

# Gender-equitable Pathways to Achieve Fish Marketing in Cameroon : A Case Study of Mbalmayo Markets

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## ABSTRACT

Fish like most seafood is a very rich source of protein and plays an important role in food security as a source of food for millions of people Worldwide. In many developing countries like Cameroon, fish is mainly for direct human consumption. This paper shows case lessons learnt from the field and generates discussion to further highlight existing challenges and opportunities to reach scale and impact of fish marketing in Mbalmayo, Cameroon. As key findings, the study determined the typology of Fish market which varied from Smoked, dried, fresh live and dead fish, the sources of fish Sold in Mbalmayo markets which come from the river Nyong, the market actors (both men and women), the cost and price of fish sold in the markets and finally the fish marketing chain and distribution channel.

**Keywords:** Channel; Fishing; Food; Marketing; River

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## 1. Introduction and Background

Fish like most seafood is a very rich source of protein and plays an important role in food security as a source of food for millions of people Worldwide. In many developing countries like Cameroon, fish is mainly for direct human consumption. Generally, fish is consumed in all corners and parts of Cameroon as an important source of animal proteins in the diet of both rural and urban households indicating a good future for the fishing sector. But production is usually on small scale. According to DSCN 1997, estimated fish production in Cameroon stood to about 100,000 tons/yr. As a result of this low production, Cameroon highly relies on imported fish to meet the demand of its existing markets. What this entails is that excess production from other parts of the world is traded in Cameroon. However, increased fish production has received far higher priority from development agencies than the handling, processing and marketing of the existing catch (UNIFEM, 1993 ; Arrington *et al*, 1994).Therefore, market studies for aquaculture and fish products in Cameroon are of importance because marketing is a vital function of any business as it may be disastrous to produce any commodity which could not be sold. Mbalmayo a humid forest zone situated at about 45 Km of Yaounde, the capital city of Cameroon was highlighted as focus for this study. This study was based on the artisanal sector. Insights from a similar area in Ghana recognise that fishing and the associated processing and sales had developed as socially organised to enable livelihood for many, rather than entrepreneurial benefits for a few (Anderson *et al*, 2016) as it is the case of Mbalmayo, Cameroon.

### Objectives

The study focuses on gender-equitable participation in marketing highlight fish marketing situation in Mbalmayo , Cameroon, sources and prices of fish sold, the marketing channels and stakeholders working to promote fishing activities in this locality.

### Literature review

The following photo1 maps out a rural space of river Nyong, where fishing is carried out along the due river. It is also ‘a continuous densification of the rural space ‘as defined by Petterson (Gender in Rural Entrepreneurship, 2018)

‘a socially produced set of manifolds’ (Halfacree, : 44), where the minimum number of inhabitants is less than 5000 compared to the urban localities. The main activities here are agriculture, sand mining and fishing which is our targeted study. In the idyllic rural household women play triple role as the mother, farmer and wife.

Building Fishing organizations offer great opportunity to maximize returns in value chains, and best exploit the potential of river Nyong’s resources. This all relies heavily on efficient fisher profiling activities which will allow the fisher organizations to connect better with their members and deal with third party service providers.



### Contribution

This study aims at (Gender in Agribusiness Investments for Africa (GAIA) ) addressing the needs and priorities of a diversity of both men and women across the entire fishing value chain; focusing on building mentoring, leadership, and gender responsiveness skills.

## 2. Methodology

In the study, data were collected from sellers and producers. Interviews, discussions, observation and questionnaire were administered to both fresh and smoked/dried fish dealers in the markets that constitute Mbalmayo city. But more emphasis was laid on fresh fish, which concentrated around Mvog-mbi and Japan markets. A representative sample was drawn from the fish marketing population. About 80 – 85% (50 in number) of fresh fish retailers in the market were interviewed from 19 th february to 24th February 2018. Data were also obtained from research documents and journals. The data collected was analysed using cross tabulation, regression and tables. These was done based on the objectives. The results obtained from the study were as followed:

### Findings and discussion

#### Typology of Fish Market

There are three important markets that make up Mbalmayo city where fish are sold. These markets are either located on the roadsides or on special places designed by the council. These markets are: " Japan Market", Newton Market and Oyack market. Two important aspects of these markets were looked into. These aspects are the geographical location and specialization of these different markets that characterized consumption of fish in the town of Malmayo (**Table 1**). These markets are located according to the density and importance of quarters or council areas in the town of Mbalmayo. As concerns the commercialization of fresh water fish, the markets are situated around the agglomeration of strong propensity of consumption of animal (fish) protein. The markets of « Japan » along the river Nyong and Oyack

are the two principal areas where fresh fish are sold. Fresh fish are of two categories: fresh life fish, which constitute mostly of life Catfish (Siluriforms) and fresh dead fish, which are “kanga” (*Heterotis niloticus*), tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) and “capitain” (*Lates niloticus*). The fresh life fish are put in large steel pots for sale. They can last for about a week or more without feeding, with periodical change of stream water. While the fresh dead fish are placed in piles according to their various sizes.

