

Lake Chapala's Fish Value Chain Dependence on Female Labor

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Background



Lake Chapala

- Lake Chapala is shallow tropical lake, the **largest** in Mexico and the 3rd largest in Latin America.
- Its main fisheries are tilapia and carpe. Tilapia was introduced in the lake in the 1979 and carpe at the end of the 19th century.
- The lake sustain an important fishing activity.

Petatán

- Petatán is a fishing village bordering Lake Chapala.
- Most fish caught in the lake and in other water bodies in the region is processed here.
- Petatán houses the second largest fish processing industry in the region, and the fish filleted here goes to the second largest fish market in the country.
- There is not arable land because the community is located between the lake and the mountain.

Research objective

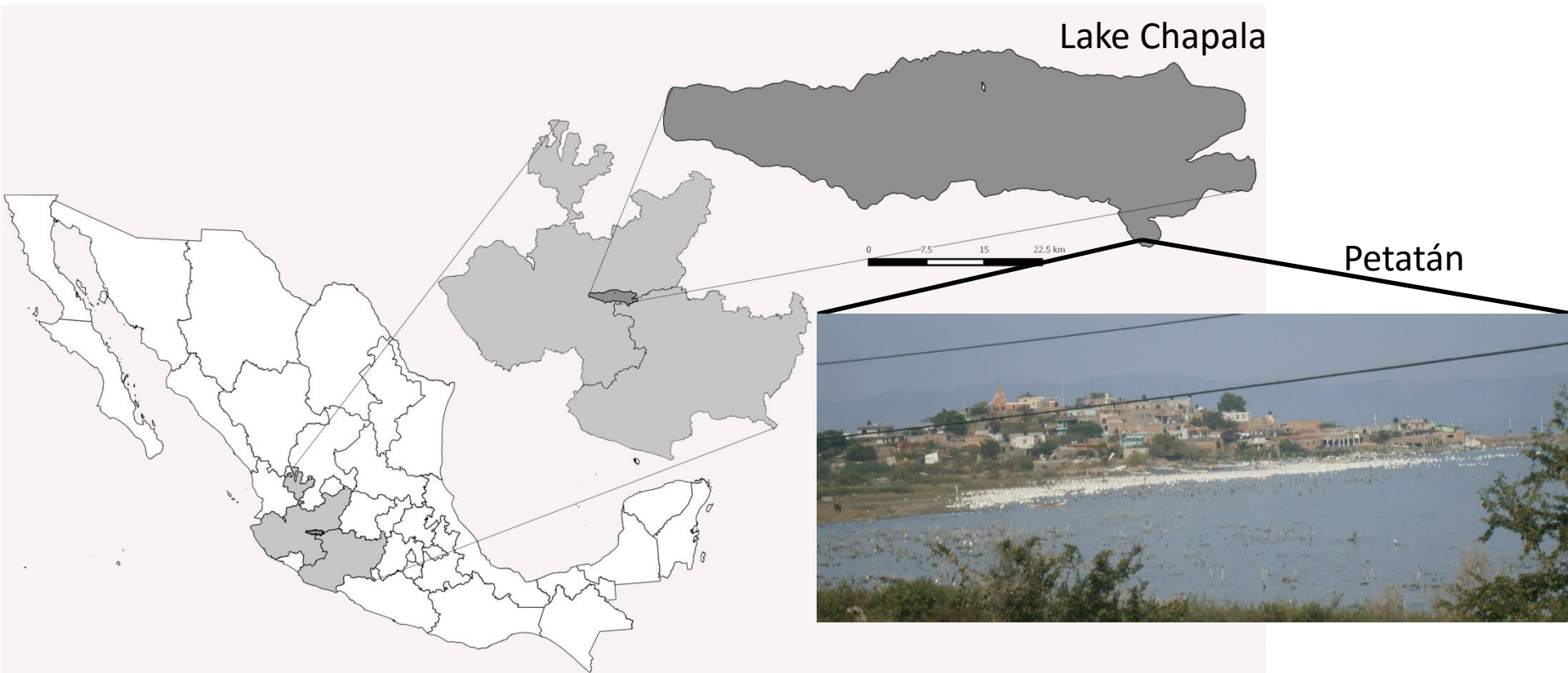
- To explore the importance of women's processing activities for Lake Chapala's fish value chain and the household survival.



