficient and effective, though we have also heard men within the industry arguing for change.

The Future of the Industry

24. The changes in the fishing industry in recent years, including the decommissioning of the fleet and the introduction of access controls, has had a significant impact on fishing towns and villages. Fishing families found the changes resulted in deep cuts in their household incomes. While money earned directly from the sea dwindled, many families were forced to identify second incomes. In most cases these came from shore-based sectors of the industry such as processing and trading. As a result, many wives and partners have become significant second, or even first bread winners in some households and see themselves as either "adding value" to the family income or "masking" the dire situation that the fishing industry is in.
25. While the traditional gender division of labour remains fundamentally unchanged, the roles of men and women are changing in fishing families and communities,

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and there is evidence of a re-negotiation of roles between men and women. Increasingly, more women are the primary bread winners while still acting as primary carers for the family.

Involvement in Decision Making

26. It was generally felt that contributing to Government consultation exercises was mainly the domain of the men. There were examples of strong women attempting to influence decisions through written challenges, calling for judicial reviews, etc and joining campaigning groups to challenge Government policy. However, because of the individualised nature of the industry, these responses were not widely known.

“Fishermen are atrocious at organising. It is not a united industry. It is about dividing and conquering.”

27. When meetings were held it was said to be mainly the men who attended. It would appear that there are still few instances of women attending in their own right, unless they are vessel or business owners.

28. However, fishermen’s wives are reported as getting more politically involved in some communities with an increase in participation at local meetings. However, this is often in the role as husbands’/partners’ representatives. In some towns where fishing has suffered a significant decline, women have recently set up their own networks and organised events in the community in order to “raise the profile of our industry”.

Barriers to Involvement

29. A number of reasons were given throughout the study for women’s lack of participation. These included feelings of hopelessness and apathy, communications not being targeted so they didn’t feel they were included, lack of confidence on their knowledge of the issues, feeling unwelcome at meetings and time commitments.

30. However, lack of involvement in the traditional consultation processes does not mean that the women interviewed had no interest in the wider concerns around the fishing industry. In fact, one of the strongest messages from this study was that they all cared passionately about the future of their industry and they recognised that decisions regarding its future were being made elsewhere. All had very strong views on the way the industry had been treated by Government and the European Commission and had feelings of frustration and disempowerment.

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Women in Processing

31. In processing factories, large numbers of women are employed to process the fish for market consumption. Most of them are employed as processors, packers, quality controllers and other operators in the production line, working on three shifts to support the 24-hour operation of the factory, earning the minimum (or even lower) wages.
32. This cohort consists of two major groups: women locally employed and women recruited overseas through agencies. Local women workers tend to be school leavers, married early, with some as single mothers. Poor education and family responsibilities can lead to lack of confidence and ambition which seems a shared feature with many in this group.
33. Foreign workers are increasingly used in processing factories, including women. Most are recruited through from Asia and Eastern Europe. These women are better educated with most holding university degrees and many with professional employment histories in their own countries. Economic incentive seems to be the only major motivation for them to leave their home countries and take jobs in the processing sector.
34. At the bottom of the factory hierarchy, shop-floor women workers have little influence, and also demonstrated little interest in policy making. Compared with women in other sectors of the fisheries in England, these women seem to have received least attention from researchers, policy makers and the general public. They are, therefore, also invisible in spite of their formal employment status.

Women in Business

35. We interviewed a wide range of women who ran their own businesses, for this study. These ranged from highly influential women who managed and ran their own fleet of beam trawlers, and had started successful medium sized processing factories, to smaller enterprises linked directly to selling and processing their husbands' and partners' fish.
36. We expected to find more women in trading. However, at least in Northern England there seemed to be few women involved in direct sales in fish markets as auctioneers. We came across one in SW England. Most women involved in trading tend to work in fish retail shops or buying and selling away from the fish markets.
37. Although there is no special training required to be an auctioneer and auctioneers make up a tiny proportion of the industry, the absence of women in this sector suggests that 'tradition' can be a barrier coupled with physical hardships. In fishing villages and towns, men often started as fish porters or barrow boys from

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an early age, carrying out tasks traditionally classified as 'physically too hard for girls'. Women generally do not have such experiences. Women's lack of training and skills thus reinforces the traditional stereotype that auctioneering is a man's role.

38. Barriers to direct sales for women were identified as physical conditions such as the cold, hard and smelly work, the domination of the sector by men, as well as the inconvenient and irregular working hours. Working hours tend to be an issue with women rather than men mainly because of women's child care and other family responsibilities.

39. Fierce competition from large supermarkets is also a pressure, over shadowing the future of all small fish traders. Women traders are more vulnerable as they tend to be small business owners and/or operators.

40. There was a significant number of women in South West England who were successfully running their own enterprises and a number had expanded so that they were supplying fish to restaurants across the UK.

Women Regulators, Managers and Administrators.

41. Women's involvement in regulation management and administration has increased over recent years. Women are found holding important managerial positions, some with high profiles and with responsibilities in decision making in the fisheries. They work as senior HR managers, as the CEO in training schools, as Senior Economists, as Quality Controllers, Fisheries Officers and in Policy and Research. They are women with strong leadership skills playing important roles in running institutions and in decision making in various sectors. They are referred to by one of our interviewees as 'beacon women' in the industry.

42. More women are found holding administrative positions, some as office administrators with significant responsibilities in helping the daily operation of the organisations, and some with responsibility for data entry and other clerical tasks. Compared with managers and directors, these women seem to have less influence on policy making. There was a difference in views among those interviewed at this level as to whether they felt listened to and could progress if they were interested. A minority felt confident that they could seek and be successful at promotion to fisheries officer level.

43. Lack of confidence is a recurring issue amongst women in administrative positions especially among those with operational responsibilities towards the lower end of the institutional hierarchy. When asked about their expectation about their future, many tend to say that they prefer to 'just carry on doing what I do at the moment'.

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44. Lack of recognition and male prejudice remain a major barrier blocking women from developing themselves fully, personally and professionally. Women managers and high profile administrators reported difficult experiences in this respect. Several recalled occasions, usually at meetings or conferences, when they were mistaken for 'secretaries' or 'nurses' in spite of their seniority.
45. There is also a shared belief from the respondents that women in managerial positions have to work twice as hard as men in order to prove their capability. It is believed by some that there is a spotlight on women in top positions in order to highlight any mistakes and present them as incapable.
46. Some women pointed out that bullying by male colleagues is also an issue that needs addressing.
47. Isolation is an issue that is observed in organisations among minority groups. Feelings of isolation were reported by some women with senior administrative or managerial positions. The decision to work in a male dominated organisation tends to be a conscious one that requires a lot of thought. Nevertheless, the sheer prospect of being the only woman can be intimidating even for strong women.

Conclusions and Suggested Actions

48. Our field work would seem to confirm that women are often under-represented, unrecognised, underpaid and seem to have little say in decision making at various levels in the fishing industry in England. From the literature review, this echoes the experience elsewhere in Europe. However, the contention of The International Collective in Support of Fish (ICSF) workers that little value is placed on the unpaid work is not an accurate reflection of the roles of women interviewed for this project, at least at the level of the family business.
49. What has been particularly noticeable is the passion and concern that women at all levels have about the future of their industry. This overrides any anxieties or interests in improving their position or status. The masculinity of the sector was mentioned by nearly all those interviewed, but this was only perceived in a negative way by a small minority. Although, clearly this may imply that women have merely absorbed the dominant cultural mores, their interests in exploring innovative ways to maintain the industry and their pride in their contribution to their businesses suggest otherwise. What was apparent was an unspoken understanding that the businesses depended on them for their survival.
50. We have included many of the interviewees' suggestions for change in the body of the report and have translated these and our suggested actions into a complete list attached as Appendix B. These focus on:
 - Policy changes in Defra

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- Support with new and existing business ventures
- Improving recognition of the industry
- Improving access to the industry for women
- Setting up women's networking groups
- Establishing training programmes to offer support for women both in business skills and confidence building
- More senior role models.

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Introduction

1. The core aims of this project are to offer a basis for identifying how equality of opportunity for women can be achieved within the fishing industry and how women can be encouraged to become more involved in contributing to the decision making process within the sector. Key elements of this approach are the roles of women in improving the economic efficiency of businesses, their contribution to the social fabric and sustainability of coastal communities and their interaction with regulators at the local, national and EU levels. The project is intended to provide a basis for creating and fostering networks and opportunities for exchanging experience and best practice with a view to:
 - fostering equal opportunities;
 - identifying the tools and means to improve skills;
 - creating and providing training opportunities and upgrading professional skills;
 - promoting access to employment; and
 - contributing to better management of resources.
2. We have found that women are often under-represented, unrecognised, underpaid and often seem to have little say in decision making.
3. In order that the voices of those who so willingly contributed to our understanding, especially the voices of the women who are the primary subject of this project, can be heard, we have included extensive quotes from our fieldwork and interviews.

