

THE
MED
FUND



Portraits of women involved in Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas



SEPTEMBER 2021



© The MedFund/2021

All right reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the Publisher.

Requests should be sent to contact@themedfund.org

Publisher: The MedFund

Director of publication: Romain Renoux

Coordination: Elodie Couraud and Laura Marrucchelli

Author : Carine Pionetti Ph.D.

Citation: Portraits of women involved in Mediterranean MPAs, The MedFund , 2021

Cover photo: ©Notre Grand Bleu

Edito

When we look at the MedFund objective of promoting sustainable funding to contribute to the long-term financing of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and cover their operational costs, it is understood that this will contribute to the protection of some of the most sensitive marine areas in the Mediterranean basin. Sustainable financing should have a direct impact on conserving and restoring key habitats, improving the ecological and socio-economic monitoring, enhancing surveillance, tackling illegal activities, or maintaining equipment and facilities. All this, with the final objective to strengthen the management of existing MPAs and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources and to create constructive partnerships and good governance.

But this list of broad objectives would not contribute to improve the Mediterranean region if the MedFund was not supported by strong social policies. Funds do not demonstrate real value when spent only on technical or scientific activities. To make a significant difference, it is important to consider not only “what” The MedFund supports, but also “how” this support is implemented. Funds will only bring about change if, in addition to classical activities, they contribute to change the triggers of the biodiversity loss - that are always based on human and social factors - and improve the social sustainability. In this sense, in the complex Mediterranean system, the traditional and the current roles of women around the sea are as crucial as underestimated. That’s why The MedFund pays special attention to recognize and strengthen the role that so many women are playing today on MPA management, and established a clear and ambitious Gender Policy.

This publication is just a little taste among the great examples of Mediterranean women from different ages, all of them well trained, engaged, and passionate for marine protection. Women from Albania, Morocco, Tunisia or Turkey leading or working in male-dominant environments, but women that are also able to bring innovative and integrative ways to approach and face the MPA management challenges.

I hope you will enjoy meeting each of them and learning about their daily activities around team-building, planning, monitoring, training, raising funds or establishing positive relationships with the fishing or the tourism sectors and, most importantly, inspiring and showing to the society that “we Mediterranean women”, we are more than ready to take our part of the responsibility at any level, to take care of the Mare Nostrum.

Purificació Canals, Ph.D.

Member of the Board of Directors of the MedFund
President of MedPAN



© Kladij Kucaj

Through women's eyes

Since 2019, The MedFund has been integrating a gender dimension into its core activities, financing and supporting Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) around the Mediterranean.

In 2021, The MedFund team decided to produce portraits of women involved in MPA management in four countries: Albania, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. The aim is to highlight the role of women in the protection of the marine environment but also in fisheries, from fishing at sea to the collection, processing and selling of fish, shellfish and seashells. The idea behind these portraits is also to better understand how gender influences the day-to-day activities of MPAs and shapes decision-making processes.

Several observations and questions served as a starting point for this work:

- Women are well represented in most MPAs, in various positions (coordination, scientific monitoring, surveillance...) but the profiles of these women are relatively unknown: what are their motivations, what is the nature of their commitment?
- Within MPAs, some positions require specific skills (e.g. underwater diving) and great mobility to go to sea or to carry out field missions lasting several days: do women encounter barriers in accessing these positions and do they face challenges linked to the socio-cultural contexts in which they live?
- Does the presence of women in organizations managing MPAs produce particular results? Can we identify different approaches between men and women in terms of skills deployed, management style or in the conduct of dialogue with stakeholders?

- Is an organization led by a woman more likely to promote gender sensitivity in its activities and in its interactions with local communities?
- Has the implementation of a Gender Strategy by MedFund catalyzed gender awareness in MedFund-supported MPAs? To what extent can the complementarity between men and women serve a more balanced and efficient management of MPAs in the Mediterranean?

These issues were addressed during a series of interviews with a dozen people - a majority of whom were women - all directly involved in the management of Marine Protected Areas.

The ten resulting portraits are above all testimonies that reveal the diversity of backgrounds and approaches. These portraits also provide insights on successful pathways for gender equality and point to remaining challenges.

This work is the fruit of a collaboration with Carine Pionetti, an independent researcher in Political Ecology, specialized in gender and environmental issues.

This publication hopes to meet a double objective: (i) to give more visibility to the experience and knowledge of women in the management and conservation of marine resources and biodiversity and (ii) to promote the participation and leadership of women in the management of MPAs, at local, national and regional levels.





© Wise communication

SAMIA, AGENCY OF PROTECTION AND COASTAL PLANNING, TUNISIA

DIRECTOR OF THE MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

Samia masters the legal aspects of biodiversity conservation , but she is also a scientist, a woman with a pragmatic mind and a lot of experience from the field.

At the Direction for Management of Coastal Ecosystems, Samia contributed to the elaboration of the Law for the creation of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) in 2009 and the decrees of application of this law (2014). Since 2017, she takes part in the designation of MCPAs alongside representatives of all ministries. In 2020, still within the framework of her responsibilities at APAL, she piloted the implementation of co-management agreements for several MCPAs with four Tunisian NGOs.

Samia is as comfortable with lagoon modeling tools as she is with the development of management plans (for monitoring biodiversity on a protected site) or with awareness-raising approaches.

Leading a team, gaining confidence and legitimacy in decision-making

She heads a team of 13 people, with only 3 women (herself included) and 6 marine rangers who work on the different sites. "We are short of staff at APAL," she says. Out of a total team of 140 people, she counts between 20 and 30 women. It has been challenging for her to transition from the position of team member to the one of director. She had to show that she would continue to work in a participatory way, she had to regain trust from her team through dialogue.

Samia held positions at different levels before playing a managerial role at APAL. She observes that, like her, the other women she knows who hold positions of responsibilities in public administration have all been "in the field a lot" before reaching their positions. "They know the details, which helps a lot when it comes to making decisions. This gives you assets and legitimacy when you are in a management position", she states. "In addition, according to Samia, women in these positions get less drawn into power issues, they focus on reflection and on making the right decisions. "

« Having a lot of field experience helps when you are in a management position. It gives you assets and legitimacy »

To her, it is not a coincidence that there are so many women in the association Notre Grand Bleu, which co-manages the Kuriat Islands MPA. "When an organization is headed by a woman, it makes a difference!" she says. And she adds: "For a woman, it does not pose a problem to have a woman manager!" This is not the case for all men: this distrustful attitude towards women in positions of power persists in Tunisia, even if it is less marked among young people.

