Caribbean women small-scale fisheries learning exchange with Costa Rica

COOPESOLIDAR R.L, CARIBBEAN NETWORK OF FISHERFOLK ORGANISATIONS AND CENTRE FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

2018
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **Background** ........................................................................................................... 1

2. **Setting the scene** .................................................................................................... 1
   2.1 **Overview** ......................................................................................................... 1
   2.2 **Profile and initiation** .......................................................................................... 3
       2.2.1 Who participated and what were the locations? ........................................... 3
       2.2.2 What did we want to achieve with the exchange? ....................................... 3
       2.2.3 Initiating the exchange: welcome and working route ................................ 4

3. **Experiences of the participating organizations** ...................................................... 6
   3.1 **CoopeTárcoles R.L and Consorcio Por La Mar R.L** ......................................... 6
       3.1.1 Fisherfolk leader shares information .............................................................. 6
       3.1.2 Analysis of the practical exercise and reviewing the value chain ............... 7
       3.1.3 Empowerment ................................................................................................. 9
   3.2 **CoopeMolusChomes R.L (Mollusc Fisherwomen Cooperative of Chomes)** .......... 9
       3.2.1 Analysis of the experience in Chomes ............................................................ 11
       3.2.2 How do we see ourselves in the graphic and artistic representation that reflects our experiences, perceptions and feelings? ........................................................................... 11
   3.3 **Co-management in Cahuita National Park** ...................................................... 12
       3.3.1 Perceptions, feelings and key words of the women regarding this experience .......................................................................................................................... 13
       3.3.2 Comparing the Pacific with the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica .................. 14

4. **Lessons learned** ...................................................................................................... 14

5. **Innovation plans** ..................................................................................................... 16
   5.1 **Nadine Nembhard’s Presentation (Belize)** ....................................................... 16
       5.1.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning? ...................................... 16
       5.1.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed? ....................... 16
   5.2 **Kasha Walker’s Presentation (Grenada)** .......................................................... 16
       5.2.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning? ...................................... 16
       5.2.2 Does that idea stay the same or what changes are proposed? .................... 17
   5.3 **Lorna Warner’s Presentation (St Kitts)** ............................................................. 17
   5.4 **Bertha Simmons and Kathy Ann McClean’s Presentation (Barbados)** .............. 17
       5.4.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning? ...................................... 17
       5.4.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed? ....................... 17
   5.5 **Laura Wilson’s Presentation (Cahuita)** ............................................................ 18
       5.5.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning? ...................................... 18
       5.5.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed? ....................... 18
   5.6 **Jeannette Naranjo’s Presentation (Tárcoles)** .................................................... 18
       5.6.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning? ...................................... 19
       5.6.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed? ....................... 19
   5.7 **Aracelly Jiménez’s Presentation (Chomes)** ....................................................... 19
       5.7.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning? ...................................... 19
       5.7.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed? ....................... 19
Citation

1 BACKGROUND

The Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), CoopeSolidar R.L., Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have long had shared interest in gender and fisherfolk organizations in small-scale fisheries. They collaborate to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) that was adopted by countries in 2014. Arising from discussion on this collaboration was an idea to arrange a fisheries learning exchange (FLE) in which the three elements of gender, fisherfolk organizations and small-scale fisheries could be addressed. In addition, an exchange across the languages (Spanish and English) and cultures of Central America and the Caribbean could provide integrating and illuminating benefits for all concerned.

Putting the idea into practice resulted in a Caribbean ‘fisherwoman’ field trip learning exchange from 16-21 July 2017 among women from Caribbean countries and their hosts in Costa Rica, including representatives of CERMES, CNFO, CoopeSolidar R.L. and FAO. For CERMES, the activity was part of the programme of the Gender In Fisheries Team (GIFT) that included the key Caribbean organising participants. This brief report summarizes the events of the field trip, the lessons learned from it, and the innovation plans that the participants shared to outline possible follow-up action informed by the learning exchange. It does not go into the details of designing and organising the FLE according to the best practices that were used by the parties involved. Readers can refer to the reference section for guidance on these aspects. This report builds upon the project report submitted by CoopeSolidar R.L. to FAO upon conclusion of the activity. Supplementary material such as the complete photographic record, artist’s productions, interview results and such are also omitted in order to keep this brief. Photographs are inserted for general information only. The activity was initiated by the CERMES-led GIFT, implemented by CoopeSolidar R.L. and CNFO, and supported by FAO. Several other organizations and individuals also played important roles as acknowledged in the remainder of the report.