Our Approach

4. The first stage of this project involved a literature review. There is a fair amount of information about the history of the roles played by women in the fishing industry and this makes for interesting reading for the student of social change within the industry. However, the changes have been rapid and far-reaching in recent years and, therefore, the focus of our literature review was on more contemporary material. We sought to find out what was known about women in

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today's fishing industry and to compare that with literature about women in a number of other traditionally male dominated industries. We looked at the roles of women in farming and the haulage industry and as miners' wives both during and after the 1984 miners' strike. This provided us with some useful insights and provided a basis for proceeding to the next stage of the project, which consisted of extensive fieldwork. A summary of the literature review is at Annex A.

5. Qualitative methods were taken as the primary approach for the fieldwork. Semi-structured interviews, both face-to-face and over the telephone, focus groups and first hand observation were used as the major methods for gathering the information. We employed interview guidance tailored for this project and informed by our survey of the relevant literature. The purpose of the fieldwork has been to test some of the preliminary findings from the literature review, and to build up a picture of how women see their roles, the opportunities and obstacles they face in practice, their appetite for greater involvement (including through networks and exchanging information) and their potential interest in skills and other developmental training.
6. A total of 83 people were interviewed, during February and March 2010. Fifty-four (65%) were conducted face to face and 29 (35%) were over the telephone. These were made up of 70 (84%) women and 13 (16%) men. These were people from a broad range of interests, including fishermen's wives and partners, owners of vessels, skippers and crew, fish processors, shop owners, traders, fishing families, senior managers (public and private sector) and public sector equality professionals.
7. Our original intention was to visit 6 fishing ports across England. However, we found it necessary to extend our geographical coverage because of the highly dispersed nature of the industry and the practical difficulties of making contact with people who commonly find themselves outside normal consultation processes.
8. We visited the following ports:
 - Newhaven
 - Poole
 - Plymouth (twice)
 - Exmouth
 - Brixham
 - Newlyn
 - Whitehaven

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- Blackpool
- Morecambe Bay
- Amble
- North Shields
- Grimsby

9. We also interviewed people from other areas including London, Northern Ireland, Newcastle and Aberdeen as a result of the 'snowball' effect of other interviews. Most of these interviews were conducted over the telephone, with the exception of two which were carried out face-to-face.

Gender Equality, Responsibilities and Duties

10. Organisations generally have 5 main drivers for taking action on equality - most are interlinked. They are:

- Legislative and Codes of Practice - Currently the key strands are separate and have been relatively complex with additional duties on public sector bodies.
- The Business Case - Organisations would suffer a detriment in terms of a number of factors including finance, service quality, talent and reputation without taking positive action in identified areas.
- Best Practice - To be an employee of choice or an organisation of repute actions that go beyond basic legislative requirements are considered necessary.
- Moral/ethical reasons - Viewed by some as the most important element - action is necessary because it is the "right thing to do."
- The organisation's own policies, procedures and practices that have usually been produced with consideration of the above elements.

11. Taken together, these are the starting point when considering what further might be done to promote and achieve equality for women in fisheries.

12. Public bodies have a legal obligation to demonstrate how they will eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and how they will promote actively equality of opportunity between women and men in terms of employment and in the provision of goods, facilities and services. Public bodies are required to prepare and publish gender equality schemes, showing how they will meet their general and specific duties and setting out their gender equality objectives.

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Among the other duties is the requirement to assess the impact of their current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.

13. Defra's Gender Equality Scheme sets out a number of high level internal and external objectives and is accompanied by an action plan. The external objectives include:

- making Defra's services more accessible for women; and
- securing more effective engagement with women to inform policies and service delivery.

14. The focus of these external objectives is very much on more effective ways to communicate with stakeholders to ensure that services reflect the needs of everyone involved with the industry.

15. During an interview with a key member of staff with responsibility for equality she pointed us to The Defra Equality Scheme Progress Report which shows that good progress was made on a number of areas during 2009. Dame Helen Ghosh commented in her introduction to that report that "Diversity and equality continue to be high on Defra's agenda and we will continue to drive progress on equality both internally and externally throughout 2010 and beyond. We will deliver further improvements in all aspects of our work through continuous engagement and involvement of people from diverse groups."

16. The Progress report indicated that a number of key themes had been focused on. These covered:

- Leading the way - promoting strong leadership and clear accountability for delivering diversity.
- Bringing in, and bringing on, talent - attracting, retaining and developing talent from all areas of society.
- Influencing behaviour and culture - changing behaviour and culture to become fully inclusive and diversity confident.
- Measuring progress.
- Considering the needs of diverse groups in service delivery.

17. In respect of the external environment, the Progress Report states that "engagement work continues to evolve." An example provided described how a diversity sub-group, led by a member of the advisory group, has been formed to explore how Defra can work better with groups that have historically been less engaged. This sub-group met for the first time in November 2009, and an engagement action plan will be developed during 2010." This may be something that the findings from this study will be able to contribute to.

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18. As part of its stated policies on equality, Defra is strongly committed to employing active and innovative measures to promote equality of opportunity for women on public bodies. Equality impact assessments are intended to be integral to Defra's policy development and implementation.
19. The Defra Diversity strategy had set challenging targets for women in the Senior Civil Service by 2011 of 38%. It currently stands at 31%. An interview with the Head of Equality at Defra identified that a great deal of work was being carried out internally to promote equality and diversity.
20. An interviewee within Defra said that issues around the lack of involvement and representation of women within the fishing industry were of concern. It was recognised that some of the skills and attributes that many women have, including being environmentally conscious, were pertinent to sustainable fishing.

The Equality Act 2010

21. The existing responsibilities, duties and powers of public bodies will be enhanced by the provisions in the Equality Act which recently passed through Parliament and is expected to come into force in Autumn 2010. Among the new measures introduced by the Act is a duty on government departments and other public bodies to consider the action they can take, when making strategic decisions about spending and services, to reduce socio-economic inequality in the public sector. The Act also extends the scope whereby positive action can be used.

European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Operational Programme

22. The EFF Operational Programme makes clear that gender equality is an important part of the delivery programme in fisheries. It states that "the delivery bodies will be responsible for ensuring the proactive promotion of equality at all stages of programme implementation (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). This will include, for example, the preparation of literature and publicity material, guidance for delivery staff, and the criteria for targeting of support under the programme". In addition, there is the commitment to put processes in place that will seek to prevent discrimination on grounds of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

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Women's Roles and Perceptions

23. Our findings confirm the importance of the contribution made by women and the way in which this contribution is often underestimated by the women themselves as well as by men in the industry. Women fulfil a range of roles from invisible, unrecognised and unpaid support functions to high profile jobs charged with considerable responsibilities. Within fishing families and communities, women are more frequently to be found in support roles rather than in the catching sector. They hold equally important positions by acting as business leads or actively representing industry interests.
24. There are notable exceptions to this gender segregation, where women have successfully established themselves, as vessel owners, skippers, crew, trainers, business owners and managing directors of fishing related enterprises.
25. In processing, women account for somewhere between 30%-50% of the workforce. In government agencies, women are appointed as administrators, managers or other officers with significant fishing-related responsibilities. There are also women who are prepared to campaign and speak up on behalf of the industry in various sectors.
26. The next part of the report presents our main findings from the field work. It identifies and analyses the major roles played and contributions made by women in different sectors of the industry. This, in turn, leads to our identification of the main barriers preventing women from full participation in the industry and from more a more effective contribution to policy making.
27. We have separated our findings into key issues for 5 main groups in our study:
- 1) Women in the Catching Sector
 - 2) Fishing Families and Communities
 - 3) Women in Processing
 - 4) Women in Business
 - 5) Women Regulators, Managers and Administrators

Women in the Catching Sector

28. The number of women engaged in ship board production is tiny. We found a handful of women who have experiences of working on board fishing vessels or, in some cases, as cockle pickers, scallopers or crabbers during our field work.

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Fisherman and fisherwoman (WIF Archive, 2010)

29. When women are involved in the catching sector, their passion for the job was particularly noticeable. Two commercial fishers with their full skipper's licence were interviewed.

"I knew from a very young age that I never wanted a traditional job in an office....I was so lucky that my partner introduced me to fishing. We now fish as far as France for cod, pollack and bass"

30. Another described how she worked on a scalloper for seven years.

"It was my step-father's trawler - I helped build it. We bought a French trawler - we bought her back to life - it took a year and a half and we fished her and she is still fishing.".....I passed my skipper's ticket - it was such an achievement."(Women Skipper).

31. There were also a number of examples of women crewing for their fathers and husbands/partners. One young woman had been crewing for five and a half years since she was 13. Although she now ran her own beach side tea business she continued to crew and said that she would be getting up at 4 a.m. the next morning to fish with her father.