The domestic and mental care burden: an invisible but very real barrier

The question of hiring a woman for one of the marine ranger positions regularly comes up. According to Samia, the major obstacle for a woman to hold this type of position is "not skills, but availability". This has to do with the responsibilities women have at the household level. "For most people in Tunisia, including for educated men, the home and children are women's business" she stresses. In other words, socially, it is less easy for a woman to be away from home for several days for professional reasons. However, Samia is determined on this issue: she thinks that it is possible to create the conditions for a woman to work as a marine ranger, or in a similar position, within APAL.

« We have such a heavy workload at APAL that there is no time to realize that there aren't enough women in the organisation »

In fact, a woman on her team will soon be trained to get a boat licence, in part because Samia had a say in it. "I would be interested in supporting women who are looking for this work-life balance," she says, pondering over the matter. "We would have to identify the care burden that apply to all women, and look for ways to reduce that load," she continues, regretting that this question is so infrequently raised within the institution. "We have such a heavy workload at APAL that there is no time to realize that there aren't enough women in the organisation", she adds.

Both time and availability are missing to comprehensively address the issue of gender and parity in an institution like APAL. Samia herself seems to have found this precarious balance in the life of a woman, thanks to her husband who takes over when she is away. However, she confides that "it is easier now that the children (9 and 11 years old) are more autonomous!"

Considering the gender realities of the field

Samia has participated in many meetings with fishermen, and for her, one thing is clear: the complementarity between men and women in the team that intervenes is essential, and helps in taking the exchanges and discussions with fishermen further.



She remembers a meeting with the fishermen in Kerkennah: "I started to talk with them, but they did not react. Then when my male colleague arrived, they started to express themselves, even to shout!". She ponders: "Out of respect, they'll listen to what you have to say [if you're a woman], but if there's a man and a woman present, it's more constructive." For her, when interacting with users, "the plan has to be well-thought out".

Women managers can foster very positive developments on several levels: different leadership styles; transparency in decisions; innovations in communication or governance.

On the other hand, the fact that a woman leads an organization is not a sufficient condition for the implementation of parity, nor for taking into account the specific constraints encountered by women due to the fact that society assigns domestic and care tasks primarily to women. The disproportionate impact of Care work (unpaid) on women's professional life is increasingly recognized, including in the Maghreb countries. A growing number of international organizations are now looking at solutions to remedy this problem.

Taking these constraints into account to create equal opportunities for women and men in the job market means opening up spaces to listen to women's needs and propose realistic solutions that are also viable for the company: more flexible working hours, greater flexibility in taking leave, adapted training opportunities, coaching for women who wish to develop their careers...



© Notre Grand Bleu

MANEL, KURIAT MCPA, TUNISIA

DIRECTOR OF NOTRE GRAND BLEU NGO

Well-anchored in her life, endowed with boundless dynamism, Manel lives and works in the Bay of Monastir. She is the coordinator of the Marine and Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) of the Kuriat Islands.

From nanomedicine to marine and coastal preservation

Her background is worth a detour. Manel studied biology, then earned a doctorate in nanomedicine. But she did not pursue this path. Her heart was elsewhere, closer to the sea. "I have always lived five minutes from the sea" she says.

During her studies, together with a small group of nature lovers like her, she started the association Notre Grand Bleu, meaning Our Big Blue, in 2012. Countless hours were spent developing and structuring this small NGO, on a voluntary basis. "We started with almost nothing," she recalls.

At the end of her Ph.D. thesis, she takes what was supposed to be a sabbatical year away from scientific research and became the Director of Notre Grand Bleu. Slowly, she gets aware of the positive impact the NGO's activities have on schoolchildren, citizens, young people... This realization becomes decisive: "With research, one can have an impact, but it is minimal. With the association, we have a direct impact". She decides to stay in the association, despite the social pressure to take a different path. "Having a Ph.D. and working for a NGO comes across as strange to many people!"

Finding her place as a woman

"We used to meet in a diving club. Once, I came for a meeting and I stopped in front of the door: there were only men there, I was the only woman". The environmental community was very male in Tunisia ten years ago. Today, it is not so longer the case: "It's going in the right direction" says Manel. Little by little, the association has welcomed more and more girls, and currently, among the volunteers, girls are in majority. It took time for Manel to find her place. "In the beginning, I was observing a lot. It took me 4 years to speak up in meetings!"

«We used to meet in a diving club. Once, I came for a meeting and I stopped in front of the door: there were only men there, I was the only woman»

Today, Manel is at the heart of the association. She leads a team of 10 people, including two women and two men involved in the management of the MPA. She manages a large number of projects, works with schools, universities, volunteers, local authorities... Being a woman and a team leader is not always easy. It requires knowing how to make decisions without being too authoritarian, taking into account the emotional dimension without being overwhelmed.

Finding this balance is essential and building trust amongst team members is a key ingredient. When asked what she likes most about her work, Manel comes up with her three "favorite subjects". Sea turtles come first: they fascinate her! She took part in the preparation of a guidebook on sea turtles with the MedPAN network. Second, Manel is set on climate change, which has a visible impact on coastal and marine species. Finally, she is keen on communication: "I love communicating with everyone, young and old alike". By welcoming young people, the association fosters change in behavior and environmental awareness. This may be gratifying, but Manel does not lose sight of a second, equally important, objective: to convey rigor in observation, a rigor that comes from her scientific training.

Manel is a good underwater diver and she can run the association's speedboat, but she can't seem to spare the time to get her upper-level diving license and boat permit. In her mind, it is essential for women to get skilled in these areas. A female marine ranger was recently hired to monitor the MPA alongside two male rangers. Recruiting a woman for this position took some determination. Manel explains: "We made the decision as a team to recruit a woman for this position. We had qualified men applying, but we chose a woman who was also very competent". This young woman, Arij, is the first marine ranger in Tunisia.

« If we want women to run the speedboats on their own, to know how to moor, to become marine rangers, we must make the extra effort from our side... »

A game-changer for gender equality

It is quite rare to find this level of commitment to gender equality in the MPAs of the Maghreb. Manel is aware of the fact that hiring women in such positions won't happen unless you set targets. "If we want women to run the speedboats on their own, to know how to moor, to become marine rangers, we must make the extra effort from our side".

In Tunisian culture, there is no level-playing field for women and men when it comes to leading a team, going to sea, being a full-time volunteer, following a passion ... It is therefore clear, for Manel, that her association has a role to play.

"Recently, we received the Minister of the Sea. She is a woman who knows her job well, who is competent, whom people listen to. During her visit to the Kuriat Islands, we had two marine rangers come forward: a man who did the marking of a sea turtle, and a woman who explained how to search for nests to protect them. If we don't do this, the young woman won't come forward by herself".