2 SETTING THE SCENE

To set the scene we provide an overview of the FLE including a brief profile of the participants and the introduction to the activity.

2.1 Overview

The FLE was aimed at strengthening the capacities of fisherwomen from different Caribbean countries who expressed interest in learning about Costa Rican experiences, and at the same time wanted to contribute their knowledge of small-scale (artisanal) fisheries value chains. The visiting fishing industry women from Barbados (Kathy-Ann McClean), St Kitts (Lorna Warner), Grenada (Kasha Walker), and Belize plus CNFO-GIFT (Nadine Nembhard) along with Bertha Simmons (CERMES-GIFT) and Susana Siar (FAO) visited Tárcoles and Chomes in Puntarenas on
the Pacific coast, and Cahuita National Park on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. There were many host country participants in Costa Rica accompanying, and at each site visited.

The FLE was designed using a participatory approach with vertical and horizontal exchange of knowledge. All of the organizations and the participants were actively engaged from the earliest preparatory steps guided by the best practices on FLE arrangements as well as prior practical know-how. The design was to ensure that in each of the field trip experiences, there were to be significant learning elements from the social, economic, cultural and organizational aspects of artisanal fisheries in Costa Rica, with special emphasis on women. At the same time, the hosts were prepared to receive the perceptions, recommendations and learning from the Caribbean women who visited them — in other words, a mutually beneficial feedback process in the FLE.

Based on the notion that Caribbean women could apply the ideas generated together in their contexts, they designed an Innovation Plan that evolved throughout the exchange and learning route (i.e. the road trip adventure), so that they could incorporate new visions and strategies from what they saw along the way, and learned from their field experiences at the sites visited.

In parallel to the journey’s route, the process developed artistic material reflecting discussions and learning. This was shared at a global level through social networks. The artistic impressions of the FLE provided added value and meaning to the experiences through media familiar to all.
2.2 Profile and initiation

In the preparatory stages the organizers exchanged information on the people and places to be included in the FLE.

2.2.1 Who participated and what were the locations?

Fisherwomen from the Caribbean countries, women from the fishing communities of Costa Rica from the experiences of CoopeTárcoles R.L (Cooperativa de Pescadores de Tárcoles) and the Consorcio Por La Mar; CoopeMolusChomes R.L (Cooperativa de Molusqueras de Chomes), as well as those involved in the approach to the co-management process of the Cahuita National Park and the South Caribbean Diving Center: Ambassadors of the Sea. While the inclusion of men in matters of gender was well appreciated, it was decided to prioritize women in this case.

![Map of Costa Rica with three fisheries sites highlighted](image)

Figure 2. The three fisheries sites on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts visited during the FLE

2.2.2 What did we want to achieve with the exchange?

The exchange was intended to facilitate the construction of links and sharing of experiences among women in marine small-scale fishing communities from personal, economic, political and organizational empowerment perspectives, by strengthening ties, bridges and bonds between women from Caribbean countries and Costa Rica. Achieving similar outcomes among men is also important, but typically most FLEs have focused on male participants and interests. It was time for change.
Specific objectives

In order to better assess along the way whether the aim was being achieved, some specific objectives were jointly developed:

1. To acquire a deep understanding of the experiences of three coastal marine communities in the Pacific and Caribbean regions of Costa Rica by showing good practices of integrated management of fishery resources to provide women in the Caribbean with opportunities to incorporate ideas and innovations into their projects and contexts.
2. To promote a process of reflection-action to generate lessons learned that contribute to the programs, projects and policies of small-scale fisheries with focus on gender and equity.
3. To generate a process of application of learning from the fisherwomen in their contexts, building ideas of innovation that they can put into practice in their respective countries.
4. To develop creative visual materials that will contribute to the implementation of Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, on the gender and governance focus.
5. To demonstrate the benefits of a properly planned learning exchange.

2.2.3 Initiating the exchange: welcome and working route

The opening session started with the presentation of the women participants and the facilitating team. This was followed by brief remarks by: Susana Siar, Fisheries Industry Officer; Octavio Ramírez, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Costa Rica, and Gustavo Meneses, Executive President of INCOPESCA (Costa Rican Fishing and Aquaculture Institute). Their messages to set the scene are summarized below.