32. The number of women who had developed a love for less traditional roles, either by working full time as catchers or by continuing to fish with their fathers or husbands/partners on a part time basis points to the importance of family in the fishing industry.

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33. As members of the fishing family, women supported the family business in different ways. One who had been married to a fisherman for 37 years described how, in the early days, she had collected the shellfish and driven the seven ton lorry with tons of mussels. Their business has now expanded and all the shellfish was now exported.
34. Some talked about actively working alongside their partners. One of the participants at the focus group in Poole described how she had lived with a fisherman for 10 years - during that time she went out fishing locally and helped fix the nets and pots and as well as supporting her partner with the book work and licensing arrangements.
35. A woman, who was relatively new to the fishing industry, having recently moved in with her partner, described her work as "We have two boats - one scalloper and one for crab meat. He says the crab meat one is mine! I pick the crabs three mornings a week and do the invoicing - all the paperwork. Lots of paperwork." In these cases, women had dual roles of wives/partners and fisherwomen.
36. There were mixed views as to whether women should be involved in the catching sector. The difficulties experienced by women who wanted to go to sea were highlighted by one of the attendees at a focus group "we had a woman who was better qualified and we couldn't integrate her..... you can't change male attitudes" However, those women who had worked on boats said it was possible to gain respect - so long as the women proved that they knew what they were doing. It was generally agreed that women needed to be "twice as good to be taken seriously."
37. Many commented that few women aspired to be catchers. A number of women were adamant that because the fishing industry was dominated by men who were often uneasy in women's company at work, they should be left to it. "Men don't want us there. It is their security - It is about keeping their dignity."
38. The fact that there were not many women directly employed in the catching sector was mentioned by nearly all the interviewees. However, it was also recognised that the fishing businesses were underpinned by women because "fishermen are generally not good at paper work." One of the fisheries officers commented that internally and externally - "it feels very male - with entrenched sexism....Fishermen always ask for the boys first."
39. One interviewee on being asked about her experience replied "there aren't any or at least not enough [women fishers]. There used to be women who fished. My 23 year old daughter loves fishing and has her own boat. She catches mackerel. She goes out with her dad and her brother and has taken a job as a post-woman in order to have the time to do what she loves."

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40. The women who went fishing mainly came from fishing communities or had family members in the sector. They also tended to be active in both the production and the running of their family business, fulfilling multi-roles.

“I have been in the fishing industry for 24 years. I started when I was 24. I got into this industry because I met someone who was a fisherman. I used to go out with the boat because he had a boat. I went out a few times with them, the crew were all men, and eventually got the chance of investing some money to buy a boat” (a fisher woman and vessel owner)

41. The family link was also the introduction for a cockle picker and cockle trading business owner:

“I have become part of the family business since I was 17 when I married into the business. At the age of 20, I received my licence to pick up cockles. I have been involved in all aspects of our cockle business, from picking to selling”

42. We heard about young women in training with fishing training schools and working as trainees on board vessels. One such school has recruited female trainees from across the UK in recent years. “We got girls in the last two years, one in each. We trained them the same way as we do the boys” (a senior manager of the school). The school had been successful in finding work placement opportunities for these female trainees.

43. Unfortunately, in both cases, the shipboard training does not seem to have gone well. One of the young women left the school after six months’ shipboard training; the other left “abruptly after working on the boat for only two months”. The training school had not received any complaints or explanations from these women. The wives of the skippers, on whose boats the women received their training, were of the view that “the girls left, because it was too tough at sea”.

44. We did not get the opportunity to explore these particular cases further, but the experiences of other women, suggests that the trainees’ departure could well have been closely linked with the harsh work and living conditions and a male dominant culture. The difficulties experienced by other women who wanted to work on fishing vessels include:

“After doing my marine biology, for two years, I was desperately trying to get on fishing vessels as a volunteer, but with no luck....Finally with the help of one of my lecturers, my name got added on a list and I got the placement. That’s how I got the experience that was needed then” (senior woman fisheries officer)

“I ran away to sea when I was ten. I hid under the net on my granddad’s boat. He showed me several times how to gut a herring so I

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was gutting fish on a rowing boat. After that I went several times with him. His crew weren't very happy but if they wanted to keep their jobs they didn't complain. When I was 20 years old I went back into fishing...I put my hair up in a woollen hat and persuaded an older man who used to take his granddaughter out, to take me" (retired female skipper and crew member)

45. For those women who succeed in working on the fishing vessel, the working and living conditions can be daunting.

"You'd be worn out and all you wanted to do was strip your wet gear off and dry it on the exhaust pipes then go in to the accommodation; same room for men and women. I don't know of any boat that could give a woman separate accommodation. You might have a big boat with a woman skipper who will sleep in the wheel house, otherwise the women crew members would sleep in the normal accommodation provided. Even as you are sleeping you are listening all the time, you'll wake up even when the sound of the engine goes off because that could mean there is something wrong...We usually had a couple of hours of sleep."

"The toilet was a bucket, if you wanted privacy you would go to the engine room, the men would just pee on the side...you got used to it... there are quite a few boats nowadays with toilets. Only the very big boats have toilets and showers." (retired female skipper and crew member)

46. The same woman described the behaviour of some of her former male shipmates:

"Being away at sea, playing pranks on each other might be a way fishermen had a good laugh. It might take a woman a while before she got used to the pranks played on board..... The pranks they (the crew members) played on women are not nice. They'd shit in your boots and then you need to go and wash it out and people are screaming at you because they are hauling and they need you to do things"

47. Another commented:

"There is a pack mentality on boats that is not in my biology. They don't worry about hygiene - they are slob on board and need to be retrained when they are back on shore..."

48. A women skipper observed, "The older generation - 50s upwards - they are fine. But the younger generation on the bigger beamers gave me a lot of abuse. There was back stabbing. I wouldn't advise it for any girl." Interestingly her view was that it was the younger generation that had the real problem with women on

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board boats - “the older men are happy for anyone to keep the fishing industry going but the younger generation want to be best at everything. It is an all male industry and they continuously want to prove that women can’t do it.”

49. The working conditions and risks, especially on board fishing vessels, were frequently cited as barriers to women seeking employment in the industry. It often means being exposed to poor and dangerous weather conditions, there are the other dangers of working on board fishing vessels, the working hours are long and unsocial and there is the lack of financial security (“no fish no pay”). Working at sea was generally perceived as “physically unsuitable for women” because it demanded a great deal of physical energy and strength.

“It is a hard and soul destroying job. Crabbing is particularly strenuous.” (Fisherman’s wife, Exmouth)

50. As noted above, the lack of facilities on board for women was seen as a significant barrier, for example the use of shared bunks and the toilet arrangements (or lack of them). This was acknowledged to be an issue among some of the men interviewed:

“The only barriers [for women] are working conditions: no toilets, sleeping arrangements...they [women] don’t really want to take it [a job at sea] because of the lack of facilities catering to their needs” (director of a seafood and fishing training centre)

51. Superstition remains a strong factor against women going aboard fishing vessels in certain areas. One senior woman director in charge of a fishing training school said:

“Oh, yes, the idea is still very much alive. I know the local skippers very well. But I still have to be very careful, especially I have to avoid touching their boats, because I know they still believe women would bring bad luck to their boats if allowed aboard”.

52. Another interviewee described how many boats had refused to go to sea with female members of a film crew. Other women’s experience chime with this:

“I had wanted so much to go on board. But I was never allowed, probably because of my family’s superstition...” (a woman administration officer)

“Well, I was allowed to sailon board with them. But it was a rare case, mainly because I owned shares on the boat” (woman vessel owner)

53. Many of those interviewed (men and women) commented on the problem of the ageing workforce and of the difficulty in recruiting young people. When asked

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whether attracting more women into the capture sector might be part of the answer their response tended to be couched in pessimistic terms about the future of the industry:

“.....as the industry is not looking to expand.... there is really no particular interest in getting women more involved [in the catching sector]... we need to think who will take over when these [the current] catchers die out.” (senior fisheries officer)

54. Some of the men interviewed were firmly of the view that working on board fishing vessels was not for women. While most expressed their views carefully, clearly aware of equality policies and legislation, a few were more explicit:

“Honestly, I don’t think fishing is women’s job. It’s dirty, hard and dangerous. I certainly don’t want my women to do it. It would be too much.... And, who will look after my kids and house when I am away?” (a fisheries officer)

55. Most of the women we met expressed reluctance when asked if they would like to join the capture sector. Their reluctance was typically associated with their perception of the tough working and living conditions as well as the dangers involved. There also seemed to be a clear linkage between them not wanting to work on board vessels and their concerns about the decline of the industry and the lack of any future prospects in the capture sector.

56. On the other hand, we also found progressive enthusiasm for women’s full participation:

“I don’t think people should use[lack of] physical strength as an excuse to stop women from going to sea any more. Fishing vessels nowadays have all the modern gadgets. They don’t need much strength to operate. Both men and women can do it.... Of course the boxes may be too heavy for women. But, they can be redesigned, for example, from 40 kilos to 20, so that women can carry them....” (a fisheries officer).