This also applies to the young volunteers that the association supervises: "Some parents don't want their daughters to stay overnight with us on a deserted island," says Manel. "We listen to them, we tell them that their fear is legitimate, but at the same time, we create trust, we explain that we provide a caring environment". As a result, teenage girls of 14 or 15 go on night patrols to monitor the nesting of sea turtles with the team of Notre Grand Bleu. This is a great success... A perhaps a calling for these young women to contribute to marine protection in their future life?

The dynamism of a competent woman, in the right place, can change the situation, by giving the impulse and the desire to other women to follow suit. Positive female role models are essential: they open up horizons by showing that a different life is possible, even when you grow up as a girl in a fishing community.

Striving towards equality between women and men in a Marine Protected Area happens through small operational steps and strategic choices: deciding to recruit a woman as marine ranger, training women to get more skilled at scuba diving, making sure that women have as many opportunities as men when it comes to going into the field, speaking in public, organising a night patrol...





ARIJ, KURIAT MCPA, TUNISIA

MARINE RANGER- NOTRE GRAND BLEU NGO

Arij lives in Monastir. She grew up in the city of Gafsa, which is inland, but she has always loved swimming and being in the marine environment. Today, at the age of 27, Arij is the only female marine ranger in Tunisia.

Arij clearly loves her job. The sea – and especially the Kuriat Islands, the large one and the smaller one – have become her element. "For the past few days, I haven't been able to go out due to Covid. I miss the Kuriat Islands!" she confides.

Arij's personal story is linked to that of the NGO Notre Grand Bleu (meaning literally 'Our Big Blue'). She started getting involved as a volunteer in 2016. She was only 22 then, and she was completing her applied degree in marine biotechnology and aquaculture. Then she went on to do a Master's degree on pollution and environmental management, co-supervised by Manel, the director of the Notre Grand Bleu and by the Faculty of Bizerte. Her research thesis focused on the loggerhead turtle and the impact of climate change and human activities on their habitat and nesting practices in the Kuriat Islands. At the end of her studies, she joined Notre Grand Bleu as a marine ranger.

Being part of a team lined with consideration and trust

Arij didn't have to struggle to get accepted in the team: everyone knows her and values her engagement. She has been involved in conducting awareness trainings for schoolchildren, in organizing events such as the Happy Day, an event that offers the opportunity to people with disabilities to discover the marine environment.

Arij and her two male marine ranger colleagues carry out their work together. They are responsible for running an awareness center, conducting surveillance activities, monitoring turtles and migratory birds, maintaining underwater and coastal paths. Arij benefited from the Young Ambassadors of the Seabeds project run by the Bizerte Diving Activity Center: this helped her to obtain her second-level diving certificate. Arij is at ease underwater. She recalls one of her recent dives : "We went diving at night, with two women friends of mine and an instructor, all the way to a wreck, 15 meters below the surface! It was extraordinary!"

« Gaining experience boosts your self-confidence. You have to accept the fact that being a marine ranger is not easy every day»

For Arij, it is clear that "gaining experience boosts your self-confidence". "You also have to accept the fact that being a marine ranger is not easy every day, and move on". Her family has always supported her and the very friendly atmosphere in the team also plays a big role.

On alert during the turtle nesting season

Arij is in charge of organizing the next science camp for children on the Kuriat Islands: two days dedicated to welcoming children from fishermen's families – both girls and boys – and raising their awareness about marine life.

This is one of her favorite activities, along with the monitoring of sea turtles : "I especially like to see the baby turtles!" From May to August, it is the nesting season for turtles: in order to do close monitoring, they have to stay on the islands almost permanently. "During the nesting period, we stay 4 or 5 days on the islands, we get back to the continent for a day, and then we get back to the islands", she explains.

Over the years, and also thanks to the work done with children in fishing communities, the fishermen have for the most part become allies in conservation work. Arij proudly says: "This year, 24 turtles have been saved by the fishermen". When turtles get caught in their nets, they bring them to the association. The NGO staff looks after them, puts a mark on them and releases them into the sea.

Solutions to limit the impact of pollution

What Arij finds challenging in her job is not being cut off from regular life, without network, when she visits the Kuriat islands. It's being confronted with pollution and its impact on marine life! Plastic bottles, wastewater flowing into the bay of Monastir, intensive aquaculture: all these sources of pollution have a direct impact on marine ecosystems. Aquaculture farms where sea breams and sea basses are raised create "a desert" in terms of biodiversity, due to the antibiotics present in the feed. "Unfortunately, most people are not aware of the damage caused by this pollution," notes Arij with regret.

« People go to the Kuriat Islands to enjoy the beach. Then we tell them about Posidonia, sea turtles, birds. And we see a change in their perception. »

To fight these pollutions of anthropic origin, environmental NGOs such as Notre Grand Bleu try to find solutions: artificial reefs for octopus and cuttlefish nesting, ecological mooring to avoid destroying Posidonia seagrass beds. These aquatic plants are essential "sea nurseries" since many marine species reproduce in them and feed on them. They also act as carbon sinks. Arij is involved in an effort to replace plastic fishing traps with biodegradable fishtraps made of braided rush. Men and women have been trained in this technique and in the long term, the NGO hopes to involve a greater number of women from the fishing communities in this activity. They could derive additional income for their families from the sale of these fish traps.

The positive results of the awareness campaign are a source of satisfaction for Arij: "People go to the Kuriat Islands to enjoy the beach. Then we tell them about Posidonia, sea turtles, birds. And we see a change in their perception. They are surprised to learn all this".

Arij's future projects mainly revolve around the activities of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) and the marine environment. She would like to contribute to the development of environmental education in schools, continue to improve her scuba diving skills, and "why not, become a diving instructor". She wants to continue to learn, discover, and travel. And camp in the wilderness whenever the opportunity arises!

Hiring a woman marine ranger is one of the objectives of several MPA management teams, but most of them are unsure of how to make it happen. What we see here is that for some young women, it is simply one more step in a rich professional and personal journey. Commitment, determination, self-confidence and experience are good antidotes to overcome self-censorship and the gender barriers erected by society. The point is to identify and support these young women, and to encourage others to follow their example.

Having a woman in a team of marine rangers helps in diversifying approaches for conflict-resolution or for educating the public. It can also contribute to creating stronger ties with local stakeholders, which creates a climate of trust with positive outcomes in terms of conservation in the MPAs.







