



Although offshore fishing is a male preserve, the whole fishing cycle employs about 47% female workers. With the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems, these livelihoods are threatened.

## Marine Pollution

Marine and coastal ecosystems provide a variety of ecological and economic services oceans act as 'carbon sinks'. Natural shorelines provide protection against storms and floods in densely populated coastal zones; these ecosystems are essential for global life support systems and biodiversity. Over 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods. Around the world, fish and other seafood are crucial for food and nutrition security for 4.3 billion people; and the global oceans-based economy is valued at \$3-6 trillion per year.

The degradation of these ecosystems, specifically through by human actions– oil spills, plastic debris, pathogens, chemical pollutants such as polychlorinated biphenyls and methyl mercury, discharge of untreated wastewater, and industrial and agricultural runoff– is known as marine pollution. Marine pollution affects marine life and biodiversity as well as women and men living in coastal areas dependent on natural resource-based livelihoods.

### How are women differently vulnerable?

Both men and women are vulnerable to marine debris, microplastics and chemicals. An example is mercury, which bioaccumulates in food. As a result, women and men face health deterioration, especially if they belong to poor, coastal communities with lower adaptive capacities.

Yet, a pertinent way marine pollution is gendered is its economic repercussions as women and men often have socially defined roles in traditional fishing communities. Often lacking the institutional capacity and technical knowledge for boat fishing due to gender norms, women sometimes partake in income generating activities such as shrimp farming, shellfish collection or ornamental pisciculture along coastlines. With saltwater intrusion and pollutants washing up on shorelines, women are disproportionately affected in their roles as supplementary fishers.

## CALL FOR ACTION!

**Collect sex-disaggregated data regarding marine and coastal communities. Aim to fill data gaps on health-effects of pollution as well as economic effects of marine pollution**

**Ensure full participation of relevant stakeholders, especially women and youth, for marine and coastal ecosystems management**

**Encourage sustainable ocean use, incorporating traditional and artisanal inputs**

## READ MORE:

**The Ocean Conference. 2017.**

**Global Gender Environment Outlook. UN Environment, 2016.**

**Marine Litter. UN Environment, 2016.**

## Clean Seas

The Clean Seas Campaign was launched by UN Environment in February 2017 with the aim of engaging governments, the public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine litter. Aiming to 'turn the tide on plastic', this campaign deals with the 8 million tons of plastic added to our oceans each year. Research on plastic microfibers and microbeads (such as in beauty products) shows that marine litter of 5mm or less makes up 85% of human-made pollutants on shorelines around the world.

The Ocean Conference, held in June 2017, reaffirms global commitments to address priorities to realize SDG 14 - life below water. The call for action to strengthen cooperation, policy coherence and coordination among institutions at all levels will help to better understand the relationship between climate in view of the health and productivity of the ocean.



A woman is seen in Ninh Thuan, Viet Nam, repairing a fishing net. Women participate in many invisible and undervalued roles along the fishing chain. Often their traditional knowledge is not consulted, and they have minimal influence on how local resources are managed. Lack of socioeconomic capital increases their susceptibilities and should be a concern for marine and coastal resource management policies.