57. Despite the many challenges experienced by all the women we interviewed who had worked in the capture sector they all said that they did not regret their choice. They had enjoyed working at sea and they felt proud of having done so. They view themselves as “strong women” who had “made it” and they emphasised the importance of women being sufficiently tough and tenacious to get into and stay in the industry. At the same time, they wanted change “to make things easier for other women who want to go fishing at sea”.

58. The main barriers to women in this sector can be summarised as:

- the tough, uncomfortable and dangerous working environment;

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- male attitudes and behaviours towards women working on board fishing vessels;
- women are often not welcome on board;
- the commonly held belief that there are poor prospects for anyone working in the catching sector because of the decline in the industry;
- superstition against women going aboard fishing vessels; and
- the view among some women that fishing is a man's job and the men should not be undermined in this by women going aboard.

59. There is possibly not a strong business case for widening participation of women in the catching sector, in so far as the sector is seen as contracting. The driver for action therefore comes down to fairness and equal access to opportunities. Legally, of course, it would be difficult to support continuing to refuse women applicants on the grounds of their gender.

60. However, the real issue is the lack of women wishing to enter the sector or even knowing that such opportunities exist as well as the social and environmental conditions when on board. Again there are legal protections in place against harassment but enforcing this in a nearly all male environment would be difficult. In these circumstances change will only take place if a programme of awareness raising takes place within fishing communities. This should be a topic for discussion within the industry and with other relevant Government bodies with the aim of ensuring that those women who want to go to sea do not face unnecessary barriers and prejudice.

Fishing families and communities



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Newlyn (WIF Archive 2010)

61. In fishing families, fishermen's wives/partners and mothers fulfil multiple roles as accountants, book keepers, administrators, crew, cooks, drivers, attending meetings, community organisers, running the home and so on. Their contribution to their households and to the industry is significant.

"I don't go out to work. I keep the books for my son and husband. My husband and younger son work together. The older son works on the biggest boats in Grimsby." (fisherman's wife)

"I do the paperwork as well as ordering the gear" (wife of fisherman).

62. Another said:

"I do whatever I can to make his job as easy as possible." (fisherman's wife).

63. Others commented:

"I run the shore side of things such as picking the crew up and driving them around, doing the shopping, the books and the paperwork. I also attend meetings with Producer Organisations (POs) but I found in these POs the only woman you find are secretaries" (fisherman's wife).

"He would be away for two weeks at a time. It was quite hard since the kids were small...The money was very hard.... I managed the budget, took care of the children (a fisherman's wife and technical manager for a seafood workshop)

"I do the books everyday and the accountant comes in every quarter for the VAT to check them. Many fishermen's wives do this (a fisherman's wife)

64. Some women had full time jobs separate from fishing. For example, one was a full time social worker but supported the business through handling the licensing arrangements and book-keeping. Another was an accountant and helped with the book keeping.

65. Many of the women interviewed seemed to be proud of their roles in maintaining the business, knowing that their husbands/partners would not be able to manage without them. One did comment however that there was no recognition or appreciation by Defra of their roles.

"Women are not appreciated. It is hard to get yourself appreciated. There is no financial allowance and we could still be doing the VAT at 5

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a.m but still getting up to go to Billingsgate. It would be good to have some recognition by the industry. In Scotland, women are more considered.” (focus group attendee)

66. As indicated above, women were often proud of their roles and what they had achieved, but, in some cases, the women themselves failed to recognise their contribution. When asked about her involvement in fishing production, the wife of a trawler skipper said:

“I wasn’t involved at all. I only looked after the house and the kids, cooked for the boat, cleaned the crew’s clothes and drove them around sometimes” (wife of a trawler skipper).

67. An interviewee from Defra stated that during her time in the department she had become increasingly aware of the important role women were playing in maintaining the fishing industry. She described how she had spent time with a fisherman’s wife who had told her about some of the tensions of keeping the family together. She explained how she had heard about the enormous implications for the family business when fishermen lost their wives/partners through illness or divorce and how that seriously impacted on their ability to continuing fishing.

68. Interestingly, women’s roles were sometimes better recognised by their partners. Nearly all the men interviewed said that they valued the contribution made by their female family members.

“Women have a big part in running the business. In the 1950s-60s, my mother and aunts played a big part in picking mussels to put on the lines as bait. Currently my wife is also much involved, including the decision making, even in aspects such as buying gear and equipment” (fisherman)

69. The National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations (NFFO) confirmed that the women who are shore based are often influential through family involvement.

70. The main grievances expressed by the majority of the women interviewed were around the problems with what was seen as a lack of future for the fishing industry... “it is a soul-destroying job. You are stuck with quotas - half have to throw them back even if they are dead - The Spanish take our fish. They are closing the scalloping areas because they are saying it is for conservation.” (Fisherman’s partner). The majority of those interviewed talked about the risks to their businesses/communities from Government and European policy. Of real concern was the role of Natural England in promoting ‘Marine Conservation Zones’ (MCZs). There was a strong feeling among many of those interviewed that decisions had been made with little scientific evidence and with a huge impact on the fishing industry that was not fully understood.

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71. The restructuring and other changes in the fishing industry in recent years has had a significant impact on fishing towns and villages. Many fishing families have seen deep cuts in their household income. As money from catching and landing fish has dwindled, many families have sought second incomes. In most cases, these were from shore-based sectors of the industry, such as processing and trading. It was evident from several interviews that many wives and partners have become significant second, or even first bread winners in the households.

“Money became hard. So, I got a job in the processing factory in order to help my husband. I have to make sure that the money made during the summer must be budgeted and managed to last all year round.”
(fisherman’s wife)

“My husband was a fisherman but sold his boat two years ago, because the cost became too high. We just could not afford it. I began to help a few years ago. I made fish cakes and sold them on the market. I made about £200 a month in the first couple of years. Now I make about £500 a month, about half of what we need every month
(wife of ex-fisherman)

72. Many of the wives and partners spoke about the difficulties they had in finding work. It was, therefore, necessary for them to start their own businesses if extra money was needed. Where the fishing communities are in rural areas, these findings will need to be considered in the context of the limited nature of opportunities for women in rural areas and the fact that there are fewer local work choices than those in urban areas. (Countryside Agency, 2003)
73. Traditional attitudes remain strong. Some interviewees regarded the sea as the man’s space/haven; the place where he was free from the woman telling him what to do. At home the woman was said to be in charge.
74. Clearly, while the traditional gender division of labour remains fundamentally the same, the respective roles of men and women are changing in fishing families and communities. It appears that increasingly more women are becoming the primary bread winner, though still remaining the primary carer. Some of the men are now either unemployed or have become the secondary bread winner.

Women’s Involvement in Decision Making

75. It was generally felt that contributing to Government consultation exercises was mainly the domain of the men. There were examples of strong women attempting to influence decisions through written challenges, calling for judicial reviews, etc and joining campaigning groups to challenge Government policy. However, because of the individualised nature of the industry, these responses were not widely known. “Fishermen are atrocious at organising. It is not a united industry. It is about dividing and conquering.”

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76. When meetings were held it was said to be mainly the men who attended. It would appear that there are still few instances of women attending in their own right, unless they are vessel or business owners.
77. Among the barriers to greater involvement in decision making was said to be the strong masculine culture within the fishing industry. When asked to describe the culture of the industry descriptions such as macho, out of date and complex were given along with competitive and insular. This was reflected in the attitudes of many of the women as well as the men.
78. The competitive nature of the industry was also cited. "It is dog eating dog out there..and it is Government policy to blame"
79. During a focus group the comment was made that Government consultations were little more than paper exercises and there was no clear vision for fishing, so why bother? There were so many issues even outside the control of the UK government and so many uncertainties. Women gave a variety of reasons for not getting involved in aspects of the decision making processes:
80. **Hopelessness** - "We responded to numerous consultations - sometimes doing this at 3 a.m. but we now know it is not genuine consultation but a paper exercise. I don't know of one decision that has been changed as a result of responses or campaigns.""They are trying to close the fishing industry down and there is nothing we can do about it..."
81. **Communications not understandable** - "Anything that comes out of Defra is like gobbledegookthere was a folder to learn that was 40 pages long and far too complex." However, this was contradicted by another woman who stated that "The documents are fine. I am dyslexic and don't find them difficult to understand."
82. **Communications not targeted** – It was said that letters of invitation to attend consultation events are always addressed to the fisherman. Women take from this that they are not expected to attend or respond. Some women feel the need to be personally approached to become a member of a decision making body, such as the Sea Fisheries Committee, or stakeholder group: the reasoning being that if the men, who are the paid experts in the industry, are not listened to, then why would they (women) be listened to?
83. **Lack of Confidence** - Some women felt they lacked the confidence and eloquence needed to speak out or voice their opinions. "I couldn't go to the meetings and stand up and give my opinion. I don't feel I have the knowledge - I have only been in the industry for 2 years. I have no background"..... and "At the end of the day - what can I do - nobody wants to listen to me - I don't know enough about it."