Theoretical and methodological approach

- A gender perspective is considered because it strengthens the importance of the whole value chain. A VC has been defined as the required activities and services to move a product from producers to consumers, adding value to the product in each link (Hellin and Meijer 2006).
- The research design was mainly qualitative and explorative, however some quantitative data was obtained to show the socioeconomic impact of the activity.
- An interview tool, based on semi-structured interviews, was developed to find out the general situation of women's work. About 35 women were interviewed in their working places, and 3 key informants from the community.
- Fieldwork was carried out during 2015.

Location



Lake Chapala

Petatán

RESULTS

Fish value chain in Lake Chapala

Subsistence value chain



Middlemen

Value addition process and women's participation

Commercial value chain



Fish from other water bodies

Processing=Slicing

Payment by piece-rate. Each Kg= 0.2 USD for fileting.



Processing= packing

Payment by piece-rate. Each Kg= 0.1 USD for packing.



Main working conditions

- Working hours are between 5 and 13 hrs.
- No formal training
- No social security
- Child labor (9 and 11 y)
- Informality
- No women cooperatives
- They are force to work in the places where their husbands sell their fish.
- Poor hygiene conditions.



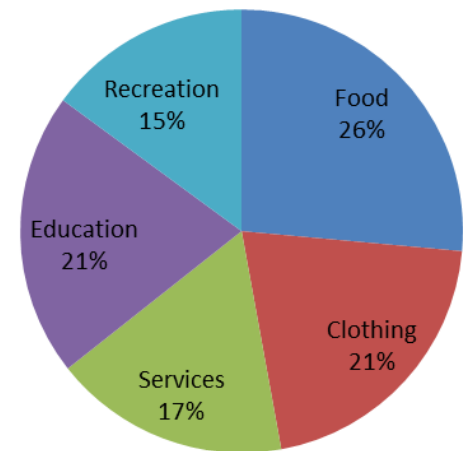
Why do they do this job?

- “If you want to carry money in your packet you have to learn how to fillet fish” (Amparo Castellanos)
- “If we work we do not mind if our husband wants to leave us because we have our own money” (Diana Medina)
- “ This is what we always have done and we do not know how to do other things” (Faby Rodríguez).
- “We are known as the bravest women around the region because we earn money”
- “We can pay for our children to go to school”



Earnings and income distribution

- Earnings are between 12 and 23 USD per day.
- Minimum wage in Mexico is 4 USD per day.
- Women's household contribution range between 25% and 100%. Depending on their husband catch.



Women's work contributions

- Women's income is in more regular bases than men. There is always fish to fillet but not always fish to fish.
- Women feel that it is a **reliable job** because there is always fish to fillet.
- They have a saying in household decision making.
- Positive impact on local economy
- Fisheries value chain = value addition specially because local fish is considered as poor quality fish.
- In general every household have enough to eat and to cover other basic needs such as basic education and clothing.
- About 70% of the interviewed women affirmed that they can go to holidays once a year to the seaside.



Discussion

- Women's participation in post harvest activities allows to add value to the harvested products and makes possible a faster commercialization and investment recovery.
- Women's work is an adapting and coping strategy to face environmental and market changes.
- Studying women's work from an efficient production perspective might better describe the importance of this work.

Final remarks

- Research in Mexico about women's participation in fisheries is limited and even more in inland fisheries.
- Geographic isolation limits the people from Petatán participating in other economic activities, but at the same time not even young people wants to leave the community to go to work in other places. They are also discourage to follow further education because people say "why to study more if you are going to end up filleting fish".
- Petatan's economy is highly dependent on the fishing activity.
- Fishers cooperatives are only men's territory and only fishermen receive governmental funding.
- Intermediaries have total control over the fisheries value chain in Patatán, and the local economy.
- Women's role is crucial for the FVC and places them at a central role in the household and local economy.
- Without women's work household income will be substantially affected because fishers won't be able to sell their catch and women wouldn't receive money to support their homes.
- Training women will benefit the whole FVC and a women cooperative might improve their working conditions.

Further work

- Next step will be to extend this research to the most important filleting village from Lake Chapala. To find out:
 - Women participation in fish processing and household contribution
 - Benefits
 - Illnesses and accidents
 - The importance on women's work on food security and household nutrition

Acknowledgments

GAF6 Travel Award
Meryl Williams and Nikita Gopal
UNAM-PAPIIT IA300215
The women of Petatán



Thank you for your attention