© Association Continuité des Générations

SANA, KNEISS MCPA, TUNISIA

PRESIDENT- ASSOCIATION CONTINUITE DES GENERATIONS

Sana is an occupational physician in the city of Sfax. She is involved in civil society, taking actions on environmental issues at different levels. She also works closely with women clam collectors.

Sana has worked as an occupational physician in oil companies and in fishing communities. She is concerned about people's health, but also about their safety at work and about the impact of pollution in the environment. "I'm crazy about environmental issues," she says before describing her various commitments as founding member or president of associations, member of national and international networks and expert committees. She chaired the Agenda 21 of the Municipality of Sfax. She has also trained in Environmental Management and is interested in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

In parallel, Sana is involved in activities that support women's livelihood in rural and marine contexts. At the local level, she engages with women clam collectors along the Tunisian coastline. At the international level, she is part of a network that promotes the role of women in marine and coastal activities.

The beginnings of the Marine and Coastal Protected Area of Kneiss

The Association of Continuity of Generations (ACG) was involved in the protection of the Kneiss Islands several years before the creation of the MCPA.

"Whenever there was a project, I tried to direct it to the Kneiss Islands" says Sana. The association was thus able to acquire basic equipment, including boats, and to launch actions for the protection of the coastal and island environment.

« We conduct discussions with all the stakeholders, from the coast guard to the representatives of relevant ministries ».

The recent implementation of a sustainable management plan provides a framework for new measures on the Kneiss Islands archipelago: scientific monitoring, awareness of the local population, eco-tourism activities, consultation with stakeholders. "We conduct discussions with all the stakeholders, from the coast guard to the representatives of relevant ministries", says Sana.

Defending the rights of women clam collectors

According to FAO, the Tunisian clam production sector employs more than 4000 women in 17 production sites primarily concentrated in two major coastal areas: Gabès and Sfax.

Sana is familiar with the profile of women clam collectors, but also with their difficulties. "Many of them are single, with no fixed job, under the control of their father or brothers," says Sana. "At least 30% of them do not have a good level of education, which makes it easy for them to be exploited by intermediaries," she adds.

The relationship between these women and the middlemen who buy the clams from them is very ambivalent, according to Sana: on the one hand, the middlemen provide women with transportation to the beaches, acting as friends or family support, and on the other, they buy their production at a very low price.

"These women are not aware of their rights," says Sana, adding that "the needs are enormous: capacity building, literacy, health and safety at work, finding alternative sources of income...".

« Women clam collectors are for the most part single, with no fixed job, under the control of their father or brothers »

Different projects have tried to organize these women, with some measure of success. Yet obstacles persist, and according to Sana, they are linked to important economic and political stakes: clams are exported to Europe at a price up to ten times higher than the price at which they are bought from the women collectors.

The creation of a database in which the women clam collectors across Tunisia are registered is a step forward. "This was a step to try to obtain guarantees in terms of social protection and a professional card for these women" says Sana. There has also been progress at the regulatory level to take into account the seasonal dimension of clam collection, which lasts only six months a year.

As part of the Kneiss Islands AMCP management plan, women clam collectors have been invited to take part in outreach activities. "They can ask questions to stakeholders and learn about their rights," says Sana.

Clam is one of the conservation targets of the MCPA, along with Posidonia seagrass beds and several species of seabirds: it is therefore unthinkable to regulate the collection of clams without involving the women who collect this shellfish on foot and earn an income from it. The preservation of this resource is strongly linked to its economic dimension: if women clam collectors receive a higher price per kilo, they will be able to collect only the largest clams and leave the juveniles to grow, thus enabling the renewal of this resource from one year to the next.

To understand the role of women in marine and coastal activities, we need to pay particular attention to what happens "elsewhere", not only at sea, in the ports or auction houses where fish and shellfish are sold in bulk (usually by men). Women may be involved in the domestic sphere where they process, cook and store food; as employees in processing plants or canneries; on the beaches or markets where they collect, sort and sell their catch.

The example of Tunisian clam harvesters shows that women also generate economic benefits from the use of marine and coastal resources, and therefore have an interest in contributing to their preservation.

In some cases, women from very disadvantaged backgrounds survive and support their families thanks to the collection of small fish, shellfish and seaweed. These practices may not be valued economically or socially, but they are nevertheless means of subsistence that must be taken into account in the interest of equity, social justice and gender-equitable conservation.









© Funda KÖK FLİZ

FUNDA, GOKOVA MPA, TURKEY

CONSERVATION MANAGER, MEDITERRANEAN CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Marine protection is not exactly where Funda saw herself when she was doing her studies in Political Science! Today, she has returned to what always motivated her: the desire to accomplish herself in a profession in line with her values.

« I always wanted to contribute to society at large, either through environmental or social work”, she explains. She managed to join an international NGO involved in counter-terrorism and refugee rights in Istanbul, as finance manager. She learned about women’s health and women’s rights. In 2015, she joined the Mediterranean Conservation Society (MCS), an Izmir-based NGO that operates in 3 Marine Protected Areas (MPA), including Gökova Bay MPA.

Funda’s commitment to marine protection brought her back to university studies: she is currently doing a Masters in Environment, with a focus on marine conservation. When asked if she enjoys it, she answers: “I love it! And I want to go further, combining political science, management and new ideas for more effective protection”. She brings her experience to MCS, which in turn provides her a space to explore her interests and test new ideas in the area of marine protection.

Working in a male-dominated environment

“In the organisation, we are 19 permanent staff, explains Funda, 12 men and 7 women. We [women] are included in the decision-making process, and I feel like we have enough opportunities to grow in the organisation.”

But Turkey still does not offers the best context when it comes to gender equality. “As a woman manager, sometimes you can feel the tension when you want a man to do a particular task”.

“I was in Bozburun Peninsula just recently, taking part in discussions with local fishing communities about the No-Fishing-Zones, tells Funda. There were 23 people and I was the only woman. I was there with the organisation’s director, a scientist, the site manager and government officers. I could not find space to express myself, apart from answering a few technical questions. But I was expecting this! One of the benefits of my presence in that meeting was there was less swearing and fighting amongst men than there might have been otherwise!”.

When asked whether she thinks it would be a good idea to build the leadership skills of women in her organisation, Funda answers: “Yes, that would be useful! It takes courage for a woman to speak up, especially when she is with influential men”. “This is always overlooked, she ponders. Men don’t face this situation, so they don’t see it as an issue”.

The organisation has plans to hire a woman ranger in the near future. Funda believes it will be easier to recrute a woman ranger in the Göcek area, “Göcek is more cosmopolitan due to the influence of boat tourism.

