Gender and ecosystem services: a blind spot

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• Different people utilise and benefit from ecosystems in very different ways

• We need to account for social difference to make ecosystem service policy and interventions equitable and sustainable

• We need to think about gender!!
Outline

1. Gender is a blind spot for ecosystem service research
2. How are ecosystem services gendered?
3. Why are ecosystem services gendered?
4. Why it matters?
5. GCRF Blue Communities
6. Conclusion
1. Gender is a blind spot for ecosystem service research

Gender highly prominent in the development agenda since 1980s, yet...
• Only 5 out of 4000 ecosystem service articles considered gender (Cruz-Garcia et al., 2017)

• Only 0.7% of ecosystem services’ research examined gender dimensions (Yang et al., 2018)
2. How are ecosystem services gendered?

• Sustainable Poverty Alleviation from Coastal Ecosystem Services Project (SPACES)

• Eight coastal sites across Kenya and Mozambique, East Africa

• Mangrove and coral reef ecosystem services

• Multiple qualitative and quantitative methods
Women value a greater variety of ecosystem services

Both value provisioning services most, but men don’t value those exploited by women

But differences in the perceived importance of each ecosystem services
Differences in perceived contribution of ecosystems to different aspects of wellbeing

Male (left) and female (right) values of mangroves for wellbeing domains (SPACES Project)
Women capture a smaller share of income

**Mangroves**

- Women are confined to firewood collection and not do engage in the higher earning activity of pole cutting
- Men earn twice as much income as women from firewood collection
- Overall, men earn between 1.4 and 18 times more than women

**Fish trading**

- Men trade in commercial high value fish to larger markets
- Women (‘mama karangas’) trade in small, low value fish to local markets
- Large-scale traders (men) earn 85 times what female small-scale traders earn
- Small-scale male traders still earn 4-5 times more than female traders
2. Why are ecosystem services gendered?

Linked to distinct gender roles and responsibilities

Gendered livelihood activities linked to coastal ecosystem services
Access mechanisms

• Financial capital
• Mobility
• Skills and knowledge shared within gender
• Gendered rules and memberships
• Behavioural expectations and culture
• Gendered spaces (men = sea; women = home, land, intertidal)

“[Do women also collect or fish octopus?] No [a big no], ...octopus is dangerous and can kill. Not anyone can catch octopus, it must be someone brave because octopus is dangerous ...’
(male participant, Wasini)
3. Why does it matter?

• Decision-making currently biased because of invisibility of women’s activities and views

• Bias towards income generating / provisioning vs subsistence / broader non-monetary ecosystem services

• Because men and women perceive, value and benefit from ecosystem services differently, interventions that alter ecosystem services result in gender trade-offs (winners and losers)
E.g. Well-meaning intervention aimed at reducing fishing effort

Increase number of big fish

Decrease no. of small fish

Large-scale fish traders (men)

Small-scale fish traders (women)

(Daw et al. 2015)
Identify interventions that work for women and ecosystem services

• Participation in decision-making not enough

• To give women true agency in decision-making, they need to have sufficient capacity to make decisions and influence the decisions of others

• Few interventions on ecosystem services take rights-based approaches to transform the structures by which women are inhibited from benefiting from ecosystems
Ecosystem services as a path to women’s empowerment?

“For the women, their top most priority was for them to get income and educate the girls since within Wasini there was a tradition that girls were not to go to school in the past”

“For me, if there would not have been many of these developments, I would not have been able to have attended secondary level of education. The group assisted me in achieving, and many other more, as we were many who were assisted. for me if there was not the women group, I would have not been able to reach the level.”
Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while leaving no-one behind?

Who’s at risk of being left behind?

- Women from disadvantaged ethnic groups
- The estimated 375 million workers who earn less than $1.25 per day
- Children – they make up around a third of the world’s extreme poor
- LGBT – they make up 40% of homeless youth in the US

We can’t achieve the SDGs unless governments target support to marginalised groups. Find out more at odi.org/briefing-bottom-billion
Building capacity for sustainable interactions with marine ecosystems for the benefit of the health, well-being, food security and livelihoods of coastal communities in Southeast Asia
Case study areas

- Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve, Vietnam
- Palawan MAB, Philippines
- Tun Mustapha Park, Sabah, Malaysia
- Taka Bonerate – Selayar MAB, Indonesia
Projects

- Evidence synthesis
- Critical analysis of marine planning model applications
- Synthesis of knowledge on current impacts on ecosystems and services
- Marine renewable energy
- Small-scale coastal tuna fisheries management
- Wellbeing benefits and risks of coastal living
- Earth observation approaches
- Probabilistic Graphical Models (PGMs)
- Principles and approaches to decision-making
- Future scenarios of changes in resources
- Ecosystem level policy and management options
- Systematic scenario planning

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Conclusions

• Men and women value, utilise and benefit from ecosystem services differently

• Therefore, the impacts of changes to ecosystems will be felt differently by men and women

• Policy and projects need to consider gender and other forms of social difference to ensure the benefits of ecosystems reach everyone

• In project 9 of Blue Communities we will be consider gender trade-offs and other types of trade-off in coastal marine governance – please get involved!
Thank you!!
In conclusion, to develop and implement sustainable and equitable policy and interventions, consider:

1. How and why do different groups of people benefit differently from the full range of (wetland) ecosystem services?

2. Therefore, how will decisions differently affect different people? Who are the winners and losers?

3. How can you better account for trade-offs in your decision-making processes?
Blue Communities Project 9: Trade-offs and decision-making in marine planning

Design participatory tools to account for trade-offs in decision making in marine parks and reserves

- Analyse ecosystem service and well-being trade-offs
- Gender and other sources of social difference
- Stakeholder workshops on trade-offs, how to navigate through these and how to identify **acceptable** trade-offs.
3. Why does it matter?

Because men and women perceive, value and benefit from ecosystem services differently, interventions that alter ecosystem services result in gender trade-offs.

Example: Well-meaning intervention aimed at reducing fishing effort

- Increase number of big fish
- Decrease no. of small fish

Large-scale fish traders (men) 
Small-scale fish traders (women)

(Daw et al. 2015)