



# The role of women in the blue swimming crab (*Portunus pelagicus*) fisheries in the Philippines

Ruby P. Napata, Ariel S. Sefil, Segrid V. Manderico, Genna D. Serofia, Ernestina M. Peralta, Grace N. Palmos, Encarnacion Emilia S. Yap  
College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, University of the Philippines Visayas

## Abstract

The blue swimming crab (*Portunus pelagicus*) is one of the most important aquatic invertebrates in the Philippines that contributes significantly to fish food supply. Its fisheries belongs to the top export fisheries commodities of the country, with products traded as fresh frozen and pasteurized crab meat mainly in the United States and some Asian markets. Blue swimming crab fishing is also one of the main sources of income for small-scale fishers in the country especially in the Visayas region. Clearly, the blue swimmer crab fisheries is commercially and economically important, contributing dramatically to food security, employment, and economic development of the different stakeholders of the industry.

This study was conducted to characterize the role of women as one of the key players in the blue swimming crab fisheries. Results revealed that women are involved in the series of activities along the blue swimming crab supply chain, from fishing preparation and operation to marketing and processing. They are also involved in the top level management of crab processing plants and in the management of crab fisheries resources through community-based initiatives. Indeed, women play a vital role in the blue swimming crab fisheries industry in the country.

## Research Strategies

### Research Objectives

- Determine the role of women in the blue swimming crab industry

### Research Methods

- Surveys with different stakeholders (fishers, traders, and processors) using an interview schedule - (1,335 participants)
- Key informant interview (KII) with Local Government Units (LGUs), plant managers and fishers' organization officers (30 participants)



Figure 1. Study sites

## Author Information

Ruby P. Napata  
Institute of Fisheries Policy and Development Studies,  
College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, UP Visayas 5023  
Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines  
E-mail address: rubynapata@gmail.com

## Results and Discussion



Figure 2. Participation of women is valuable before (preparation and construction of gears) and after fishing operations (e.g. gathering of crabs from different fishing gears and repair and maintenance of gears).



Figure 3. Marketing aspect of blue swimming crab is dominated by women in the identified study sites. Women are involved in running the buy and sell business of the family (logistics and financial management)



Figure 4. Active involvement of women is observed in the processing of blue swimming crab. Most of them are involved in picking, sorting, cleaning/sanitation, supervising, and ensuring product quality.



Figure 5. Women are good sources of significant information for research and development studies of blue swimming crab since they are involved in all areas of the supply chain.

- Although women play a vital role in the various sectors of the supply chain, no attention has been given to them by the government.
- According to Harper *et al.* (2013), women contribute substantially to fisheries economies worldwide and their role is often under-estimated and under-valued. Also, their research emphasized that recognizing and quantifying the role of women in fisheries has profound implications for management, poverty alleviation and development policy.

## Conclusion

Women are actively engaged in a wide range of activities along the blue swimming crab supply chain, from fishing preparation and operation to marketing and processing. They are also involved in the top level management of crab processing plants and in the management of crab fisheries resources in some of the study sites. Their role, however, is mostly prominent in marketing and processing, as well as source of information on blue swimmer crab. Because of the vital role that women play in the blue swimmer crab industry, the results of this study can serve as baseline information for management and policy intervention in the future.

## Main References

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