Enhancing the Role of Women in Inshore Fisheries

Eastern Shore, Nova Scotia

Summary Report

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Extension Department, StFX University
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Background

This project was developed by fieldworkers from the Extension Department StFX University to address the needs of women in fishing families on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia. It was funded by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha.

Methodology

Six kitchen meetings were held in: Little Dover, Queensport, Larry's River, Port Bickerton, Mosher River, Jeddore. Three co-ordinators were hired to bring together women from fishing families in six communities (Nellie Baker, Janet Peitchze and Lynn Jelleau.) Forty-seven women participated in the meetings which were facilitated by John Kearney and Nancy Wright from the Extension Department of StFX University. Most of the women were married or partners of inshore fishermen involved in lobster fishing, but some also held groundfish licences and others were involved in aquaculture activities.

The meetings had two key elements:

A) An overview of the current state of the fisheries presented by John Kearney.

The overview included information on the impact of globalization and privatization on the fisheries, changes in government policy and a brief discussion of alternative strategies using the example of Community-Based Management approaches. In two of the meetings a video from the CBC documentary The Nature of Things was used for stimulating discussion on Community-Based Management.

B) A discussion, facilitated by Nancy Wright of the following questions:
1. What were the traditional roles of women in fisheries families in this community?
2. What kinds of roles are women playing today?
3. What are the challenges faced by women in fishing families today?
4. What are some next steps, or strategies for the future?

A follow-up meeting was planned for March 27, to bring women from the six communities together to review the summary of the kitchen meetings and discuss follow-up initiatives.
Kitchen Meetings Report

Information from the kitchen meetings was recorded by note-taking and flip chart. The data was collected and summarized and the following summary prepared.

Traditional Roles of Women in Fisheries Families

This discussion explored the variety of roles women have played in fishing families in the past. Many of the women are daughters and grand-daughters of fishers and could recall their own mothers or other family member's experiences.

The following is a summary of their responses. They were very few differences between the experience of women in the six communities.

Family Responsibilities
- Child care
- Larger families
- Dual parenting role when men were away
- Household management
- Full time homemakers
- Meals for fisherman, crew
- Knitting gloves, socks etc.
- Made clothing for family
- Carried wood, water
- Maintain winter/summer homes
- Small farming
- Gardening
- Arrange credit at general store

Equipment maintenance & repair
- Mend nets and gear
- Paint buoys

Sharing skills/bartering to help other women
- Babysitting,
- Share food

Processing
- Salting fish

Moral support
- "Support and worry"

April 20, 1998

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Women in Fisheries Families Today

Women were asked to reflect on the roles they play today. The key differences between the past and current roles are: the need for women to explore other sources of income, a higher degree of involvement in the management of the fishing enterprise, boat maintenance and repair and more women are directly involved in fishing.

Family responsibilities
- child care
- household management
- more support from men with work in the home and child care

Other employment outside the fisheries
- part and full time for extra income
- women are working in restaurants, fish plants, baby-sitting, nursing homes, hairdressers,
- small business, dress shops
- crafts, dog grooming, kennels, nursing

Fisheries management
- bookkeeping
- DFO information and paperwork
- interpret government changes and regulations
- marketing & telephone sales
- Income tax
- pay bills
- correspondence
- payroll
- record minutes at meetings
- HST

Processing and value-added activities
- Aquaculture
- Band lobsters

Equipment maintenance & repair
- boat maintenance
- boat building
- work on wharf
- “go for parts”
- cut bait
- bait trawl
- built traps and headings

Fishing
- as crew members
- as licenced fishers
lobster fishing with partners
groundfishing

Support

- make decisions when men are away
- have input into decisions

Challenges & Changes

In this discussion women were asked to identify challenges, changes and to share their frustrations and rewards with the current situation in the fishing industry. The critical areas included the need for women to find other sources of income for themselves and their partners, and a multitude of problems and concerns with fisheries management. Women also shared their experience of the growing frustration and stress being felt by fishers and their families who are trying to continue fishing and living in coastal communities on the Eastern Shore.