There is a higher level of education, and you can see women as boat captains there. We have 4 or 5 women candidates”. Gökova Bay is more traditional, with fewer women in non-traditional gender roles. “But I think we can also do it”, says Funda. Getting women to apply to become rangers in the Gökova MPA would mean, concretely, identifying and supporting women fishers or students to obtain their boat driving certificate.

Funda is into diving, and when she gets a chance, she dives to observe, help with underwater monitoring activities and practice her diving skills. One of the ways in which she promotes gender balance in the organisation is by pushing women to take diving classes. She wants to see more women taking part in the underwater monitoring.

« We need to develop our financing mechanism, so that we can manage the MPA independently. It's not happening yet, but it's a dream I have! »

Women fishers in Turkey: a struggle for recognition and equal rights

Funda clearly sees how gender bias also gets played out in the fishing communities where she works. She knows her figures, which she got from a 2017 study exploring the role of women in Turkish fisheries: “There are approximately 3000 women fishing in Turkey, and coastal areas. Yet the majority of these women – 2600 in total – are not members of the fishery cooperatives: this means that their voice is not heard!”.

Gender is a major issue in the fisheries sector in Turkey, and Funda is well-aware of the problem. “Women are not seen as fishers in their own right, but rather as a crew member on their husband’s boat”. Owning a boat and joining a cooperative are simple steps which women fishers can not take without struggling.

Two civil society organisations, MCS and Underwater Research Society, have been at the forefront of changes in recognizing the role of women fishers, responding to their needs and ensuring their inclusion in decision-making processes around sustainable small-scale fisheries and conservation in Turkey.

A vision for the MPA

Funda’s main concerns about the MPA are urbanization, centralized decision-making and sustainable financing of the MPA. “We need to develop our financing mechanism, so that we can manage the MPA independently. It’s not happening yet, but it’s a dream I have!” says Funda.

She loves the opportunity to be in nature, to learn new things every day. She finds meaning in the small victories gained after a lot of hard work, like convincing Government officials to take measures. “It’s great to feel that we have an influence on decision-making”, although she admits that this does not happen every day.

With a few exceptions, fishing is an activity done mostly by men across the Mediterranean. Turkey stands out with a large number of women fisherwomen. It is always useful to explore the socio-economic factors that have brought women to cross gender lines and practice an activity usually “reserved for men”. It is equally valuable to understand the difficulties women face when they start becoming active in a male-dominated sector.

Collective action – forming groups, cooperatives – is a strategy women often use in order to bypass discriminatory gender norms which deny individual women access to property, equipment or financial resources. Women’s cooperatives and other forms of collective action enable women to gain access to resources, loans or equipment, secure better incomes, voice their concerns. Working with these collective action groups – where they exist – and supporting their creation and/or development is a step towards making environmental protection truly gender-responsive.









© Yanki Tandircioğlu

YANKI, GOKOVA MPA, TURKEY

COORDINATION ASSISTANT, MEDITERRANEAN CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Yanki is the site assistant manager for the Gökova Bay MPA. Aged 24, Yanki is the youngest member of the team. She brings in fresh perspectives and a great deal of enthusiasm!

Fascinated by the interaction between nature and humans, Yanki studied in an emerging field: Biology & Ecospsychology. Her Masters' Thesis at the Middle East Technical University, in Ankara, explores the relationship between the frequency of a bee hive and the frequency of the human brain.

Becoming a scientist who makes a difference

Yanki loves being at sea. Her brother is a professional sailor, so she has got plenty of opportunities to sail. Next she wants to get her diving licence.

Her motivation for being in the scientific field is plain and simple: "It makes it easy to communicate with all public!". She goes on to explain: "At the moment, I work on invasive species. It's easy to explain to people why invasive species are harmful to our ecosystems when you go with your scientific background".

« It's easy to explain to people why invasive species are harmful to our ecosystems when you go with your scientific background »

She also sees her work at MCS as a chance to explore the socio-economic dimension of environmental preservation.

"We go to the restaurant owners, and we ask them to put the invasive species on their menu, we tell them that for the lion fish for instance, the spines are poisonous but the flesh is ok".

Being a biologist and going to speak with fishermen or cooks in restaurants with a conservation message: this is new to her, but it makes perfect sense when you work for a Marine Protected Area, trying to restore a balance in the ecosystem.

Promoting the complementarity of gender roles in fishing communities

Yanki is aware that she has to listen and learn in order to find her place in her new team. "There are two marine rangers on the team. I'm their manager but I don't know anything about their field! So I told them 'Tell me everything about your work, the boat, what you do, etc'. I went at sea with them".

With the fishermen as well, it's not a easy road for Yanki, and she is well-aware of it: "How can I, how should I approach them?" she asks. When she passes by a fisherman in the harbour, she always says "Hi Captain".

She is conscious of the gender dimension at play: "It's very common in our country for a woman to catch an eye on her. If I realize this I just say 'Hi!' to people to make them see me as a normal person like them".

Her manager introduced her to the members of the Fisheries Cooperative, who are all men. She admits that his presence made her “feel more safe” initially, as this was a new experience for her. Now she regularly goes out to sea with a couple from the fishing community.

“I learnt so many things from the fisherwoman! She has been fishing for 40 years. She is so professional. She told me that sometimes, she goes fishing alone”.

« We want to promote gender equality, so people will go on fishing boats run by a couple: a woman and a man. This is to show the complementarity of gender roles »

Yanki is involved in the project on Pescatourism which is about to start in the MPA. The idea is for tourists to get to learn about traditional fishing by spending half a day on a fishing boat. “We want to promote gender equality, so people will go on fishing boats run by a couple: a woman and a man, says Yanki. This is to show the complementarity of gender roles”.

Yanki’s favourite activities in the MPA are communicating with people and monitoring the animals. She also feels a strong connection with her team and finds meaning in what she does. What she finds most challenging is monitoring illegal activity. Recently, the collaboration with Coast Guards has been stepped up, leading to better results.

Environmental conservation is a growing field, which attracts many young people, including women. In any work setting, be it a large company or a small NGO, gender norms and stereotypes get reproduced. It can be challenging for a woman to work in an organisation or a team in which men have more experience, authority and legitimacy than her. In addition, when dealing with stakeholders in a traditional/patriarchal environment, inappropriate remarks towards women may arise.

Organisations and MPA managers have a key role to play in developing a culture in which women feel safe and comfortable at work, in meetings or when they go to the field. This can be done by creating safe spaces for women to speak up, raise concerns, debrief challenging situations, explore options for change.

The organisation can act proactively in different ways: by providing adequate support for women (especially young women), by convening an open dialogue on gender issues within the organisation, by establishing a formal Gender Policy that everyone is aware of and can refer to.