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84. **Feeling Unwelcome at Meetings** - Women could feel out of place at meetings. They were not expected to be there. "They are scared to get involved - because the meetings are so male dominated". "Messages should be given that this is something for all the family - not just for the men." Although in many cases the women were extremely knowledgeable, there was a tendency for them to feel that 'men are more knowledgeable'.
85. **Time commitments** – women often have family care responsibilities as well as providing practical support within the business. Consultation exercises and invitations to participate in the decision processes fail to take this into account.
86. However, a lack of involvement in the traditional consultation processes does not mean that the women interviewed had no interest in the wider concerns around the fishing industry. In fact, one of the strongest messages from this study was that they all cared passionately about the future of their industry and they recognised that decisions regarding its future were being made elsewhere. All had very strong views on the way the industry had been treated by Government and Europe and had feelings of frustration and disempowerment as a result.
87. There were concerns about the decline of the industry, the restrictions placed on fishers which prevented diversification through the year, the negative publicity the industry received, and the increasing use of foreign crews. The belief was expressed that the UK Government and Europe were actively "killing the industry".
88. The loss of geographical fishing communities was commented upon. Even within South West England – where it is commonly held that fishing communities are more recognised – there were differences of view on whether there were still fishing communities. "Plymouth is a big city there is not much of a community – these days people travel in by car and don't socialise." (Businesswoman, South West England) Others commented that with the exceptions of Looe and Polperro in the South West, people don't live and fish in the areas. The view being that there are no longer whole communities.
89. To take Newhaven, as another example, one of the interviewees described how in the 1970s there were forty trawlers operating out of Newhaven. She said that now there was only one. "There are not enough fishermen's wives to form a community. There used to be a fisherman's club. It is now flats. That was our community."
90. There is some evidence that some fishermen's wives are becoming more involved and, driven by concerns for family and communities are overcoming some of the barriers identified above. One boat owner and a fisherman's wife observed:

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“I think the skippers’ wives are getting more actively involved in the more political side of it. It’s because all the rules are getting so complex. I think that they seem to be taking a role in that side of things and sort of basically help their husbands”

91. In Whitby, a number of wives have recently set up their own organisation called ‘Fishermen’s Families and Friends’. In doing so, their primary objective was to “help enhance the image of our industry, and to save our community from disappearing.”
92. As a result of this the women have found new roles as networkers or activists, which could eventually lead to their more direct involvement in decision making.
93. One of the women interviewed, who was a well respected senior business woman in the industry, had succeeded in being appointed to senior positions in decision making bodies. She felt that these bodies had managed to influence and change proposed decisions by Government. “Sometimes though there was nothing that could be done and the fishing industry needed to accept that. More people should respond not just women.”
94. However, again, not many of the other women we spoke to were aware of these interventions.
95. An interest in forming local community groups that had a specific purpose was expressed by a number of wives and partners interviewed for this study.

“Ideally I would like to see a body of women made up of fishermen’s wives so that when decisions are made they are consulted as a separate group. We have the NFFO but it is not well known and yet it is supposed to be our voice. Everyone knows about the CBI or the NUT for example. The NFFO is mainly all men. What about us? Let women be the PR voice... I feel very strongly about this. ... It is all about quotas. I have a husband and two sons. They are putting their lives at risk - I need to feel that people have their interests at heart. The Greens are getting stronger and stronger and are not being challenged.” (Fisherman’s wife Newhaven)

96. There is strong evidence from this study that the barriers identified to lack of participation in the decision making process could be overcome to some extent by showing the direct links to proposals being put forward and a vision for fishing that impacted on families and communities. Also, the creation of community based networking structures would help to overcome many of the difficulties that stem from isolation and lack of confidence.

Women in Processing

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97. The processing sector employs the largest proportion of women. In the small and large establishments we contacted, women formed about half of the workforce.



Woman processor at work (WIF Archive, 2010)

98. Most of the women in this sector are employed as processors, packers, quality controllers and other operators in the production line, working on three shifts to support the 24-hour operation of the factory, earning a weekly wage of around £200-£250. This cohort consists of two major groups: women locally employed and women recruited overseas through agencies.

99. Our fieldwork in this study found that the local women workers tend to be school leavers, who married early with some as single mothers. Lack of confidence and ambition seemed a shared feature with many of these women. When asked about their views on their prospects in future, most said that they would rather continue to do what they do 'on the line' and would expect little change or promotion.

“Apply for promotion? Oh, no. I would rather stay as I am. It’s too much responsibility for me” (Production Controller)

100. Their limited education and their family responsibilities are two major blocks to further personal and occupational development. Some women, however, expressed a strong wish for education and training. A 39-year old woman operator, a mother and, also a new grandmother said:

“I would like to have an opportunity to do my A-Levels, probably in a local collage. I was 16 when I left the school. I didn’t really understand how important education was for an individual... I hope someday I will be able to go to university.”

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101. Foreign workers, women and men, are increasingly employed in processing factories.

“Seven, eight years ago, it was the refugees from Iraq, then it was the Thais, the Filipinos, and now it is mostly workers from Eastern European countries: the Poles, the Bulgarians, the Latvians and so on”
(senior HR officer in a processing factory)

102. Compared with the local recruits, these women and men are generally better educated, with most holding university degrees and many with professional employment histories in their own countries. Financial incentive seems to be the only major motivation for them to leave their home countries and take jobs in the processing sector. A 43-year old woman with 18 years employment history in banking in Poland shared her experiences and views:

“I take this job in the factory not because I love packing fish, but because of money. I have three children to support. In Poland, I would not be able to afford to send them to the university. Here, the labour is hard, but the money is better. That’s why I am here. I work for my children”

103. At the bottom of the factory hierarchy, shop-floor women workers have little influence and also demonstrated little interest in policy making. Poor education, lack of skills, language difficulties (for foreign women) and family responsibilities are identified as the major obstacles behind their overall lack of confidence, interest and influence.

104. However, it is worth noting that many of these women, especially those from foreign countries, expressed a strong interest in joining a women’s organisation. The foreign women had a stronger interest in organisation. There are probably two reasons: first, their perception that the trade union was open only to local workers; and, secondly and more importantly, they felt isolated in a foreign land, and hence were eager for networking.

105. There are women who are supervisors and managers in processing factories, but they are still in the minority. Despite this, progress is being made and the number of women supervisors has increased considerably in recent years and more women are being promoted to managerial positions. The women in these positions have a better chance of contributing to decision making in the factory. They were noticeably more articulate and assertive in expressing their opinions. One Quality Manager in a large seafood processing factory said:

“I always made sure that my voice is heard, even though I could see resistance in top managers. I had to use lots of meetings and paper work to prove my point.”

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106. We interviewed a woman who was the HR Manager in a large processing factory. She had played a key role in introducing some important and popular HR management policies, including English language training for foreign workers.
107. In small factories, there are women operators, administrators and supervisors. The decision making is always in the hand of the owner(s) who generally are men.

Women in business



Plymouth Trawler Agents Lorry (WIF Archive 2010)

108. There are successful business women engaged in the fish trade. In our interviews, one woman described how she had been in the industry for 37 years and managed a large number of beam trawlers. She described how she had been born into the business started by her great-great grandfather. She was clearly influential both in her community and through her membership of a wide range of bodies.
109. Another had returned from a very different career in the United States of America to start a business in the industry. She had set up a scallop business three and a half years ago. It now employs 40 staff in the factory and 60 at sea.
110. A third described how she had helped set up the Plymouth Trawler Agents - which had been formed by fishermen for fishermen out of necessity. The old fish market had not met the required standards. There was no one available to run it,

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so the interviewee, as the wife of a local fisherman, had taken over that role. Unusually, the interviewee also acted as an auctioneer.

111. In the fish market, where fish is sold and bought, supporting staff are often women, but they are rarely seen on the market which tends to be a predominately male domain.

112. The trading activities are often part of multiple responsibilities among the women:

“I am involved in all aspects of my cockle business, from picking to selling the cockles in France, Spain, etc. I am actively involved in the decision making process, I usually make decisions by myself, or first discuss it with my husband “ (a cockle picker and trader)

“I peel and pot the shrimps, prepare them. I butter them and spice them. I sell them. I do the book work. I also buy and sell cockles, arrange the transport and deal with customers in France. I sell cockles and mussels into France”

113. One of the barriers to women in this sector are the physical conditions. It can be cold, hard and smelly work. It remains a male dominated environment. The working hours are inconvenient and sometimes irregular. Working hours tend to be more of an issue with women than men mainly because of women’s child care and other family responsibilities.