Family Responsibilities

- men are away working
- families are encouraging children to get an education outside the fishery and leave the area

Need other sources of income

- women need other source of income for family and sanity
- some men do not have an education
- age is a barrier
- some men don’t want to or know what else to do besides fishing
- some women have GED and computer upgrading but no where to work
- low income
- re-training is difficult
- limited educational opportunities
- if we did retrain or upgrade education, who would want us
- staying in the fishery will require education
- TAGS ends in August and people are faced with welfare
- cannot take courses if you have to pay
- if you go away for education, you will not be coming back
- you might get a degree at 40-50, but who’s going to hire you
- need to have work for fishermen (ie. carpentry etc. so they can stay)
- fear that nothing is going to happen here with the Sable Gas project
Fisheries management

- should be able to bring in what they catch
- seals in the nets, stealing bait
- we need better fisheries management, but not from DFO
- communities don’t stick together
- communities are far apart geographically
- our fishermen don’t accept or realize how bad things are
- lack of leadership
- it’s getting more expensive, harder to fish
- the rest of the community doesn’t give a damn
- no fisheries committees within all RDA’s
- conflict and back-biting in the associations
- DFO treats people differently “divide and conquer”
- licences, fees going up
- additional red tape
- causeway hinders lobster stock growth
- no money to fight
- not enough people to win fights
- decisions are political
- no source of income except development projects
- government has stopped funding them
- TAGS will be gone
- changes in lobster fishery ie. size increase, lower catches here
- fears government will reduce numbers of licences
- fears about impact of Sable gas project on fisheries
- kelp harvesting affecting lobster
- cannot afford licences to get into lobster
- tuna regulations limiting opportunities for local fishermen
- there are competing interests (ie. Canso trawlermen vs. inshore)
- discouraging to have to fight your neighbour
- lack of marketing (ie. no market for summer mackerel)
- plants will not process mackerel-dogfish

Support

- men are frightened
- stress- we don’t know where the next dollar is coming from
- no security
- stress-related health issues- physical and mental
- women and men are working harder
- complaining, anxiety, unhappy
- physically, it’s getting harder to work in fishery
- sadness that children will not be fishing with them
- we’re not moving!
Rewards/Benefits

• calm
• peace of being on the water
• being home for children
• no driving to work
• it’s all they know and all they want
• freedom
• enjoy outside work
• love seafood
• natural lifestyle

Next Steps…..

Women were asked to identify ideas or strategies for addressing the challenges and changes. While there were some women who wanted to look at opportunities for themselves outside of the fishery, the majority were concerned with finding strategies for improving the fishing industry to benefit their partners and their families.

Opportunities for Women in Fisheries Management

• Fisheries Research
• Becoming involved in Community-based management
• Training
• Need to develop a widespread movement
• Explore new licences: sea urchin ranching, new species, scallop enhancement
• Marketing: not good/not properly done for scallop; promotion of value-added products
• Lobster is high quality, where is promotion
• Dock-side monitoring companies
• Staying - get core licence, need changes for women
• Get tuna licences
• Help husbands
• Companies for dock-side monitoring
• Role for women in aquaculture more acceptable
• Take control of the industry
• Requires co-operation
• There is fear of change
• Articulating ideas, presentations are a challenge
• Computer bookkeeping, basic computer, orientation with the Internet, fisheries
• Address for website for communications secretariat
Opportunities for Women in Fisheries Organizations

- Increase the participation of women in fisheries associations
- Becoming involved in decision-making
- Bring women together from other areas
- Have women's meeting, group to share
- Work to overcome resistance from men and government to women's involvement
- We know what we are talking about
- Research on fisheries issues
- We can do what they (men) do not want to
- Women have better organizational skills
- Commitment - volunteer time - no pay
- Women can make commitment
- Women will share the information with others
- Work together as organization or association
- Skills for association building - research, lobby and organize
- Teach us how to live in this community
- Training in research
- Connecting with Fishnet
- Join together with other groups
- Get feedback from others - solutions
- Who will listen to us? or make ourselves heard. Lobster Advisory Committee?
- Is there a role for women to speak out? or will we be a laughing stock - it's a harsh group

Opportunities for Women in Education & Training

- Education to obtain a trade, deal with distance problems and costs
- Training in computer bookkeeping
- Basic retraining that would boost the area i.e., tourism, fisheries related, monitoring, services for other fishermen
- Computer access site and training
- Financial planning
- Income tax training and preparation
- Need training in managing a small business

Opportunities for Women Outside of the Fishery

- Developing craft industry (i.e., organizations, standards, co-ops)
- Opportunities from Sable (i.e., take in boarders, meals)
- Explore tourism opportunities (i.e., take over restaurant)
Wrap-Up Meeting

Eighteen women, representing the six communities where kitchen meetings were held, attended a wrap-up meeting in Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia on March 27. Following initial introductions, participants shared the following expectations they had for the day:

**Expectations**
- see if we can get this working
- find out more about it
- what we can do to help the fishery - as women
- keep our communities alive
- listen
- get information, do things as women
- want to know about what’s going on in other areas
- small fishermen being squeezed out - what can we do?
- help fishermen
- get DFO to let fishermen manage the fishery
- listen & learn
- women take it one step further
- women have a good voice - think they should use it
- see similarities between communities
- find out what connections we can make to take control
- see how StFX can support you

Women were asked to provide updates from their community, and there was general discussion and information sharing about some of the shared concerns women expressed. Not all groups had an opportunity to report, but most participated in the discussion of issues raised by women from other communities.