LORELA, REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF PROTECTED AREAS OF VLORE, ALBANIA

DIRECTOR

Lorela heads the Regional Administration of Protected Areas (RAPA) in Vlore region of Albania. Passionate about her work, she manages a team of 32 people, a quarter of whom are women.

Linking scientific knowledge with good management

Lorela first studied Environmental Biology, and she thought to become a naturalist. But slowly, as she gained experience, she developed an interest in the management of protected areas and a conviction that this is where she belongs. Her third Masters' degree, in Public Administration and Citizenship, got her to where she wanted to be: designing and improving policies that work for the environment. "Natural conservation is enhanced by good managerial skills. You can't do scientific monitoring of protected habitats or species unless you are a good manager", she says. To her, it's important to preserve nature but it's equally relevant "to understand how to translate scientific knowledge into policy and concrete management activities". At the end of the day, you can only do good conservation if you have a good management plan, with indicators for performance and efficiency.

"One of the first things I did when I started the office in RAPA-Vlore was to print and post the vision of the MPA", she says. She believes it helps her team stay focused of the larger purpose by bearing two questions in mind: "What is the point of the day-to-day activities we do? What vision are we working towards?"

Gender imbalance in the governing bodies of protected areas

RAPA-Vlore was created in 2015 as one of 12 Regional Administrations for Protected Areas under the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA). Lorela was part of the team who established the pillars of the NAPA/RAPA architecture.

Her unit is the only one headed by a woman, the other 11 directors of Regional Administrations are all men. Regularly, Lorela gently reminds the National Administration that it would be good to have more gender balance across the different regional agencies.

"Once they understand your purpose and trust you or the institution, it does not matter much if you are a woman or a man"

It is clear to her that when an organisation is headed by a woman, it creates favourable conditions for other women to join. "I have many women colleagues, and together we have managed to build a model where women successfully handle different managerial roles, including activities that are usually thought of as more masculine", she points out.

This contributes to changing men's perceptions about gender roles. In practice, at RAPA-Vlore, the Management division has a majority of female staff while the Monitoring division has mostly male staff.

Yet Lorela has managed to hire two women rangers. "It's more about understanding the context and building trust than about gender", she says. The same applies to the organisation's relationship with stakeholders and communities: "Once they understand your purpose and trust you or the institution, it does not matter much if you are a woman or a man".

Who represents communities in consultations?

However, as she reflects further about gender dynamics at local level, a different picture emerges. There is some level of gender balance in consultations that take place with stakeholders and university scholars. But when it comes to community, it's a different story altogether.

"We deal with legal issues, zoning, properties in our discussions with fishing communities, and it is always men who represent the household", she admits, adding more philosophically: "We always use the term 'community', but we only deal with men!".

This realization brings emotions to the surface for Lorela. "The shop owners, the tour boat operators, the hotel owners, the fishermen, most of the people we speak with are men. Yet the community includes women, men, children. We still are not sure how the MPA affects women and what benefits they derive or could derive from it".

"If we find out what women do for a living, it will give us some ideas about how to better integrate them in the MPA conservation and management activities".

Seeing more women participating in the community-level roundtables is going to be a challenge, but Lorela believes it is critical to act on this. "If we find out what women do for a living, it will give us some ideas about how to better integrate them in the MPA conservation and management activities".

In collaboration with different NGOs, including the NGO Flagpine, RAPA-Vlore is implementing a few activities to promote the role of women in the boat tour sector in Karaburun Sazan MPA. "We need to show step-by-step that some activities can be managed by women" concludes Lorela.

She also feels like it would be important to bring this discussion into the organisation. "We tend to focus on everyday tasks and responsibilities". Yet she sees great value in brainstorming to see what could be done differently to bring more gender balance into the organisation and beyond, in all the MPA activities.

Entitlements over resource and properties, access to equipment such as fishing boats, access to credit are all gendered domains, in the sense that in any given society, women and men don't have the same rights and entitlements over resources (land, forest, trees, marine species...). Likewise, institutions also have often invisible gender patterns, which determine who can/can't become a member, who can/can't get elected as a leader, who can/can't take part in decision-making and so on. In order to make conservation more effective and inclusive, it is critical to bring these gender differences to light and understand how they influence people's behaviour, strategies, and individual and collective responses to change.

Including the voices and opinions of women is not just a matter of achieving better conservation outcomes. It is also an important ethical consideration and a pathway for more equity in society.



© Kladij Kucaj



THE
MED
FUND

FRANCAIS POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT



LAURETA, KARABURUN SAZAN MPA, ALBANIA

SITE COORDINATOR, FLAG PINE NGO

Laureta coordinates the work of the Karaburun Sazan Marine Protected Area (MPA) along the Adriatic Coast of Albania, in the NGO Flag Pine. This MPA runs along the coastline of Karaburun peninsula, in the Vlore Bay.

Combining two passions: protecting the environment and working with children

Laureta grew up in Vlore, a small town on the coast. "Connection to nature comes natural to you when you grow up in this environment" she says.

With a Masters in Environmental Biology, Laureta belongs to this generation of environmentalists whose commitment and professionalism changes the rules of the game. At the age of only 27, she manages a team of 10 people (including herself), composed of 3 permanent staff, seasonal staff and volunteers. She works closely with the team of the Regional Administration of Protected Areas in Vlore (RAPA-Vlore).

The two main figures at RAPA are also women. "Women play an important role in the environmental field" asserts Laureta confidently, admitting that in other sectors, gender bias still prevails. "People don't always trust a woman to be in a leadership role".

Laureta is happy to accompany the rangers at sea about once a month during their patrolling to monitor and reduce illegal fishing activities. It's important for her, as coordinator of the MPA, to have a global understanding of all its dimensions.

Conducting monitoring activities is one of her favourite part of the work. "I like monitoring because I get to go to the field, take measures, see what is happening. Sometimes we go on the water, sometimes not. For instance if we measure microplastics, we take samples in the sea. We also monitor habitats, do some testing in our labs".

"Women play an important role in the environmental field"

She also likes doing awareness-raising activities with children. "My other dream was to be a teacher. So when I go to a school and interact with kids, I can live my two passions: teaching children and the environment!" As a coordinator of the MPA, Laureta interacts with other scientists, with people, with children, with decision-makers. "This is why this job is so interesting!".

Building trust and mutual understanding with fishing communities

She and her team also work closely with fishing communities. She recalls that it was not easy at the beginning to build a working relationship with them. "At first, I think fishermen were feeling something like: "You are taking what is ours", because of the restrictions imposed on fishing in some parts of the MPA".