---

1 From the CoopeSoliDar R.L Team were present: Vivienne Solís Rivera, meeting coordinator, Ivanna Ayales Cruz facilitator and president of CoopeSoliDar R.L, Marvin Fonseca Borrás, manager; Jesslyn Solano Monge, secretary; Flora Sánchez Sáenz, CoopeSoliDar R.L associate; Ana Lucrecia Barrantes, associate of CoopeSoliDar R.L and Coordinator of the Rebyc LAC II Project; Guadalupe Álvarez, artist, and also Róger Gutiérrez, communication manager.
Mr. Octavio Ramírez, FAO Representative in Costa Rica

Today we achieve a dream. Welcome to the eight conch shells representing women’s voices. I really hope this to be a sincere exchange between you, and I am sure that it will yield very good results. You must learn and work hard, but also learn about the country, its people and enjoy the time together. We must work 80% and leave the remaining 20% to enjoy.

Ms. Susana Siar, FAO Rome

I would like to wish you the best in this activity that we have been organising for so many months. We believe that learning could be generated by sharing concrete Costa Rican experiences to strengthen the activities that are developed in support of small-scale fishing in the Caribbean. Today we join in a common effort that we hope will give good results. Thank you very much to all.

Mr. Gustavo Meneses, INCOPESCA

This is an activity of great importance due to the major role performed by women in fisheries and in the development of the country. Until now, the participation of women has been marginal to our development due in part to a “machista” society, our culture. Developing an agenda with fisherwomen is worth celebrating. Now we have a global policy for small-scale fisheries. These days will be very satisfying; indeed, satisfying expectations of learning in the implementation of the Guidelines for the sustainability of small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication. If we want a secure society, we must have healthy and strong women who do not depend on others. We must recognize their needs in fisheries, establishing a before and after this experience. From our government and together with FAO, we want to focus our efforts on sustainable development. Welcome and I wish the best for you all in this exchange.

Thanks to Susana Siar and Daniela Kalikoski

The facilitating team thanked both women from FAO for their valuable support in the technical development of this event and delivered a small token of recognition to them in appreciation.
3 EXPERIENCES OF THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Rather than present a day-by-day journal of the FLE, in these sections we highlight the main learning from the exchange at different locations using the perspectives of the women involved. These perspectives were gained from informal discussion along the way and from interviews on specific topics.

3.1 CoopeTárcoles R.L and Consorcio Por La Mar R.L

CoopeTárcoles R.L (Fishers Cooperative of Tárcoles) and Consorcio Por La Mar R.L are in Tárcoles, the first Pacific coastal site visited after leaving the introductory meeting in San Jose. There is a lot to learn in Tárcoles. The visiting women had the opportunity to learn, through the key people of the organization, the value chain in operation combined with the experience of guided tours and rural community tourism. They shared with the women how Jeannette, their manager, had achieved personal empowerment and perseverance for increasing knowledge and experience. In addition, the visiting women were part of a practical experience where they learned about the management of CoopeTárcoles R.L, its collection centre, the experience of traceability and their sale of fish, among other matters.

3.1.1 Fisherfolk leader shares information

Jeannette Naranjo commented about the organizations and their initiatives for strengthening it. One is the Consorcio Por la Mar R.L., an enterprise jointly formed by CoopeSoliDar R.L and CoopeTárcoles as an inclusive alliance to strengthen each other. Another one is CoopeTárcoles R.L, which has more than 40 members, 8 of whom are women. The cooperative buys catches from the fishers and, as an organization, it has taken important steps in the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. They have achieved the establishment of a Marine Area for Responsible Fishing. The communities' struggle began with the action to recover the shrimp stocks by making the shrimp boats move three miles offshore. The negotiation took four years, and later the shrimpers agreed to move only one mile away. The shrimp is caught near the mangroves that are ideal ecosystems for their reproduction. Annually in December, January and February, there is permission to catch shrimp. Research has been carried out since the creation
of the Marine Area for Responsible Fishing. They have been collecting data and maintaining a database for decision-making. With information from the database, the fisherfolk demonstrated to the government that the shrimp stock was recovering. There is now a Network of Marine Areas for Responsible Fishing at the national level. Jeannette also explained the process of traceability, as well as rural community tourism, which are benefiting many people in the community.

Regarding the postharvest, Jeannette commented that there are requirements that have to be met based on the principles and regulations of SENASA (National Animal Health Service). Modifications will be made to the collection centre to adapt it to the new regulations. She said: “For example, we are going to construct an entrance behind so that fishers can enter from there, and the front will be used only for the volume sale. A space will be arranged for filleting and peeling the shrimp. Then, there will be more order, so we can participate and sell fish to schools and hospitals. The more fish sold at the national level the better. It is not worth selling to the broker or for export. When we sell to the public, we earn more.”

