

# Gender Roles and Challenges in Aquaculture in Sierra Leone: A Case Study of Tonkolili District

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Fisheries Training Programme

Henry Gainda Allieu  
Fisheries Officer, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Sierra Leone  
Supervisors: Jon Geir Pétursson, Theódór Kristjánsson

## Abstract

- This study explores women's participation in small-scale aquaculture in Tonkolili District, addressing gender inequalities, social inclusion, and resource management barriers.
- Using the WorldFish framework and mixed-methods research approach, it examines women's roles, contributions, challenges, and perceptions within the aquaculture value chain.
- Findings reveal that while women are central to aquaculture activities, they face limited access to resources, technology, and decision-making opportunities due to structural and cultural barriers.
- The study recommends gender-sensitive training, improved access to finance, and policy reforms to enhance women's empowerment, and sustainable aquaculture development.

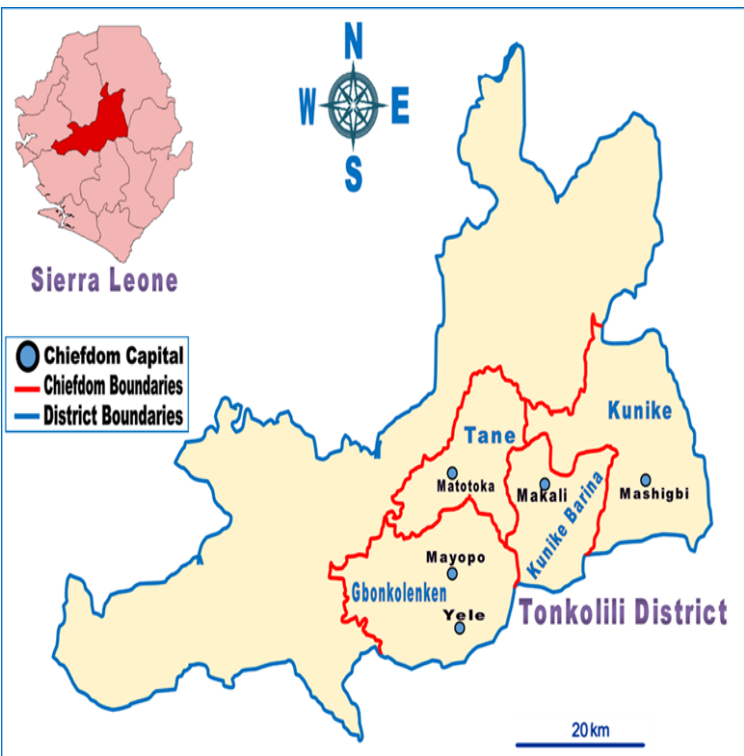
## Introduction

- Investigates the roles, challenges, and opportunities faced by rural women in small-scale aquaculture in Tonkolili District, Sierra Leone.
- Focuses on raising awareness of women's contributions and addressing gender inequalities and barriers to resource access.
- Assesses women's involvement, socio-economic and cultural obstacles, and their perceptions within the aquaculture value chain.
- Aims to inform strategies that promote women's inclusion, empowerment, and equitable resource management.

## Methodology

- The study was conducted in four chiefdoms of Tonkolili District, selected for their active small-scale aquaculture and significant female participation.
- A mixed-methods approach was used, combining surveys, key informant interviews, and personal observations to explore women's roles, challenges, and opportunities in aquaculture.
- Stratified random sampling ensured representation across aquaculture roles, while purposive sampling targeted key stakeholders for in-depth insights.
- Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, guided by the *WorldFish Gendered Aquaculture Value Chain Analytical Framework*, focusing on labor division, resource access, decision-making, and structural influences.

Map of Tonkolili district in Sierra Leone showing study areas



## Results

- Aquaculture primarily attracts young women with lower education levels, while men are more often full-time participants, reflecting gendered patterns of engagement.
- Men engage more in formal sustainability initiatives, but both genders face barriers such as lack of information, funding, and infrastructure, issues especially affecting women.
- Women prefer modern methods and group-based solutions, whereas men tend to rely on expert advice. For both, income generation is the main motivation.
- Socioeconomic barriers heavily impact women, including financial constraints, heavy household responsibilities, and policy gaps that hinder their full participation and advancement.

Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Question		Female	Male	Total	Significant
Age	Count	69	20	89	P value
	below 18 years	13%	0%	10%	0,049
	18 - 25 years	42%	20%	37%	0,001
	26 - 35 years	29%	35%	30%	0,760
	36 - 45 years	16%	35%	20%	0,000
	above 45 years	0%	5%	1%	
Educational level	Count	69	20	89	P value
	No formal education	29%	20%	27%	0,113
	Primary school	42%	15%	27%	0,000
	Secondary school	25%	55%	27%	0,000
Marital status	Count	69	20	89	P value
	married	86%	90%	87%	0,7186
	single	6%	10%	7%	0,9132
	widowed	9%	0%	7%	0,5450
Aquaculture experience	Count	69	20	89	P value
	Less than 1	10%	10%	10%	0,9646
	1 - 3 years	61%	45%	57%	0,0067
	4 - 6 years	25%	45%	29%	0,0001
Aquaculture engagement	Count	69	20	89	P value
	Full time	51%	75%	56%	0,0001
	Part time	49%	25%	44%	0,0001

## Conclusion

- Women in Tonkolili District play vital roles in small-scale aquaculture but face structural, economic, and cultural barriers that limit their full participation.
- Their involvement contributes to household income, food security, and social status, despite challenges such as limited access to funding, training, and markets.
- Sustaining women's participation requires targeted interventions to overcome both practical barriers and deep-rooted gender stereotypes.
- Inclusive aquaculture policies are essential to unlocking women's potential and advancing gender equality, food security, and rural development.

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- Author email: allieuh@yahoo.com



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