

GENDER, EMPLOYMENT, AND RESOURCE ACCESS IN MWANZA, TANZANIA

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My research focuses on the human-environment relationships of Lake Victoria, with a focus on the fishing industry. Lake Victoria's fishing industry has been consistently undergoing change over the past several decades. The industry has reorganized around a single caught species, the Nile Perch. As fishing activity has increasingly (and sometimes exclusively) focused on this fish, the cities on the shores of Lake Victoria have experienced large in-migration, leading to a change in the structure of employment in these cities, including Mwanza, Tanzania.

Part of my doctoral project explores how this change is impacting the economy in Mwanza, exploring what aspects of the industry men and women work in, if there is overlap in the jobs that men and women can and do perform, and what role these patterns play on the amount of power

women have in the industry. I conducted interviews during multiple trips to Tanzania to begin addressing these questions. I spoke with both men and women who caught fish, who prepared them for sale as meat products, and who sold meat directly to consumers. These conversations showed that, almost universally, men and women do not perform the same jobs within this industry. These discussions also revealed that the post-catch work (processing of fish and preparation of sale-ready meat products) is being moved physically away from locations in the city center. As the preparation and sale of fish meat has moved to more suburban locations, these jobs have been mostly taken by female workers, while male workers are almost exclusively the only ones catching fish on boats. This division in jobs along gender lines has provided a new type of power

to women in the industry where they previously had little impact, as the male fishers must now rely on women to sell their fish. Notably, women are typically the ones setting the price for fish meat, a primary control over a key economic decision.

The impact of this finding is significant. Female empowerment is a goal of international donors such as the USA and the EU. Understanding how women in this industry have obtained power will be informative and useful for application in different industries and locations across the globe, and will inform my larger dissertation project on the relationships between environmental change, resource access, and economic functioning of this industry.

Ryan Good is a doctoral candidate in geography and former FLAS fellow (Swabili).