3.1.2 Analysis of the practical exercise and reviewing the value chain

The participants expressed the following views on what had caught their attention from the experience in Tárcoles, especially in relation to the fisheries value chain:

1. They give much attention to the fishery product that enters the collection centre. (Kasha, Grenada)
2. The partners who did the practical exercise were familiar with the activities. In turn, each person in the cooperative knows his or her task. Everything is tidy. (Bertha, Barbados)
3. Really organized. “I would like to have this experience with molluscs in Chomes. Traceability can apply to molluscs.” (Aracelly, Costa Rica).
4. This experience is important because I have seen cooperatives, but I have never been there to perform tasks. First, I tried to understand what traceability is because in Belize it is being discussed, but I did not know it deeply. In Belize, an NGO is trying to sell us
the idea of traceability. I would like to know more about the process of traceability. (Nadine, Belize)

5. About traceability, Vivienne explained that traceability is a process to verify the origin of a fishery product that reaches the consumers. “Flora and Fauna International (FFI) supported CoopeSoliDar R.L to develop an experience of strengthening capacities by testing the technology in a Marine Area for Responsible Fishing. This system integrates FFI, INCOPESCA, CoopeTárcoles and CoopeSoliDar R.L. The system must be supported by the state. As a consumer, I get better quality of the product. The idea is also to educate consumers. There are several steps: first is to improve the collection centre, and then negotiate the food programmes from the government. It is the first experience in a small-scale fishery. Two issues were difficult to put into practice: i) Not all fishers have licenses, and they were very concerned about their informality. Nevertheless, the system made their boats visible and this made them feel very proud; ii) the market does not want to pay the added value. The market does not recognize the difference. This has made the project pay additional costs. INCOPESCA provides technical support in case the cooperative needs support. At this moment, the fishers get an intangible asset but most important is pride. This is the only experience we have in traceability in practice in a small-scale fishery.” (Vivienne, CoopeSoliDar R.L)

6. In Tárcoles the tradition and the cultural identity remains, the tradition of the artisanal fishing. (Kasha)

7. My first entry was the washing of feet, boots and caps. It was not difficult at all. It is a very nice thing that we have lived this experience and it is a very organized fish shop. (Lorna, St Kitts)

8. I imagined that everything would smell like fish, but there was not a strong smell at all. I am impressed with the memorization of all codes. It is important to have the invoices and the system in order. (Bertha)

9. The intermediary buys the boatload. She works in stocking collection centre where the management of ice is different for fish handling. I would take the traceability system. (Kathy Ann, Barbados)

10. The participation of young people in the processes of information analysis is important, not only in their leadership in the traceability system, but also in the database used by CoopeTárcoles for decision-making. Young people are an engine for the development of fisheries in communities if people consider and give them opportunity. (Ivannia)

11. I liked the traceability process. The collection centre is tidy compared with what I have seen in other contexts like Asia, for example. There is a connection to the importance of artisanal fishing. (Susana, FAO)
3.1.3 Empowerment

After the analysis of the experience, a space was opened to deepen consideration of the issue of empowerment of women. This is one of the first steps to strengthen self-esteem, break out invisibility and assert rights in everyday life and at work as fisherwomen.

**Concept of empowerment**: the concept is linked to leadership, respect, and perseverance. These three words constitute the heart of empowerment. Traditional knowledge is linked to the empowerment and identity of fisherwomen, their rights and necessity for alliances to strengthen the sector. The unity of the group is important. Other associated words are consciousness, power, unity, respect, recognition of strengths, and greatness. Other related words are thought, knowledge, rights, model of inspiration, process and support.

**Personal empowerment** is linked to the recognition of work, opportunities, belief in ourselves and self-esteem. **Organizational empowerment** is about taking into account what each woman wants, with horizontal leadership and sorority. “*We listen to each other and from that we make decisions.*” **Economic empowerment** is about having fair and equitable access to economic resources. For example, in the case of Tárcoles, income is divided into three parts: boat owner, captain, and the person fishing. “Lujadoras” are part of the guided tours and have an economic payment. They depend on the use of fishing gears.

