

# The gender division of labor in fish processing in Lake Chapala. A source of bargaining power

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- **Women participation in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture** such as input suppliers, harvesting, processing and trading have been **traditionally dominated by women** around the world.
- Fish transformation is source of economic income for female workers and in the fishing industry is where **female employment** is at its greatest, increasing the number of **women** in the **labor market**.
- Working in **post-harvest** activities, in addition of being a source of income and bargaining power for women, can also be an evidence of the **gender division of labor** in the fishing industry.
- **Informality** in small-scale fisheries make difficult to recognize and quantify women's participation in the sector.

## Background

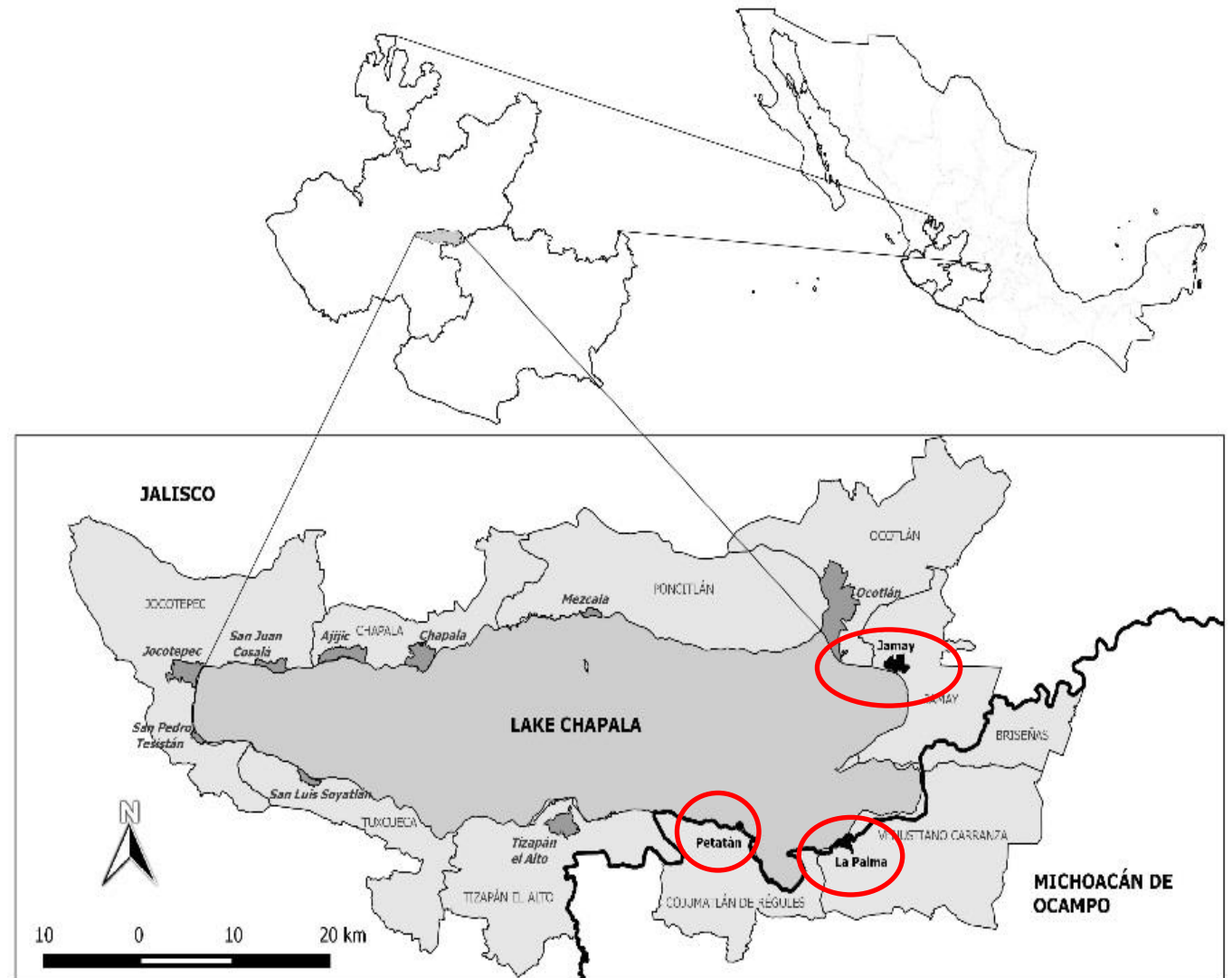


# Research objective

The aim of this study is to identify the factors influencing the **division of labor** and the determinants of **bargaining power** for women in fish processing activities in Lake Chapala.



# Study Site



**Petatán:** Inhabitants 497 (255 Men; 242 Women)

**La Palma:** 3787 (1922 Men; 1865 Women)

**Jamay:** 22881 (11337 Men; 11544 Women)

# Methodological approach

- To gain a deeper understanding of people's lives, a mixed methodology was used which considers ethnographic methods before and after applying a survey to be able to contextualize the findings.
- Field work included interviews with plant owners, the middlemen in charge of the bulking of fish-fillets, with the filleting workers, and one focus group was carried out in Jamay with the most experienced filleting workers.

	Petatán	Jamay	La Palma
Number of filleting plants	5	14	2
Calculated population of filleting workers	~47 women	~98 women ~20 men	~20 men ~5 women (Only packing)
No questionnaires	35 women	61 women 6 men	12 men
Interviews with middlemen	3	5	2

# A perspective of the gender division of labor and women's bargaining power


Women entrance into the **labor market** in recent decades has been a dynamic source of change

- the gender division of labor and
- women's bargaining power

Working may be a strategy to cope with **poverty**, or a result of **higher education** levels and the availability of **better job opportunities** in more modern economies

Gendered structures or gendered institutions: doing gender

Who does what

A photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, a small, light-colored boat with a blue roof is partially submerged in the water. Several white pelicans are perched on the boat. In the middle ground, two more pelicans are standing on rocks in the water. The background shows a calm blue sea meeting a clear blue sky at the horizon. A large, light blue, semi-transparent banner with a wavy top edge is positioned in the lower half of the image, containing the word "Results" in black text.