It took some time to come to a mutual understanding with representatives from the fishing communities. When asked what really helped in establishing trust, she replies without hesitation: “Communication, dialogue, this is what makes a difference. When there’s a conflict, I try to listen, to talk, to find a solution. I stay calm and I express what I need to say. I try to take into consideration what the other person may think or feel when I speak”.

« When there’s a conflict, I try to listen, to talk, to find a solution. I stay calm and I express what I need to say. »

One aspect which Laureta finds challenging is to find compensation people who make a living out of fishing: “People’s needs have to be fulfilled, she says, but practically, it is difficult to find something to compensate for what we are taking. The solutions to that are often beyond the scope of the MPA, they are at another level”. Another challenge is “changing the mindset and belief systems of the people: we need concrete initiatives to demonstrate to people that it is possible to protect nature and at the same time benefit from it!”

Steering clear of these subtle messages about women’s place in society...

As a child, as a student and in her professional life, Laureta does not remember facing any kind of gender discrimination. Her family has been supportive. “In the work I do for the MPA, I interact with men a lot, I have to travel to different places, stay in the field. Some people see me and ask me: “Why are you doing this work? It’s not a job for a woman”. For me it does not make any difference, I don’t think there are jobs for women and jobs for men !”

With her team, they planned to hire a female ranger. “It’s important to do it because it will set an example. Other women will see that woman and think: “If she can do it, why can’t I?””. However, this time, the ideal candidate did not show up. Laureta believes that they will eventually succeed, with additional efforts to attract candidates.

The MedFund encourages the organisations it supports and MPA managers to take action in favour of gender equality. Laureta brought up the subject with her team. They decided to make short videos to “promote women who have been successful in doing something for the MPA”.

One woman in the MPA owns her own boat and offers tours of the MPA. Her daughter works with her. She is the only woman in the business: the other 15 boat owners are all men.

During a field visit, Laureta encountered a woman who was making a fishing net with a special tool. “It was almost like knitting”, she recalls. This made her think that there is a role women play in the sea economy, which has remained unexplored so far. “We only meet with fishermen here, but there is always a woman next to a fisherman”. Laureta expresses an interest to learn more and see how to involve these women more in the MPA.

Striving towards gender equity requires putting on these “gender glasses” to see the reality differently. Gender bias is often invisible, hidden in details, in seemingly gender-neutral discussions or decisions. Only by paying special attention can these subtle forms of discrimination become visible. Gender specialists have shown that when you have a situation of gender inequality, designing and implementing a project or a policy without any attention to gender will tend to reinforce or aggravate existing inequalities.

It is therefore essential to look closer, through a gender lens, so that no one is left behind. This is even more essential in coastal communities in which traditions have tended to minimize or devalue women’s economic and social contributions. Many studies have shown that when a sector becomes more profitable, men start crowding in, sometimes displacing women who were already active in this sector. Without an adequate gender strategy, chances are that women will benefit less from emerging economic opportunities.







NAJIA, JBEL MOUSSA MPA, MOROCCO

SITE COORDINATOR, GREPOM NGO

With an engineering background, Najia worked for 20 years in the field of drinking water and sanitation before joining the Mohammed VI Foundation where she started working on marine protected areas and marine biodiversity.

A fishermen's house in Belyounech to pilot the Marine Protected Area

A few years ago, Najia and her husband decided to start materializing their dreams by investing in a small fishermen's house in Belyounech, a village located on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. Soon after, Najia began to get involved in local life: supporting a fishermen's cooperative, helping local associations with their projects...

With the onset of Covid-19, they decided to live permanently in Belyounech. Meanwhile, the GREPOM association, known for its work on birdlife conservation, including marine birds, was looking for someone to coordinate the Jbel Moussa Marine Protected Area, one of the first in Morocco, located in a Biosphere Reserve. Najia seized this opportunity, which was all the more interesting since the project was in its beginning. "We are in the process of specifying the mandate of the MPA with the Department of Water and Forests and the Department of Maritime Fisheries" says Najia. "We need to take our time, she adds, because the co-management of MPAs in Morocco is a new experience. We are laying the first foundations". Behind the words, one can feel the experience of a woman committed to finding the most appropriate and efficient approach, without compromise on rigor.

"We plan to hold a workshop to clarify the role of the marine ranger within the current regulatory framework. It is a new profile and a very important one since marine rangers will maintain close relations with fishermen and the entire local population".

« The co-management of MPAs in Morocco is a new experience. We are laying the first foundations »

The action plan is in place, the first contacts have been made with local associations, the fishermen's cooperative and the municipality. Najia is a great believer in the transformative potential of dialogue: "It is very important to create the conditions for dialogue, she says. We are here to get practices to evolve in line with the vulnerability of the territory, to federate actors of change and to open new doors, based on sustainable development perspectives".

More women in decision-making positions

When asked if women are present and involved in Belyounech, Najia answers in the affirmative. "There is a strong involvement of women in this territory". She mentions Femmes d'avenir, a local NGO active in cultural and social matters, whose president – a woman – is an elected official of the Municipality and has expressed interest in the MPA.

There is also a cooperative of women fishermen, created in 2018, the first in Morocco. The main activity is the manufacture or repair of fishing nets, and a few women have recently started fishing at sea, a field traditionally reserved for men.

However, Najia notes that apart from this woman elected in the Municipality of Belyounech, women are very poorly represented in the management teams of the local authorities and administrations involved in the MPA. Yet she believes that the presence of women in these structures would make it easier for women from the local communities to express themselves, to say what is wrong, to make proposals.

« The presence of women in positions of responsibility and decision-making in environmental protection is important ».

According to her, “the presence of women in positions of responsibility and decision-making in environmental protection is important”. She sees several reasons for this : first of all, it enables women to speak up more freely; secondly, it saves women from being constantly confronted with men who are not very receptive to the difficulties they encounter or who do not readily admit the fact that an educated woman can express viewpoints that diverge from male perceptions; finally, because “we don't quite discuss the same subjects when women are present in a meeting”.

Above all, Najia believes in the complementarity of roles and points of view between men and women. She stresses the “need for gender equality in analysis and dialogue in order to co-produce more balanced solutions”.

Seeking complementarity between men and women for better results

For the profile of the marine ranger of the Jbel Moussa MPA, Najia will propose pairing a man with a woman, to enable complementary approaches for identifying problems, understanding viewpoints, resolving conflicts in a transparent way, without excessive authoritarianism. By experience, Najia knows that “this gender balance gives very good results”.