Name	Category	Administrative location	Type of fish sold	Distance from river Nyong
« Japan Market »	Periphery market	Along the River Nyong	Smoked/dried, fresh life and dead fish	Along the river
Oyack market	Periphery market	Oyack	Smoked/dried fish	1 km
Newton Market	Periphery market	Newton	Smoked/dried fish	3km
Mvog-Mbi	Periphery market and central market	Yaoundé 5	Smoked/dried, fresh life and dead fish	45 Km

**Table 1.** Geographical Location and Specialization of Market

*Source:* Survey Data

### Sources of Fish Sold in Mbalmayo markets

The commercialization of the different types of fish sold in Mbalmayo comes from different sources. Fresh life fish comes from the river Nyong in Mbalmayo and its environs Akonolinga and Ayos. While the fresh dead fish comes from Tibati from the north of the country and Akonolinga (Nyong River). The smoked/dried fish comes from two principal sources: the river Nyong and the central ponds of Mbalmayo, Cameroon. The variability of the species commercialized is equally of prime importance and significant. The species with their local names; “kanga” (*Heterotis niloticus*), tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*), carpe and catfish, constitute the stock of fish coming from the Nyong River.

### The Market Actors

Generally there are many actors involved in the fishing activities in Cameroon. This is simply because in Cameroon fish markets are considered a free market. The market operates under laissez-faire policies in the sense that the government has no control in the marketing setup. The producer and wholesalers determine the cost of their fish and how it is sold to the consumers. Regardless of the laissez-faire policies of the fish marketing sector, the government of Cameroon through the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Industry, research institutions and other Non Governmental Organisations notably World Fish Program are putting efforts to encourage production, protection and consumption both at the level of producers, consumers and marketing actors. The producers and wholesalers are mostly men and the retailers are mostly women as shown in the following photos 1&2.



**Photo 1.** Fishing: Always made by men



**Photo 2.** Marketing: Great numbers of detailers are women and Part of them are fish-driers

From the above photos, the women play double role detailers for fresh fishes and driers for unsold fishes .

#### **Cost and Price of Fish Sold in the Markets**

Cost is simply the amount paid for the quantity of fish purchased by the retailers including the cost of transportation and other expenses incurred during the process of marketing. From the study analysis, it is observed that a kilogram of fresh life fish cost 1510 F CFA (2, 30 Euro). Price is the amount that the retailer charges for his/her fish. It is therefore the ultimate expression of relationship between the buyer and seller. Price is very crucial in any marketing system. It determines the success or failure of all marketing agents. Price is base on the cost of fish bought by the retailer. Sizes of fish play a very important role in costing and pricing in fish marketing. The average price per kilogram (Catfish) in the markets as shown in the table above is 1855 F CFA (2, 83 Euro\* ) (**Table 2**).

Catfish / size	Market Price (F CFA) per kg in Mvog-mbi	Price (F CFA) per kg in « Japan Market »	Market Average Price (F CFA) in the two Markets
• Large	• 2420	• 2360	• 2390
• Average	• 1930	• 1920	• 1925
• Small	• 1235	• 1265	• 1250
• Average	• 1860	• 1850	• 1855

**Table 2.** Estimated Prices for Fresh Life Catfish in Mvog-mbi and Lapan Markets

*Source:* Survey data 1 euro\* ~655 F CFA

### Fish Marketing Chain and Distribution Channel

Generally, the flow of goods between the raw material stage and ultimate consumption is called distribution and the route followed is usually called a distribution channel (Leighton, 1966). The concept of distribution channels in fish marketing differs at each stage along the way. Hence, the concept of what comprises distribution channels depends on the position and nature of the viewer. Further more, within any set of distribution channels, a seller must decide whether to sell to one or more customers. Distribution seldom stops with the sale to the immediate customer; it must be considered as an ongoing flow, with the immediate customer in many cases being only a temporary step along the way. The chain of distribution of fresh fish is relatively short as compared to other products due to the nature of the product and the conservation methods (CEPID, 1997).

The following **Table 3** shows that men are more involved in fish catching while women are more involved in selling. In marketing chain ,the rate of involvement of men decreases from production to distribution while the rate of women increases.

Gender Percentage	Fisher men/women	Wholesaler	Semi – Wholesaler	Retailer		Final consumer preference
				Retailer Fresh life fish	Retailer Dried or smoked fish	
Men	100 %	70%	60%	50%	20%	40%
Women	0%	30%	40%	50%	80%	60%
Difference	100%	40%	20%	0%	60%	20%

**Table 3.** Gender Matrix showing Fish Marketing Chain and Distribution Channel percentage

*Source:* Author

### 3. Conclusion and Recommendation

The importance of fish cannot be over emphasised because of its role as a rich protein source and income generation for rural households. Artisanal fishes which today are under the threat of extinction due to many reasons; abandonment of the sector by the state to the local fishing communities leading to over exploitation and unsustainable management of indigenous species. This therefore implies that, research institutions and development organisations-most especially those which have carried or are today carrying out research on fishes, have to make results available to the local and regional communities as well as, sensitize them on the advantages of consuming, producing and preserving indigenous fish species.

#### The paper recommends three concrete measures:

- Government action to enforce fishing regulations and impose penalties that will genuinely deter large-scale fleets from encroaching on the area designated for small-scale fishers
- Government support to boost the small-scale fishing market, for example by developing local market

infrastructures such as landing sites and market places where small-scale fishers can sell their catch for a good price. They could include providing suitable refrigeration facilities for chilling and storing catches.

- Government action to close the river for fishing for at least three years to allow stocks to replenish. This would be difficult for many artisanal fishers, but the government could provide compensation during that period – for example using money raised by increasing license fees for large-scale fishing.

## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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