114. One (male) owner of a small processing workshop observed:

“the reason women are little involved in the direct sales of fish is due to their lack of experience....Many of the men started off as fish porters or barrow boys - very physically demanding jobs, working their way up to auctioneer.”

115. Women’s lack of training and opportunity to develop skills thus reinforces the traditional stereotype. One woman with many years experience in the industry said:

“I have never seen any women buyers or auctioneers; not even women standing at the auctions with the clipboards or even women secretaries at these auctions, because it’s so early in the morning. 4am-7am latest [preparing the market] and the market usually starts at 6am”

116. Many women traders also run small shops. One female small fish shop owner said “it is getting harder to compete with big supermarkets”. Another women trader said, “Not many people want to work in fish sales because ‘fish sales’ is ‘fish sales’. It’s badly paid and it’s very hard work.”

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117. The competition from supermarkets was seen as a major issue by a number of women traders and shop owners. Supermarkets were well placed to enjoy the economies of scale and were able to source their fish from all over the country, or even the world. Whereas small local shops have a propensity to be dependent on the local fishermen's landings, which means that the fish they sell are seasonal and even scarce when landings are low.
118. Of interest is the range of enterprising activities/businesses that some fishermen's wives/partners have established. This was particularly noticeable in the Penzance area. Although these were mainly linked to the fishing industry they have been chiefly set up as separate businesses.
119. A focus group participant described how her husband had been a fisherman for 40 years. - "I always did the book-keeping but then started a business selling our own fish." Similarly one of the participants said that she had been married for 20 years to a fisherman. She "picked crab" but got a grant to establish a business supplying crab meat to local restaurants. Another bought fish locally and sold it to restaurants throughout the UK. Many of these women continued to support their husbands/partners through managing their book-keeping and other business and support related functions.

Women Managers, Regulators and Administrators

120. Within the industry and associated bodies there are women who hold senior managerial and decision making positions. Among those we met were the Head of HR in a very large processing plant, the Chief Executive running a fishing training school, the Chief Economist at the Sea Fish Industry Authority, and the Chair of a prominent organisation representing regional interests.
121. We also interviewed a number of senior women in Defra and the MFA.
122. These women are evidence that barriers can be overcome. They were strong women operating successfully sometimes in a predominately male working environment. But they were the exception. These women had the opportunity to influence policy and participate in decision making processes, though we were told of occasions when they had had to overcome male prejudice albeit covert in many cases.

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Women administrators at work (WIF archive, 2010)

123. There are many more women holding administrative positions, some as office administrators with significant responsibilities in helping the daily operation of the organisations and some with more limited responsibilities for data entry and other clerical tasks. Compared with managers and directors, these women have considerably less opportunity to influence policy making. Although there was a belief among a number interviewed that they could progress if they set their minds to it.
124. Women's involvement in management and administration has increased over recent years. As observed in the research undertaken by MacAllister Elliot and Partners,¹ this has been the case across Europe. Women have made significant inroads into fisheries management and administration, particularly in the public sector.
125. In the MFA, for example, the staff force at the end of January 2010 consisted of 127 male and 94 female employees. Four of the senior managers were men and three were women. Below that level, among the fisheries grades, 30% of the workforce were women. We were told that this was a considerable advance on just a few years back. Among the administrative staff it remained the position that the more junior grades (AO and AA) were predominately women.
126. The greater opportunities afforded to women in the MFA were viewed by some as being the result of a senior management commitment to equality. A number of those interviewed commented that things had changed within the MFA since the former Chief Executive had taken office. Women in support grades had been given greater opportunity to voice their views, the senior management

¹ MacAllister E. (2002) The role of Women in the Fisheries Sector.

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structure now included women, and there were now women serving as fisheries officers. One of the senior managers had designated equality responsibilities. A senior woman at Defra described the culture as “male dominated but trying to change.”

127. One woman fisheries officer said she had received an enormous amount of support from her senior member of staff. However, she said that she had worked in another area for two years. “That was really difficult because of the number of alpha males there. There was also a hierarchy and I was actively blocked from getting involved in any of the discussions.” She felt that there was still a North/South divide in respect of attitudes towards women. “I couldn’t work in some of those Northern offices. The predominant attitude is still “here is someone to make the tea.” She said attitudes on the boats were sexist. She had had her bottom grabbed when she was half way up a ladder on a ship. “All the men were laughing. I didn’t know how to handle it. “She felt that training around how to manage inappropriate behaviour would be useful although, in the long term those attitudes should be directly challenged.
128. An issue within the MFA is the difficulty for women caused by the need to move to different offices across the Country in order to achieve career progression. It was a particular difficulty for women in the coastal offices, where the teams are small. To gain experience and to take up promotion opportunities it was often necessary (for men and women) to move to other regional offices or HQ. Many women did not want to relocate due to family and care responsibilities, and some women preferred not to move because their husbands or partners held higher paid jobs. Moving away would put that income at risk.
129. Education and training are important factors associated with women’s progression. We met women who had worked their way up the career ladder, supported by educational achievement, especially further education. In a seafood processing factory, one woman started out as processor on the shop floor. She wanted to progress within her career so she went on to study as a technologist and achieved her HND and then a degree. This had helped her progress to her present position as the Technical Manager for the factory, looking after quality & specifications, hygiene training, and health and safety liaison. Another woman, came from a fishing family, married a fisherman, then later went back to study to become a trainer, and now has a very high profile position working with a Sea Regional Advisory Council and other bodies.
130. Active involvement in the industry is another channel for women to obtain opportunities for better prospects. One woman said she got involved after she married because her husband worked in fishermen’s missions. She helped out there, involving herself with the fishermen’s wives. She later received an invitation to attend an Aktea conference. The invitation was sent to the PO who then forwarded it on to her since they were aware of her involvement in the

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fishermen's mission and with fishermen's wives. That led to her current involvement in Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries (NIWIF).

131. Lack of recognition and male prejudice remain a major barrier blocking women from developing themselves fully, both personally and professionally. Women reported problems and experiences in this aspect. Some said that they always had to fight to have their voices heard. A woman CEO of a training school told us:

"Last year, I learned there was an important conference in Scarborough..... It was right in my [subject] area. I wanted to go. But I was not invited. I was determined to attend. So I just drove there. A group of men saw me at the entrance. One of them asked, 'Are you a nurse?'.... I said I want to see the Chairman where I got his permission to attend the conference... Eventually, I managed to persuade the Chairman to allow me to talk at the end of the conference for 5 minutes. I talked about our [training] school, our boys and girls, the importance of education and training for our industry's future, etc, etc. I got the warmest applause, many men standing up for me."

132. Similar experiences were reported by other women. Several recalled occasions, usually at meetings or conferences, when they were taken as 'secretaries' or 'nurses', simply because they were women.

133. There is a shared belief among many that we interviewed that women in managerial positions have to work twice as hard as men in order to prove their capability. There appears to be a spotlight on women in top positions, which serves to bring to light any mistakes they make.

"I think the women work harder than me, but I think more men get promoted...I don't think it's fair. I think women can sometimes do the job better than men" (a production controller)

"As woman, I have to work very hard, twice as hard as men, in order to get recognised" (a senior manager)

134. Lack of confidence is a recurring issue amongst women in administrative positions, especially among those with responsibilities towards the lower end of the institutional hierarchy. When asked about their expectation about their future, many tend to say that they prefer to just carry on doing what they do at the moment. There are several reasons for this, of which lack of relevant skills and experience and domestic responsibilities appear to be the two key factors.

"I don't want to become line manager. I am happy with what I am doing. I would rather stay what I am. It's a lot of responsibility and I

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assume that managers take a lot of work home with them. I don't want to do that. What is more, I don't have the experience and skills"
(administration officer)

135. Some women pointed out that bullying by male colleagues is also an issue which needs addressing. One woman activist with a high profile in the industry noted:

"I got bullied, it affected my confidence...it affected me...I was a victim. Some men think women are incapable. I didn't face so many barriers amongst the fishermen because they knew me and knew I had a background in the fishing industry. But when it comes to the broader table I remember being at a meeting in Brussels and we were discussing budgets and the men were saying you are just secretaries, what right have you to tell us what to do with money ... because you are a woman they often treat you as inferiors."

136. Feelings of isolation were reported by some women with senior administrative or managerial positions. The decision to work in a male dominated organisation tends to be a conscious one that requires a lot of prior thought. Nevertheless, the experience of being the only woman can be intimidating, even for strong women.

"It can be a bit lonely working in a male dominated industry but then again it was your choice, nobody made you go there." (a female professional head of unit)

"I believe it will be socially beneficial to have more women at work because it can feel isolated being the only woman. It used to be only me until recently...having more women at work boosted my confidence in the workplace" (a female Administrative Officer).