3.2 CoopeMolusChomes R.L (Mollusc Fisherwomen Cooperative of Chomes)

This is a cooperative that achieved its position due to its organizational effort around molluscs. The cooperative has reached a historic milestone at the country level because they achieved the approval of a Mollusk Sustainable Management Plan, elaborated in a participatory manner.
The arrival at Chomes greatly impressed the participants, as they were received with a folk group that communicated the culture, knowledge, joy and history of the place through dance and the costumes used for working in the mangrove many years ago. Many dancers in the group and its director are sons and daughters of the women of the mangroves, who are members of CoopeMolusChomes R.L.

Next day, there was a guided tour of the mangrove swamps where Chomes women explained, in four stations, everything related to their productive activity. The first station referred to the process of mollusc extraction in the mangrove, and for this, they not only shared knowledge of the mangrove species but also the molluscs they extract and the dangers they face. In addition, they explained in depth the participatory research that has given rise to the Mollusk Sustainable Management Plan and the negotiation process with different actors. In the second station, it was possible to share the obstacles they face in order to carry out their activities. Obstacles are due mainly to the presence of an aquaculture shrimp company that does not comply with stipulations and regulations, and which affects the women and the health of the mangroves. The third station discussed the process of mangrove reforestation and the traditional knowledge of women. Each of the learning exchange participants planted a mangrove seedling. Finally, an entrepreneurship initiative and its added value were visited. The key strategies to continue with the experience and to be strengthened from in personal, economic and socio-organizational empowerment were also discussed. They shared the obstacles they encountered to obtain the electricity connection to set up and make their small business operational. As a sign of solidarity, the visiting women decided to write a letter of support for the women of the Chomes cooperative.
3.2.1 Analysis of the experience in Chomes

There was much learning, but especially the identification with this group of 47 women, who underwent a difficult struggle to reach their goals and obtain the recognition that they deserve from a human rights framework. The women who visited the Chomes women saw in them:

- Women’s strength
- Communication
- Maintaining cultural identity
- Sorority
- Unity
- Alliances and development of capacity for women to transmit knowledge and partnership
- Dedication and perseverance
- Shared management

3.2.2 How do we see ourselves in the graphic and artistic representation that reflects our experiences, perceptions and feelings?

During the exchange process, the images and words that the women subsequently identified were given meaning and significance by an artist. The following were their art perceptions:

- This is a collection of what we women are doing
- It is more profound; it is sharing traditional knowledge with sons and daughters
- The eyes express the eyes of any of us, who are taking all of these and trying to transform
- We see changes and transformations in the subject of traceability
- We see women transforming the environment
- I see a future and women contribute to that future ... and not only for them, but for the next generation
• The voices, the sounds ... today we have more voice than the first day. Not only we have more voice, but it is also stronger now
• At the roots are the people who are re-taking their past, and moving forward into the future. At the root is the knowledge, the culture and roots that are founded in identity.

Through the murals and collective drawings, we can convey a message that can change life in the communities. Graphic representations can be used in T-shirts and crafts. The murals are culturally and economically useful and help increase awareness about the issues. Since the FLE took place, FAO has featured in its communications some of the artwork they produced.

3.3 Co-management in Cahuita National Park

The women participating in the FLE also visited a model situation in terms of co-management in community participation and decision-making. They learned about the experiences and history in the co-management of the resources of Cahuita National Park where its inhabitants were always present despite the obstacles they faced.

Mr. Edwin Cyrus, Director of the Conservation Area ACLAC, said the government had to listen to its inhabitants and learn from them, their traditional knowledge, their culture and their ways to co-manage the Park. After many years of dialogue and effort for its recognition, they are moving forward in community leadership and participation. Women benefit from economic initiatives generated around tourism. There are women in power and decision-making positions in the Association of Fishers of Cahuita. There must be greater recognition and motivation for women, especially young women, to integrate into the fisheries value chain.

He said that there is still a need to redouble efforts to fight against climate change, and the search for adaptation measures to counter the erosion that the territory is suffering, as well as the warming of seawater that affects the coral reefs. Women seemed more affected because they have the responsibility for the food security of their children.

He noted: "This area was declared a National Park, without the consultation of the inhabitants and without taking into account their interests. These people make decisions without consultation, such as charging for entry, and the community was very upset. Most of the park is in the sea. Leaders said that tourists should not pay to enter. Subsequently, they moved into a shared management. The government realized that the inhabitants were organized and now they ask tourists to make a voluntary contribution. The idea is that there are benefits for women as well".

Regarding the Ambassadors of the Sea, he explained that the aim was to recognize the experience of young people who are entering diving practices, and the learning opportunities offered by the Diving School, in addition to other activities such as clean-ups of the seabed and recognition of the sea’s riches.
3.3.1 Perceptions, feelings and key words of the women regarding this experience

The women said that this experience was marked by the following terms, which they explained.