The Summary Report of the kitchen meetings was presented. The discussion which followed included a consensus that the summary adequately reflected their concerns as identified in their meetings.

In the afternoon session, women were divided into small workgroups to develop action plans based on several key initiatives:

- **Opportunities in Fisheries Management**
- **Opportunities in Fisheries Organization**
- **Opportunities in Education & Training**
- **Opportunities Outside of the Fishery**

The groups were asked to consider the following questions:
- Why is this initiative important?
- What could be accomplished?
- What would be needed to move forward? What resources are needed?
- Next Steps...

Due to time constraints, there was only time to hear feedback and achieve consensus on the first initiative. The remaining action planning will be carried out at a follow-up session April 28.

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Initiatives in Fisheries Management

Initiative #1 Fisheries research & training

How could it be accomplished?
- Develop list of people to go to for information (DFO, HRDC)
- Become educated, work together as a community
- Sharing information with others
- It is a long-term initiative
- Form a network
- Get information on history, background of the fishery

What would move this ahead?
- commitment
- money - hire education people - resource people
- co-operation of fishermen

What resources?
- workshop on proposal writing - research could be done by fishers
- knowing who’s who in government

Next Step

Hold a one-day workshop April 28 in Sherbrooke to provide women with background information and knowledge of the history of the fishery, with a focus on policy development in the region.

Initiative #2
Computer bookkeeping
Basic orientation
Internet & fisheries

Initiative #3
Become involved in community-based management
Fisheries association to take over dockside monitoring

Initiative #4
Training and research ie. - proposal writing
Initiatives in Fisheries Organizations

Initiative#5
Increase participation of women in fisheries organizations

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<th>Next steps</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make initiative realistic, bringing women together to talk, seeing similarities and comparing</td>
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<td>2. Start now</td>
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<td>3. Advertise meetings, connect with more women</td>
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<td>4. Start a network to meet in a central location or fax back and forth information to communicate with each other</td>
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<td>5. Lobby government to get more licences in our communities</td>
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Initiative#6
Skills for association building - lobbying organization & research

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<th>Next Steps</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Develop skills and knowledge about</td>
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<tr>
<td>• lobbying</td>
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<tr>
<td>• proposal writing,</td>
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<td>• developing organizations.</td>
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Initiatives in Education and Training

Initiative #7
Basic re-training that would boost the area to both increase the skills of those in the fishery and provide options for those who are not.

Next steps
1. Survey to determine needs or wants of communities.
2. Identify services that would be needed
3. Identify resources that would meet the needs.

Initiative #8
Income tax training and preparation

Initiative #9
Computer access site and training

Initiative #10
Training in managing a small business

Initiatives for Outside of the Fisheries

Initiative #11
Opportunities from the development of Sable Gas

Initiative #12
Tourism
Develop craft industry (weak)

Other Questions
During the day, questions were recorded for future discussion.
- will you involve others? • develop proposal to open Western
- can you offer services? Bank - build in research training
- hiring women on Sable component
- are jobs unionized? get more tuna licenses for Canso/Dover area
- how can we take over research in the is the end of TAGS providing an community? opportunity for lobbying?
- Halibut study
- buy-out proposal - where is it coming from?

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Evaluation

At the end of the wrap-up meeting, participants were asked to complete a written evaluation/feedback form. The following is a summary of their responses.

Kitchen Meetings

What did you like best about the kitchen meeting held in your community?

*Women liked the opportunity to discuss in small groups the shared concerns they had about the fishery, to have informative input from someone knowledgeable about the fishery and the opportunity to share information.*

- talking about it made me realize that other women felt the same way I did.
- all subjects of the fishing persons life.
- being involved with someone who has knowledge and representation of the fisheries.
- all of the discussions we had.
- discussion - women really gave a lot.
- very informative.
- finding out new ideas that other women have about the fishery.
- the informative input at the beginning - the free and very interesting sharing of information - the skilful facilitation.
- small groups - more open discussion.
- discussing common problems, knowing you are not alone.
- the sharing of information was common between women.
- to know so many women felt the same about the fishery as I do, and realize what is going on.
- it was a start to get something going.
- it was small and you had a choice to voice your opinion.
- they were small and a lot was discussed.