137. Some women found it very hard to progress to managerial positions. They considered that the problem was not 'a glass ceiling' but, in their words, 'the result of a bottleneck', as explained below:

"The industry, as we see, is still evolving and the men in managerial positions tend to have been and remain in that position for a long time. There is very little space for women to move up for better positions ... In many organisations I know, technically there are equal opportunity policies, but the reality is a different case. Presently all directors are male ... lots of people have been employed for a long time, so you just end up with the gender segregation...lots of the jobs are technical jobs so there are few women who have the experience, knowledge and interest...Those jobs are taken and people tend to stay in them for a long time" (Senior advisor for fishing)

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138. This woman said she would like to see a commitment for there to be at least one female out of four male members of the board/executive of the business concerned. This does not seem a very ambitious aim, but no doubt reflects a low start point.

Views on Future Roles and Involvement



Focus Group at Poole (WIF Archive, 2010)

139. Women had many suggestions as to the steps that they felt should be in place to improve the position of the industry and their communities and families and many of these are outlined below.
140. For many women their recommendations had no awareness of levels of responsibility or resource availability. They were merely interested in what they felt would make a difference to their lives and their ability to play a bigger role in the decision making process.
141. We have included below a number of these suggestions for change. We have also attached as a separate Appendix B a number of suggested actions based on our findings from this study. Some are not resource intensive but we recognise that many will have resource implications and, unless external funding or grants are available, may be difficult to progress in the current climate. We have stated

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whether we consider these are short, medium or long term aims and, in some cases, who we believe is responsible for driving the recommendations.

142. At this point it is worth reiterating that Defra's Gender Equality Scheme commits the Department:

- to making Defra's services more accessible for women; and
- to securing more effective engagement with women to inform policies and service delivery.

143. The issue is, therefore, not whether but how these objectives can be met in the Department's dealings with the fishing industry.

Future Roles - Families and Communities

144. As far as the future roles of wives and partners in the fishing communities are concerned, it was felt that little would change unless there was support for creating and developing more small shore based businesses. It was said that currently 90% of the fish caught locally was sent abroad - mainly because the retail end was not interested in small processors. There was the suggestion that women acting within a cooperative could help reverse this trend by selling fish directly to local restaurants and pubs.

145. Improving recognition within communities was also seen as vital to the industry and to assist in developing wider interest in the industry and to help overcome the indoctrination of gender segregation, it was suggested that more could be done to educate children about the industry. Among the suggestions was children's literature with positive images of women and men fishers, and school trips to ports and vessels. There could be practical aspects to this such as teaching youngsters about safety on board, tying knots, sailing and angling to make the subject lively and interesting, rather than an academic exercise.

146. Another means of building recognition would be organising competitions, locally and nationally revolving around the industry and even fishing activities - this could be in art, painting, poems etc. Women with experience in the industry could participate in these activities to lend firsthand experience and demonstrate that the industry is open to women and men.

147. Links should also be formed with local schools and colleges in fishing communities to ensure that young people (boys and girls) are introduced to the options of the wide range of jobs available in the fishing industry. Women from the fishing communities should be encouraged to take on the role of talking about the opportunities available.

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Women at Work

148. It was also strongly felt that sustainable improvements would not be made until across all sectors, career structures were put in place with clear progression opportunities for women. Internally Defra has made good progress on its family and women friendly working conditions but an awareness raising campaign should be developed in order to persuade all employers in the industry to follow Defra's example.
149. Where feasible, small employers should be encouraged to ensure that tools and equipment that are not physically inhibiting are introduced. For example, it was pointed out that that 20kg fish boxes would not only keep the fish better but would be easier for both males and females to handle, instead of the standard 40kg boxes.

Improving Participation

150. It has already been noted that women's involvement could be advanced by encouraging participation in women's groups and networks. It would be helpful to bring together women from all parts of the industry: women skippers and crew, owners, traders, processors, wives and partners. Those involved could be trained to become trainers themselves, role models, advisors to other women in schools and colleges, and those making career choices.
151. A senior woman at Defra felt that networking opportunities for women could be beneficial but it was about priorities. She said that a system was already in place where any member of the public could be involved but it was currently dominated by men. To achieve change it would be necessary to cast the net wide with the aim of getting more female representation. If this was successful there could be quick wins in terms of engagement.
152. She went on to say that reaching a wider audience was one of Defra's biggest aims and challenges. A great deal of attention had already been paid to the manner and style of communications and Defra was getting more confident about using different approaches. A specialist had been appointed who was working with communities and getting the views of people in those communities on proposed changes. She recognised that this was just one person and to be really effective they would need ten. Identifying women champions at the local level could help to fill that gap.
153. A strong view was expressed at a number of interviews, that any action needed to come from within the community otherwise fishermen and their wives/partners would react against the initiative.
154. There is strong support for establishing groups and networks, where women could meet and share experiences, network, socialise, discuss challenges,

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compare notes, and provide mutual support. Women's networks (real time or virtual) could be used to harness innovation and promote positive change. For these groups to be effective, help would be needed with resources. There was concern that bureaucracy and paperwork imposed by public bodies tended to get in the way of success.

155. As women's groups and networks will inevitably include women with different backgrounds, interests and agendas, group leaders should undergo training to learn to ensure balanced discussion, to steer contribution in ways that facilitated broad interest and to ensure that minority views were heard.
156. Women should be recruited as mentors and advisors, advertising their achievements and successes in order to make women aware of other women's involvement.
157. Another group of women interviewed observed that they could see openings for women linked to liaising with the environmental pressure groups. These environmental groups were said to have a large number of women members and it was felt that if the fishing industry had more women to represent its interests this could be beneficial to the industry as a whole. It would help raise the status of women in the industry and could lead to more effective communication.
158. Many of the women interviewed did not distinguish between Defra, the MFA and other government bodies. Some of the messages are equally applicable to those bodies.

Business development and support

159. It was felt that financial assistance to develop business opportunities from diversification would make a big difference to those families struggling with reducing incomes from fishing. For example, taking people out on boats for recreational purposes, and providing practical training for people who want to go to sea. Encouraging more fishing festivals would also provide new opportunities for women.

Training programmes

160. Many women said they would welcome a package of support linked to running a small business, i.e. computer skills, marketing, book-keeping, health and safety, hygiene and language training (e.g. French for trading with neighbouring countries like France). Importantly, this should be run alongside awareness training of the fishing industry. "I think it would be nice to have those opportunities, if it was related to what I was doing. I would not be averse to something like that. I would find it really helpful to learn new skills. I have muddled through and have been shown by friends. I know others wives in similar

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situations. It is not recognised as a proper job - it would be nice if it were” (Fisherman’s wife) .

161. Women in the industry could be trained to educate the public (within the local community) about fish: the health benefits, cooking and preparing the fish.

162. There was also a view that if they were confident that they knew what they were talking about they would get more involved. “I want to be able to talk like they do - know the different fish and the issues” (fisherman’s wife)

163. To assist diversification and relieve the pressure within the catching sector, training should be provided for other jobs in the local economy. This would also contribute to developing stronger communities.

More women in charge

164. It was thought that the single most effective way in which to change things for the better and ensure gender equality throughout would be to see more women appointed to senior decision making positions.

3. Conclusion

165. Our field work would seem to confirm that women are often under-represented, unrecognised, underpaid and seem to have little say in decision making at various levels in the fishing industry in England. From the literature review, this echoes the experience elsewhere in Europe. The International Collective in Support of Fish (ICSF) workers, in their response to the European Commission’s Green Paper on CFP reform, contended that little value is placed on the unpaid work. We found that this is not an accurate reflection of the roles of women interviewed for this project, at least at the level of the family business.

166. What has been particularly noticeable is the passion and concern that women at all levels have about the future of their industry. This overrides any anxieties or interests in improving their position or status. The masculinity of the sector was mentioned by nearly all those interviewed, but this was only perceived in a negative way by a small minority. Although, clearly this may imply that women have merely absorbed the dominant cultural mores, their interests in exploring innovative ways to maintain the industry and their pride in their contribution to their businesses suggest otherwise. What was apparent was an unspoken understanding that the businesses depended on them for their survival.

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167. There was a mixed reaction to discussions around improving representation in the catching sector but an interest in finding new ways to influence the direction of future policy. Key though would be assurances that their voices would be heard.
168. There was also enthusiasm in supporting the industry through finding new ways of working cooperatively and identifying new and imaginative ways of using their produce.
169. There are some lessons here from the roles women took during the 1984/1985 Miners' Strike. The literature review showed that there is a consensus in the material reviewed that women's involvement in the campaign, stemmed not from the fact that this was a traditional dispute around pay and conditions but that the ramifications of the Government's proposals were seen to impact on their families, homes and communities.
170. Community networks were quickly established and although they are now more likely to be mobilised as welfare support rather than as political action. Strangleman (2001) argued that the Support Groups created a new atmosphere in the mining-communities - "an atmosphere of more equality and more respect for the women, of a higher sensitivity for sexism and chauvinism." Whilst male dominance has not disappeared from the mining-communities altogether, the strike has been seen to change women's consciousness of themselves as well as challenging male working class culture and gender relations. (J., Miller, S. and Walker, M. (1984)).