- **Unity.** The importance of family unity for conservation, as well as cultural identity because people come from different cultures, countries, nationalities.
- **Cooperation.** All people working together.
- **Orientation.** There is a vision and line of work from historical figures, which have rescued community values and traditions from the point of view of social, cultural and natural resource management.
- **Voluntary guidelines for responsible fishing.** This is a commitment to issues of governance, gender, and organization of the groups of fishers. Costa Rica has a very interesting process of applying the SSF Guidelines: there is an executive decree that transformed the guidelines from being voluntary to becoming obligatory with the participation of different institutions. We are working on a law, where civil society is the one who will give us the elements to advance towards their interests and needs. The process works because we work hand in hand with the fishers. There are many challenges with respect to gender in fisheries. We would like the Caribbean to be an example from a holistic perspective.
- **Pride.** The pride of what they have and what is important. The pride of being black.
- **Joy.** In every place, we went there was joy.
- **Music.** Music is part of the culture they do not act apart. Music means more than just dancing. It is learning from people and traditions.
- **Climate change.** Sedimentation is occurring and is part of the impact that climate change is causing. Women are heads of household and issues of food security and pollution affect us. We need to be more aware of what we use and consume.
- **Youth** will be models to other young people; they require opportunities for their development.
- **Governance.** Dialogue between government and civil society is important. We have to take advantage of the positive leadership such as the Director of the Area, but with the
support of the citizens. Local efforts can transform national policies. We must take lessons learned to the level of state powers: legislative, executive, judicial, Comptroller’s office. NGOs that facilitate processes must build bridges between civil society and institutions to produce changes. There are developments on roundtables and progress towards ODS. Knowing the international treaties, agreements, among others.

3.3.2 Comparing the Pacific with the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica

Although there are differences between the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, the SSF Guidelines constitute a meeting point for both. The common challenges are women's empowerment, support from strategic alliances, changes in power relations between men and women, marine responsible fishing areas including economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities to improve quality of life of its inhabitants.

4 LESSONS LEARNED

People learn from practice and experience. Learning is a dynamic and reciprocal process, where meaning is given to experiences and these findings are added to the baggage of knowledge that we carry with us. Therefore, a lesson learned is evidence that allows us to generate trends from a model of social, economic, political and environmental development, with the idea of multiplying and generating changes, in this case in favour of women and equality. Lessons learned that women shared from their experience were as follows:

1. The role of women in artisanal fisheries is essential throughout the process. It is necessary to generate supportive policies.
2. It is necessary to strengthen the identity of Caribbean women as women of strength, empowerment and leadership. "Change starts with me and continue to work together".
3. The importance of activating personal and collective "will".
4. To achieve goals, it is important to have perseverance, and personal and collective will. To this, we add teamwork, where we all work towards the same direction: communities, civil society and government.
5. It is determining the teamwork and the construction and reproduction of a development model that identifies us.
6. Sorority is a keyword that people must put into practice in all women's empowerment processes.
7. If we are leaders and empowered, we must multiply that knowledge and attitudes with other women in our fishing communities, and along the value chain. "Sorority because we can see how the voice of the eight women joined to become one, and thus bring learning to each of our communities."
8. The importance of non-interventionist accompaniment in organizations.
9. Empowering other women to walk together: opening spaces to advance implementation of our human rights. Empowering women to make decisions on different issues.
10. Making alliances with other women's organizations and governments.
11. Creating optimal environments for the creation of women's ideas and their implementation from an opportunity for learning and personal and collective growth.
12. Perseverance is important to enhance change. Through education, you can reach young people.
13. Working on the issue of climate change from prevention, adaptation and holistic work with women.
14. Co-management is a shared decision-making possibility that helps to set up opportunities for social, environmental and economic improvement in the lives of fishermen and fisherwomen and from the value chain. Co-management works if we give it a chance to succeed.
15. The process of implementing the SSF Guidelines must take place jointly with civil society and government.
16. Ensure that traditional knowledge of fishers is recognized. We must rescue cultural traditions in fishing to help strengthen the identity and roots of our people, as well as their commitment to the restoration of a country and an activity such as responsible fishing, including the contributions of women and young people. "The value of tradition: we have many traditions. They have taught me that we can gather values and traditions in Grenada."
17. There is hope and motivation that change will come soon. Change is a beginning of work among women working together. Start working towards a better relationship between fisherwomen. The change begins with me.
18. Women in fisheries can support one another through networking and empowering one another. Forming a network of fisherwomen to strengthen each other.
19. Stop, scream, cry, but do not let yourself be defeated ... and use all you can to grow as a woman. Take the strengths of other women, make them yours and share.
20. Provide empowerment and leadership training spaces with and for women in our coasts.
5 INNOVATION PLANS

Innovation is not far from our possibilities. It is about identifying a need and a part of a proposal for a concrete action to change what has been done, giving greater benefits to the value chain, in this case about fishing. The women shared their proposals for innovative change in fisheries.