# Results

# *The filleting activity*

- **Fish processing** has always been an activity carried out by people living in communities riparian to lake Chapala.
- The introduction of carpe and tilapia, changed the market structure and the processing activities.
- These new products **found a place in the market** was through fillets, this would facilitate the cooking of different dishes.
- The introduction of carp and tilapia was accompanied by a **governmental program** to teach young men at secondary school, in few riparian communities, how to process food, particularly how to fillet fish.
- The entrance of women into the **labor market** was also a coping strategy to the economic crisis from the 80s.
- Currently, Jamay houses the first fish processing industry in the region followed by Petatán and the activity is dominated by women.

**La Palma**



**Petatán**

**Jamay**



# *The gender division of labor in fish processing*

## Who is filleting?

Petatán	Jamay	La Palma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Men go fishing, are either lazy or embarrassed to work among a female majority.</li> <li>➤ Filleting fish is highly valued.</li> <li>➤ 99% of women enjoy their work (income and socialization)</li> <li>➤ Fish-processing is their only source of income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Male (20%) and female (80%) fish-processors.</li> <li>➤ Fish-processing is their only source of income.</li> <li>➤ Single mothers or only choice.</li> <li>➤ 51% would prefer to have a different job.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fish-processing seems to be in decline.</li> <li>➤ Filleting is like any other jobs that young men do.</li> <li>➤ Filleting is a male-dominated activity.</li> <li>➤ Additional source of income.</li> </ul>

## Main characteristics of filleting workers

	Petatán	Jamay	La Palma
Average age	34.8	33.5 W 36.6 M	27.7
Average age to start working	15.4	22 W 24.2 M	19.3
Average working years	19.9	13.6 W 12.5 M	6
Education level	6.3	7 W 8.5 M	6.8

# *The gender division of labor in fish processing*



	Petatán	Jamay	La Palma
Average working hours per day	9.6	7.8 W 8.5 M	7.2
Average kgs of fish fillets per day	82.3	51.4 W 76.7 M	50.8
Price paid per kg	5 to 7 pesos according to size	5 to 7 pesos according to size	4 pesos
Average daily earnings	494 (USD=26)	308 (USD=16) (Women) 460 (USD=24) (Men)	203 (USD=11)

# Household income contribution and sources of bargaining power

## Souces of bargaining power

Petatán	Jamay	La Palma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Equal job opportunities</li> <li>➤ Women decide their working hrs</li> <li>➤ 80% manage HH finances</li> <li>➤ 37% spend their money in food and HH bills</li> <li>➤ 56% their husbands help in domestic chores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No permanent jobs, &gt;Men</li> <li>➤ 64% manage HH finances</li> <li>➤ 57 of married women spend 50% of their money in food and the rest in HH bills</li> <li>➤ 50% of men, their wifes manage HH finances.</li> <li>➤ 67% their husbands help in domestic chores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ No permanent jobs, &gt;Men</li> <li>➤ 28% are the only HH providers</li> <li>➤ No help in domestic chores</li> <li>➤ Most married manage their finances</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Decision making, Income, flexible in working hours and allows them to take care of the children</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> </ul>

## Household income contribution

Petatán	Jamay	La Palma
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Married 72%</li> <li>➤ Complementary to HH income</li> <li>➤ Filleting is crucial-fish has to be filleted</li> <li>➤ A woman from a fishers family has to fillet his catch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Married 48%, single mothers 35%</li> <li>➤ Complement to household income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 50% are single men</li> <li>➤ Most of them (67%) have two jobs</li> </ul>
<p><b>H C</b></p> <p>75%=36%</p> <p>50%=44%</p> <p>25%=20%</p>	<p><b>HC</b></p> <p>75%= 48%</p> <p>50%= 35%</p> <p>25%=17%</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>50%=22%</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Married women's contribution to household income depends on their husband's daily earnings</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> </ul>

# *Disadvantages of the informality of filleting fish*

- In Petatán, all filleting plants are registered, in Jamay about 75%, and in La Palma none of them.
- No social security or employment benefits. (The unregistered workers do not exist for benefits marked by law )
- Payment by piece-rate. This means no-working, no-earning.
- No economic support in case of accidents.
- Risk of illnesses.



# Discussion and conclusion

- **Filleting** is typically a job done by people with lower education levels, mostly women who increase the lines of the informal sector.
- Despite the disadvantages, filleting fish is a **source of income** for all these workers and their families, additionally the work has flexible working hours and provides a constant and reliable source of income. This provides women with an opportunity, especially single mothers, to support their families and allows them time to care for their children.
- **Fish processing is an income-based source of bargaining power** because women can decide how to manage their household economy and in the case of married women have a more collaborative relationship, in terms of household decision making.
- The women of Petatan seem to be **more empowered** than those of Jamay, because labor market opportunities are equal to those of men, and their job is **more reliable** than fishing. In Jamay, the availability of jobs is higher but most of them remain in the informal sector. Therefore, **the self-esteem and pride**, given by having a paid job, for the women of Petatán give more value to the job and higher levels of individual bargaining power.
- Therefore, the factors influencing **the local division of labor in fish processing are locally created** by each communities' social practices (the different forms of doing gender), which at the same time are influenced by fishing and its derived activities. The geographic location of each community also determines the **number of economic activities available**, and the **value** given to the processing jobs.

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