What did you like the least?

*Some women felt the meetings were not long enough.*

- wasn’t longer.
- the smoking.
- time constraint.
- too few attended.
- there seems to be no end in sight, the problem seems so large.
- everything went well.
- I didn’t have any idea what to expect.
What could have improved the kitchen meeting?

*Women would have liked more time.*

- more time for to get more details on different subjects.
- greater attendance, more people interested from my area.
- more time.
- nailed down more specific goals - time constraints didn't allow for, but I don't know how much time would.
- more time.
- being held in a kitchen - nothing really, it was a good meeting.
- it went well.

Wrap-up Meeting

What did you like the best about the wrap-up meeting?

*The best part of the wrap-up meeting was meeting women from other areas and sharing ideas and information.*

- meeting different women from different communities and learning about their lives in the fishing industry.
- meeting the other women.
- meeting and sharing with other women related to fisheries ideas and knowledge and views.
- meeting new people from different communities that I know nothing about.
- discussion
- the whole day was interesting and very informative.
- talking to other groups and learning a lot about their fishery.
- I enjoyed the exchanging of ideas with other communities and the hope that as a group, we may accomplish some good for the fisheries.
- the seriousness of the discussion, the flow of knowledge, the commitment of participants, good environment and refreshments, good responses to concerns expressed, excellent prompt follow-up plan!
- enthusiasm - hopefully it'll last.
- meeting others seeing their point of views.
- the sharing of common issues of fishermen wives.
- meeting together to find out what is going on in the other communities.
- to learn a lot about what is really going on in the fishery and enjoy meeting the women and finding out about their fishery.
- see the difference between communities.
- we are starting some research.
- it was informative.
What did you like least?

There was not enough time, particularly to allow equal time for women from each community to provide updates from their area.

- time constraint
- unequal amount of "air time"
- two distinct groups - well informed and with a fishery, with Halifax County controlled discussion but with reason.
- we are talking about two group of people, those who have lost their living from the fisheries, and those who still have a fair living from the fisheries.
- crafts
- everything went well

What could have improved the wrap-up meeting?

The meet was scheduled from 10 am until 3 pm, with a lunch break. Women would have liked a longer session.

- longer session.
- more time together.
- more specifics follow-ups
- maybe a little but more directive facilitation after mid morning to draw out areas that were saying less.
- more time to work together.
- it was great.
- more time.

Next Steps

What would you like to see happen next?

Participants would like to see more women involved, more opportunities for training, further meetings and follow-up.

- more commitment from more women.
- get more women involved and training to better serve our fishermen.
- keep having meetings on a regular basis to expand our knowledge of the fishery.
- next step however small.
- more women involved who are interested in all aspects of the fishery.
- more meetings.
- as we have already decided, more training so we know more about what we are dealing with.
- follow-up course.
• further participation by attendants.
• start working from the bottom up, starting in the middle will only help those from there to the top.
• form a network to continue to work together.
• improve our fishery
• exactly what is happening.

Evaluation Summary

Women liked the opportunity to discuss in small groups the shared concerns they had about the fishery, to have informative input from someone knowledgeable about the fishery and the opportunity to share information.

Some women felt the kitchen meetings were not long enough.

The best part of the wrap-up meeting was meeting women from other areas and sharing ideas and information.

There was not enough time, particularly to allow equal time for women from each community to provide updates from their area.

The meet was scheduled from 10 am until 3 pm, with a lunch break. Women would have liked a longer session.

In terms of follow-up steps, participants would like to see more women involved, more opportunities for training, further meetings and follow-up.
Co-ordinator Reports

Janet Peitzsche, Coordinator, Eastern Guysborough County

The communities that were covered by the kitchen meetings included Little Dover, Whitehead, Hazel Hill, Port Felix, Canso, Queensport, Tickle, Half Island Cove and Phillips Harbour.

I approached the women in the communities by phone. I told them this meeting was a starting point and that the Extension Department wanted to hear their ideas and problems and see what they could do to help. I also told them, that John Kearney had a background in the fishing industry. Inviting them to sit in on this meeting to voice their ideas and concerns. This, also gave them the reason to hope that they might get to put their ideas in action or to find solutions to some of their problems.

Questions the women had were mostly cautious optimism - yes, they would go but it probably wouldn't end up helping. The feeling I got was one of apathy. After all their struggles it only seems to be getting worse, DFO is going to get them out of the fishery one way or the other. On that note, I was weary that they may not bother to show up.