5.1 Nadine Nembhard’s Presentation (Belize)

It is a fishing community with many traditions. The whole family is involved in the fishing sector. Many fisherwomen are heads of household, and knowledge is passed on to the whole family.

The Fisheries Division does not visualize women in the value chain of fishing: pre-fishing, fishing and post-fishing. There are women who work in the value chain, especially in the cleaning of conch. In Belize, there are two large cooperatives working with the exportation of lobster and conch, and some filleted fish. Women work there, but the salaries are very low and have not increased in 17 years. Changes in legislation are required to raise minimum wages, as women are the most disadvantaged.

5.1.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?

- To offer the tourist the cooked lobster
- To export lion fish
- To make jewelry with lobster waste and what is not used from fish (Jewelry products are being made with lionfish).

5.1.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?

Those three aspects remain, but attention is focused on strengthening the awareness of women to demand their rights, especially, for them to have a decent job. My job is at a national level by trying to strengthen networks and communication in the seven countries of the Caribbean, at the same time, creating a regional network to connect Caribbean countries, and advancing in articulation for change. Belize would be the lead country for articulation, trying to integrate more women through virtual/electronic media.

5.2 Kasha Walker’s Presentation (Grenada)

In Grenada, the major species are yellowfin tuna, snapper, marlin, dorado and lobster. Fishermen export lobster to the United States and Canada. Sailboats are built in the country, and competitions are carried out with international renown.

5.2.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?

There is a Local Development Plan, and women wanted to participate as protagonists. In Petite Martinique there are approximately 600 fisherfolk, but not many women are involved (about five women). Therefore, an awareness programme is being developed. The Innovation Plan
supports the expansion of opportunities for women's participation and employment through education.

5.2.2 Does that idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?

The plan has not changed, but now there is a need for integrating more women into the Local Development Plan, to carry the interests and voices of women. The idea would be to integrate the knowledge that I carry from the experience of Costa Rica, and to advance in the creation of allies to strengthen a network of fishing women. Strengthening the participation of women, and specifically of young women, is kept with concrete opportunities in the marketing of fish.

5.3 Lorna Warner’s Presentation (St Kitts)

St Kitts is part of the two-island federated nation-state: St Kitts and Nevis. I work in postharvest.

*What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?*

Because Lorna's work focuses on small-scale fisheries, especially by filleting fish, she has realized that there is a necessity to strengthen women's participation in the value chain of fishing.

*Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?*

The initial idea of the innovation plan is kept. I would like more women to participate in St Kitts, and also to create a recognized form of identity for women in fishing. It is necessary to strengthen the sense of unity among women.

5.4 Bertha Simmons and Kathy Ann McClean’s Presentation (Barbados)

In Barbados, women are engaged in preparing the fish, and preparing it for commercialization. In scaling and boning, the person who does this, whether male or female, receives the same amount of money.

5.4.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?

The idea with the innovation plan is to make fertilizer from fish processing wastes, and to involve the women's group. This is a really useful option, and it can provide economic benefits during closed season.

5.4.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?

The idea of producing fertilizer from fish processing wastes is kept to diversify the productive options. We do not change the idea, but it will not be easy; we have to move forward with perseverance. The women of Barbados will be in contact with Tárcoles, which has advanced
towards that experience, and can provide lessons learned. The project also involves training. It is important to coordinate with local actors such as the local authority, the Ministry of Health and other entities that have competence in an undertaking like this one with many environmental, economic and cultural benefits.

Costa Rican fisherwomen shared their innovation plans with the Caribbean visitors as below.

5.5 Laura Wilson’s Presentation (Cahuita)

I started work in an organization of Afro-descendant women in 2005, and I still work with them. Our goal is the enforceability of human rights. Why only with Afro-descendant women? It is because they have not been in decision-making spaces. We worked with the National Institute of Women (INAMU) and we realized that even as an Institute, it had not identified us as women with specific and special characteristics. We joined indigenous women to gather more strength. Our organization became a School of Political Training for women to be leaders in their communities, and have positions of power in decision making such as local governments. We have five women who have stood out. We work in health and political participation.