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171. One of the key features of this project is the enthusiasm shown among many of the women contacted to establish groups and networks. Although finding women to attend focus groups was not always easy, this was because of the short time period available for the study. We found that as the project became known there was growing interest. There were examples of women travelling many miles to attend meetings and most said they would welcome being part of a network so long as it had a specific purpose.
172. Capitalising on the genuine interest in the sustainability of the industry and hence their families and their livelihoods would seem to be the most effective way of increasing women's awareness, involvement and participation.

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. Appendix A - Literature Review

Attached as separate document

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Appendix B - Summary of Suggested Actions

Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
Policies and Procedures			
Defra should designate a senior woman member of staff, at Programme Board level, within the Marine and Fisheries Directorate to oversee implementation of the Department's Equality Action Plan in the marine and fisheries area.	Short term	Defra	She would have responsibility to ensure that Defra's fisheries management services are more accessible for women; and that there is more effective engagement with women in the fishing industry, to inform policies and service delivery.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
The Department should ensure that equality issues are addressed as part of developing and implementing fisheries policies, using impact assessments in accordance with existing Defra policy.	Short term	Defra and MMO	It is apparent this is being done in some cases, e.g. the EFF Operational Programme but it is questionable as to whether the policy is yet being applied consistently. We noted, for example, that there was no reference to gender equality issues in the UK Government's response to the European Commission's Green paper on CFP reform (nor, it must be said, did the EC itself mention gender equality in its own document).
The same principle should be applied when introducing changes to procedures and practices that affect the industry.	Short term	Defra and MMO	This need not be a time consuming and bureaucratic process; it would simply be a matter of ensuring that adequate thought was given to whether women might be affected in different ways to men.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
Defra should initiate discussions with leaders in the fishing industry to discuss the findings of this project.	Short term	Defra	The objectives could be to consider how the industry itself could do more to change attitudes and behaviours, to provide women with equal opportunities for career progression and to become more involved in the decision making processes.
Improving Recognition of Wives/Partners			
The work of women supporting husbands and partners in their businesses should be included in official statistics.	Long term	Defra and Office of National Statistics.	If Defra wants to be inclusive in its approach and ensure that women have a voice it will need to collect and use this data. This could be a short term exercise, but changing the basis of national and EU statistics would be longer term.
Communications to increase Participation			
When undertaking consultation and research relevant to fisheries management and affecting the industry the Department should ensure that it contacts women in all areas of the industry to invite their views.	Short term	Defra	Communications/ invitations should be addressed to both wives/partners and husbands in fishing households.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
"Fishing News" should be encouraged to carry articles about women involved in the industry in a variety of different roles. Similarly, "Fishing Focus" should include articles about the role of women in fisheries and highlight Defra's commitment to see them more engaged in the decision making process.	Short term	Defra	"A Day in the Life" series of articles was suggested.
The contribution of women in the industry should be celebrated through other channels of communication	Medium term	Defra	e.g. local radio, newspapers, Fishing Focus and prizes awarded for accomplishments.
Defra should give further consideration to how information is communicated. It may not be a question of doing more, just doing it differently.	Short term	Defra	
We suggest that all respondents to consultation – whether in written form or at meetings – should receive information about the decisions made, about where consultation had led to changes in the proposals and about where it had not.	Short term	Defra	The main concern among the women was that the Department did not provide explanations about how the consultation had affected the outcome. As a consequence there was a feeling that much consultation was a false exercise.
Increasing Participation (General)			

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
As an ideal, at national level, a senior woman with a strong background in the fishing industry should be appointed to promote the interests of women within the industry.	Medium term		The highly fragmented nature of the industry and the lack of single representative body makes this a challenge. The SFIA might want to demonstrate leadership in promoting women's interests. Alternatively, the role could be fostered collectively through the various representative bodies.
Consideration should be given to how more women could become directly involved in the SAIF project. There has been the suggestion by officials of a virtual network.	Short term	Defra	This would be a quick demonstration of Defra's commitment to equality for women and would help ensure that the project took into account the needs and aspirations of women in fisheries.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
Women champions/mentors should be established at the community level	Medium term	Defra and MMO to signal their support for this and possible channels of funding, e.g. through EFF and the Fisheries Challenge Fund.	They could help in reestablishing local networking/interest groups. It would be important that these were primarily 'bottom up' projects rather than 'top-down' if there is to be the necessary buy in and commitment, though perhaps with some central facilitation, in accordance with Defra's Equality Action Plan.
<p>Women's networks/interest groups should be established with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to consultation documents by sharing skills, experiences and knowledge. • Promoting and raising the profile of the industry • Providing individual and community support. 	Medium term	Defra and MMO to signal their support for this and possible channels of funding, e.g. through EFF and the Fisheries Challenge Fund Other public bodies with an interest in community development and with gender equality remits, such as the RDAs, and local authorities could be approached.	These would need to be resourced and some seed corn funding would probably be necessary. Axis 4 of the EFF Operational Programme might be a suitable contributory source, though other funding would need to be found as well.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
A meeting could be arranged between women representatives in Defra, BIS, RDAs, Business Link, Regional Advisory Councils, the MMO, Natural England, JNCC, and coastal local authorities and women in the fishing industry to consider how they might work collaboratively to ensure that women's interests are recognised and promoted.	Short term	Defra	Part of the agenda could be considering how the new obligations in the Equality Act 2010 could be met.
Increasing career opportunities in the industry			
Links should be formed with local schools and colleges in fishing communities to ensure that young people (boys and girls) are introduced to the options of the wide range of jobs available in the fishing industry.	Medium term	Joint initiative between the industry and Business Link	Women from the fishing communities could be encouraged to take on the role of talking about the opportunities available.
Apprenticeships or 'toe in the water' measures should be available. This would cover the three certificates needed to work on a fishing vessel.	Long-term	National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)	The SFIA and bodies such as the NFFO could open discussions with the NAS
Incentives (in the form of allowances) should be available to encourage vessel owners to give girls and women working experience on board.	Long-term	Defra and MMO	Consideration should be given to whether existing fisheries or equality grant mechanisms might be available.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
A database of fishing vessels that are women friendly, and of vessels that women have worked on should be created.	Medium term	Representative bodies, such as the NFFO and NUTFA.	As an alternative to the representative bodies taking the initiative, if there was a women network established the database could be compiled on line.
There should be positive advertising and recruitment about jobs in the industry.	Medium term	Joint initiative between the industry and Business Link	
Awareness raising should be carried out in fishing areas with the aims of making local employers aware of their responsibilities under equality legislation linked to recruitment and creating harassment free working environments.	Long-term	Commission for Equality and Human Rights	
Every effort should be made to invite women speakers to consultation/information meetings, and consideration should be given to the timing and place of such meetings bearing in mind that women often have care responsibilities.	Short term	Defra	Thought will need to be given to the support that women may need in order to take up opportunities to participate in consultation and information sharing meetings. Defra should take the lead, but will need to engage with all the various agencies that convene meetings affecting the fishing industry, such as Natural England, JNNC, Environment Agency, MMO, etc.

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
Defra should consult on and communicate a clear vision for how Fisheries 2027 is going to be delivered, including how the fleet will be modernised.	Medium term	Defra	Although Defra has set out its long term vision for the English fishing industry, many of the people interviewed were not clear on how this was going to be implemented and how they might be affected.
Defra and other government bodies should ensure that the results of consultation exercises are clearly communicated as widely as possible - drawing links with any changes made as a direct result of the consultation.	Short term	Defra	Responses received to consultation exercises should always be acknowledged and the acknowledgement should indicate how the respondent will be able to find out the outcome of the consultation. Those responding to consultation exercises want to know how their views have influenced the outcome. Defra will need to foster good practice among the various agencies, such as Natural England and the MMO.
Business Development and Support			

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Suggested Action	Time-frame	Lead responsibility	Any Comments
Assistance should be available to develop business opportunities from diversification. For example taking people out on boats for recreational purposes, and providing practical training for people who want to go to sea. It was felt that fishing festivals could also be encouraged.	Medium term	MMO	Resources are available through EFF for diversification. Defra and the MMO should work together with the industry to identify opportunities.
Closer links should be developed with Regional Development Agencies (or their successor bodies if there were to be changes to regional structures).	Medium term	Defra	They should be encouraged to monitor take up of local women's courses by industry (and recognise fishing as a separate sector)
Training			
Courses that provide a package of support linked to running a small business should be established.	Medium term	Regional Development Agencies/Cornwall Sea Fisheries	
Consideration should be given to ways in which training and support could be provided to enable women in the industry to gain greater confidence to contribute at meetings, respond to consultation documents, serve on decision making bodies, etc.	Medium term	Defra	Such action would be in accordance with the Defra's Equality Action Plan and would enhance the quality of the decision making process.