My overall impressions and feelings about the kitchen meeting were:
I was very impressed with how much the women shared with each other and Extension. The enthusiasm they had in helping themselves, as a group and individually, but the feeling that they can't do it with their skills. The need for direction, which they would embrace. I was very saddened by the sense of hopelessness and desperation in relation to the survival of our fishing communities and that the government and more specifically DFO is to blame. Also, the statement, that, it is now very frightening to their families.

The wrap up meeting was a time of realizing that, we are not alone in our rural communities and fishery problems. It is the same county, province, country and world wide. The sharing was the same, amazing, how much the women shared with each other. The big question seemed to be, where do we go for direction and help. Try to better ourselves, get a fair hearing and who is going to be our support. The commitment to work at it was definitely there.

I found my role very educational and rewarding, I learned a lot about the fisheries, about women in this area and the rest of the province. I think, the thing that stood out most was the desire to help themselves and the need to have that facilitated in some way. The women seem more than ready to start and committed to finding solutions to their problems. The Extension Department's role was excellent, I got the impression that the respect and confidence in the department was very apparent, I say this because there was not a negative comment or challenge to either fieldworker or their role.

I really think in this instance, it was good the way it evolved, the sharing of the women was so
good for both; extension because of the commitment spoken by the women, the women so they
know their not alone. Time to get things more nailed down to specifics and a handle of what
directions they want to take was limited. The next meeting and follow up meetings may be able
to determine this.

The women in this area want the skills to be able to help themselves. Skills that we know are out
there, but, how do we access them at no cost and in our own communities.

**Nellie Baker - Coordinator, Eastern Halifax County**

The communities that were covered at the kitchen meetings that I had co-ordinated were Little
Harbour, Owls Head, Head of Jeddore, West Jeddore, East Jeddore and Oyster Pond, Ecum
Secum, Harringtons Cove and Sheet Harbour.

I called the fishermen's wives to invite them to a kitchen meeting. I explained that John Kearney
and Nancy Wright from St.F.X. would be the speakers. I told them that John would give us his
breakdown of the fishery and would ask them questions concerning their feelings about the fishery
as it is today. I explained that Nancy Wright would ask questions concerning what they felt they
could contribute with the knowledge that they had. I told them that Nancy or John could help
find support if they decided they wanted help in setting up a project or more education on issues
they felt a need for.

Most of the questions concerning setting up the meeting from the women were exactly what was
the meetings about.

I felt the kitchen meetings made the women aware that they have similar problems and concerns
about the fishery.

I felt the wrap-up meeting was productive in some ways. I felt there is a great difference between
some Eastern communities and the women in my area. I’m not sure they had the same ideas or
goals that the women in my area had.

I found the staff at the St.F.X. University to be most helpful from beginning to the end of this
project.

**Lynn Jelleau - Coordinator, West Guysborough/St. Mary’s**

I coordinated meetings in Larrys' River, Port Bickerton, and these covered communities from
Port Felix to Little Liscomb, Guysborough County.

I phoned women I knew and called a municipal councillor for names of likely women in St.
Mary's. A few said "again"? - but nearly all were open to it.

*April 20, 1998  Fieldwork Unit, Extension Department, StFX University*
My role was clearly defined - what to do - when - I've worked alongside St.F.X. staff before so there were no surprises there.

Clustering the meetings closer together timewise would likely have meant greater attendance at the wrap-up meeting, but other than that, nothing would have improved the project from my end.

The meeting in Larrys' River was the first, so the participants weren't sure what to expect and neither was I. Lobster was the main focus at this meeting because it's what everyone is left with, so that may have directed things away from groundfish, which just isn't an issue anymore. In Port Bickerton so few attended it was hard to compare, but I think the issues for women are the same everywhere - help as much as you can and worry about the future. All the women who attended only needed 2-3 minutes to become comfortable with the setting, and most were quite willing to expand their role in their partners' fishing enterprise if they have the opportunity to - they want to, and feel the need to contribute.

The wrap-up meeting had representatives from all the others I think, but fewer then I thought. Fishermen in Guysborough County have no fishery compared to those in Halifax County, so they seemed to direct the discussion, but overall I think everyone came away with something. Those I brought seem eager to meet again, but will that fade in a month? The informality of the meetings is necessary, and I think a definite plan for real action is a must to keep interest up. Hopefully this will lead to the development of some sort of organization - the women need to feel they are a force, and they'll become one with some encouragement.