The management of natural resources requires technical and scientific skills, but also know-how in the field of public consultation, conflict resolution and the adaptation of regulations to the local context. Women and men do not have the same experience; each brings a viewpoint, a vision, know-how and arguments that complement and enrich each other.

A growing number of studies show that the involvement of women in the protection of biodiversity and the management of protected areas - whether marine or terrestrial - improves results because it diversifies viewpoints, skills and approaches.

Women represent half of the population: why should we deprive ourselves of the skills, know-how, ideas they bring? Marine protection can only get strengthened by the involvement of all those concerned at all levels. Solutions often lie in collective intelligence. And we can no longer afford to exclude 50% of this collective intelligence!





HOUSSINE & SAMIRA, AL HOCEIMA MPA, MOROCCO

PRESIDENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER, AGIR NGO

The Al Hoceima National Park is home to rich terrestrial and marine ecosystems. AGIR has been working there since 2008, under the direction of Houssine. Samira works with women in the fishing community, Asma joined as MPA coordinator.

Houssine comes from Fez but he has long been interested in the marine environment. “I started as a Peace Corps volunteer. I worked on osprey colonies. This bird was my ambassador to the fishing communities!” he says laughingly. He has been running the AGIR association for about 20 years, with a salaried team of 5 women and 4 men.

The Coastline Master's degree inspires vocations

Houssine initiated a Master's degree dedicated to the coastline at the University of Al Hoceima. He is pleased to see that over the years, this program has attracted competent young women, some of whom have joined the AGIR team. This is the case of Asma, a young woman from the mountains, who has completed brilliant studies in oceanography and will coordinate the activities of Al Hoceima MPA.

“I am a feminist by origin” says Houssine. He goes on to make a simple observation: “Today, the best candidates are women”. He gives the example of two young women who studied in the Coastline Master's program: “They quickly understood the fundamentals of adaptive management. In fact, they were pointing out my mistakes during class!”

Houssine is passionate about adaptive management, a method that he believes is perfectly suited to the challenges of environmental conservation: it combines the identification of main threats to an ecosystem with a system of targets and indicators. “At the end of a conservation project, we can evaluate to what degree we have restored an ecosystem thanks to the target species” explains Houssine.

« We have women giving guidelines to implement a new model for the protection of ecosystems, in the patriarchal context of the Al Hoceima region, where men used to go north to look for work while women stayed at home ».

He is keen to hire the two young women graduates to implement adaptive management: “They will strengthen the team, including on a theoretical level. Thus, we will have women giving guidelines to implement a new model for the protection of ecosystems, in the patriarchal context of the Al Hoceima region, where men used to go north to look for work while women stayed at home”. For Houssine, this is a small but very significant victory.

Biodegradable fishtraps made by women to preserve seabeds

In another area, a collaboration between the NGO AGIR and the Technological Institute of Fisheries is bearing fruit. About fifty women from fishing communities have been trained to make fishtraps made out of braided rush.

Houssine emphasizes the double ecological and societal impact of this project: “On the one hand, we are installing artificial reefs in shallow areas to prevent trawlers from passing through, thus creating protected zones. And on the other hand, we are developing sustainable fishing gear – the biodegradable fishtraps – made by the fishermen's wives. Thus women are part of the solution” he explains enthusiastically.

The change of horizon for these women is significant: “We went from a situation where they didn't leave their homes – Al Hoceima was known for its “closed windows” – to a situation where their husbands let them attend training at the Technological Institute of Fisheries four days a week!” says Houssine.

«I saw a smile on these women's faces when I gave them the money from the sale of the first traps. They gained confidence in themselves.»

Samira has accompanied these women throughout their training and has followed their rapid evolution. “At the beginning, she recalls, the women said that it was not their role to make fishing nets or traps”.

By the end of the training, they were proud of the results and motivated to continue. Samira noted significant changes in their attitude: “When the project started, they were shy and isolated. Today they are not afraid to go out any more, and to interact with men. They no longer ask their husbands for money. I saw a smile on these women's faces when I gave them the money from the sale of the first traps. They gained confidence in themselves. These changes happened in only 4 months! Now some of them even ask to go to sea on their own boats!”

Houssine points to the empowering economic dimension of the project for these women: “At the moment, they have only earned €40 per month, but now that they are trained, they will be able to produce up to 20 traps per month. This could represent an earning of up to €400 per month for each woman!”

Houssine underlines the remarkable work done by Samira with the fishermen's wives. It is a unique experience in Morocco. And he adds: “I hired a woman as MPA coordinator because my project is based on women. It's a battle for space: around the zones where fishing is prohibited, we will have sustainable and biodegradable traps”. These traps will earn women an income while changing their husbands' fishing practices. Thus, women from fishing communities will be able to “defend their rights by themselves” adds Houssine.

The anchorage of women in the domestic sphere is also a reservoir of creativity, of organizational and logistical capacity that could well find expression in a wide variety of fields. Women manufacturing alternative fishing gear that could transform the entire system is a case in point. This is a good example of a systemic approach encompassing the ecological, societal and economic dimensions, with special attention to gender.

Supporting women to get organized in groups necessarily triggers resistance that can be overcome through dialogue and the creation of long-term bonds of trust with men. Sooner or later, these men will see the value in their wives or daughters expanding their field of action, acquiring new skills and starting collective projects.





Carine Pionetti is an Anthropologist, independent researcher in Political Ecology and Gender specialist. She investigates gender issues combined with ecology and natural resource management in a variety of geographical and cultural contexts. She uses participatory methods to bring out the voices of women and to understand the differentiated needs and approaches of men and women in various fields: adaptation to climate change, farming and biodiversity preservation.

She accompanies international organizations in strengthening gender in project development and implementation. She also works on women's collective action and gender-sensitive approaches to decision-making processes.

This publication is the fruit of a collaboration on gender in Marine Protected Areas across the Mediterranean with The MedFund, which begun in 2019.

The MedFund sincerely thanks the women and men who participated in the elaboration of this report and helped to better understand women's involvement in Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas : Purificacio Canals, Samia Boufares, Manel Ben Ismail, Arij Sadraoui, Sana Taktak, Funda Kok Filiz, Yanki Tandırcıoğlu, Zafer Kizilkaya, Lorela Lazaj, Laureta Sadikllari, Najia Fatine, Houssine Nibani, Samira Rahmouni.

With the support of :



FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL



The MedFund

Villa Girasole
16 Boulevard de Suisse
98000 Monaco

contact@themedfund.org

www.themedfund.org



[@themedfund](https://www.facebook.com/themedfund)



[@TheMedFund](https://twitter.com/TheMedFund)