5.5.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?

To keep working with the political participation of Afro-descendant women, for them to exercise their rights and achieve personal and collective growth by recognizing history.

5.5.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?

To continue the alliance with INOPESCA following the association of fishers, and take very seriously climate change and its effects on fishing. It is about empowering girls in this aspect. The challenge as an association is to work together. This issue needs to be addressed urgently by involving women, from opportunities for food security and safeguarding of their lives and their environment.

5.6 Jeannette Naranjo’s Presentation (Tárcoles)

CoopeTárcoles R.L is a cooperative to which eight women and many men belong. Working with women requires sorority, accompaniment and leadership injection.
5.6.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?

Strengthen community organization for women to benefit from opportunities.

5.6.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?

We still want to bring together women fishers so that they have a group and to organize them so that they can be empowered and have their place and strength to elaborate their projects and put into practice their ideas.

5.7 Aracelly Jiménez’s Presentation (Chomes)

This community is dedicated to molluscs. They organized to face problems with mangrove resources. They have a cooperative dedicated to the extraction of molluscs in a sustainable way. They have a Participative Plan for the sustainable use of molluscs, with guided tours, a snack bar with food to go, with the strengthening of an organization formed by women and to fight for the rights of women and the formalization of the activity. The visit had four phases: mangrove, nursery, shrimp farm and plots where the participative Exploitation Plan was shared. On 21 April it was recognized as a formal activity, but this activity has risks for women such as cuts, insect problems, dehydration, sunburns, nail problems in hands and feet.

The Decent Work Training Workshop made a difference to the women. "We knew about our rights, but we did not know how to fight for them. From there it came the idea of a Participative Management Plan for the molluscs, and that we had right to the sea and social security. The cooperative contributes to cultural identity. We contribute to food security."

5.7.1 What was the idea of innovation at the beginning?

Expand the diversity of catch to improve the commercialization that they have been working with CoopeSoliDar R.L through the Participative Sustainable Management Plan. Also, exchange ideas of entrepreneurship, teamwork and sorority. Important alliances have been established among the CoopeMolusChomes R.L, Costa Rican civil society, and the state.

5.7.2 Does the idea stay the same or what changes are proposed?

The idea of the participative research for the Participative Sustainable Management Plan advancing towards the commercialization of the four species stays the same, and we continue fighting for the snack bar to be operational. I take a great learning from each of you, as well as the bond of friendship that is unforgettable in this exchange.

6 CONCLUSION AND FOLLOW-UP

The organizers and participants felt that the Caribbean fisherwomen’s FLE in Costa Rica was fresh, exciting and innovative, while following best practices for learning exchanges (Figure 3).
The objectives had mostly been achieved, and the FLE distinguished itself from many others by being about much more than technical and scientific information, or focused primarily on resource conservation, as many FLEs have been. This FLE paid significant attention to both group and personal development regarding women’s initiatives, capacities and empowerment. The artistic and cultural elements were particularly enriching, but also reinforcing for knowledge mobilization aimed at motivation for change. This is key to all aspects of implementing the SSF Guidelines, but effective change agents and leaders are especially critical for the mainstreaming of gender in fisheries that GIFT is supporting. The FLE artwork has since graced the cover of a recent FAO publication on *Women’s participation and leadership in fisherfolk organizations and collective action in fisheries*. FAO continues to provide invaluable support to initiatives in Costa Rica, and in the Caribbean countries where CNFO has members, through a number of projects.

CoopeSoliDar R.L. has also been very busy in producing publications and videos on national initiatives to advance fisherwomen’s empowerment and implementation of the SSF Guidelines. These are listed in the references and resources. Along with CERMES, CNFO and FAO, the aim is that policies, plans, projects, programmes and other initiatives will follow-up on the FLE.
7 REFERENCES AND RESOURCES


CoopeSoliDar R.L. [http://coopesolidar.org](http://coopesolidar.org)


CoopeSoliDar R.L. 2018. [Videos] Implementando las Directrices de Pesca de Pequeña Escala en su Eje de Género Intercambio de Mujer. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECq2PyVsuyC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECq2PyVsuyC)


Gender in Fisheries Team (GIFT) [www.cavehill.uwi.edu/curmes/projects/gift/overview.aspx](http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/curmes/projects/gift/overview.aspx)

