

Communication Model for Enhancing Women Fishers' Livelihoods in Bone-Bone Village

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the communication approach implemented by the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries to improve the livelihoods of women fishers in Bone-Bone Village, Baubau City, within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving eight purposively selected informants, consisting of three officials from the Marine and Fisheries Office of Baubau City and five women fishers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation and were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The findings show that empowerment was mainly facilitated through interpersonal communication, counseling, community meetings, informal social interaction, and the use of local language. Communication effectiveness was shaped by trust, local cultural values, social networks, and accessible interaction, while women continued to face gendered institutional barriers, limited information access, digital literacy constraints, and dual labor burdens. The study's novelty lies in proposing a participatory and gender-responsive communication model that integrates five interrelated dimensions, participation, access, inclusion, collaboration, and sustainability, to connect everyday communication practices with women's livelihood empowerment and SDG 5 implementation in coastal communities.

INTRODUCTION

Women play an important role in sustaining household economies and community livelihoods, particularly in coastal communities where economic dependence on marine and fisheries resources remains relatively high. In many coastal areas, women are actively involved in fisheries-related activities such as fish processing, seafood marketing, shellfish collection, and household-based trading activities that support family welfare and economic resilience.

Women's participation in productive sectors has increasingly become an important strategy for maintaining household sustainability amid unstable economic conditions and limited employment opportunities in coastal communities (Renggo & Rewa, 2023).

Despite their important contribution, women's labor frequently remains socially and institutionally underrecognized because fisheries activities continue to be associated primarily with male-centered fishing practices. Women are often positioned as supporting actors within fisheries livelihoods rather than as central economic actors, even though their contribution significantly influences household economic sustainability and community resilience. This condition demonstrates that gender inequality remains an important issue within coastal development and community empowerment processes (Putrawan, 2023; Nurimaniar & Rahmanto, 2023).

The issue of women's empowerment has become increasingly important within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 concerning gender equality. SDG 5 emphasizes equal participation, access, opportunity, and empowerment for women across economic, social, and institutional dimensions. In practice, however, women in vulnerable communities frequently continue to experience limited access to economic resources, institutional participation, and development opportunities despite their significant contribution to family and community welfare (Mustafa et al., 2025). (Safrida & Safrida, 2022) explained that women's empowerment strategies based on local potential contribute positively to strengthening economic sustainability and community participation. Similarly, (Rodiah, 2024) emphasized that communication-based empowerment can strengthen women's social awareness, participation, and involvement within community development activities.

Communication therefore becomes an important element in supporting women's empowerment within coastal communities. Development communication is not merely related to information dissemination but also to participation, dialogue, social interaction, and collective problem-solving processes within society. Participatory communication enables communities to become active participants in development activities rather than passive recipients of information and policy programs (Juliani, 2023). Communication effectiveness is also strongly influenced by interpersonal trust and social relationships within communities. (Haryana et al., 2025) explained that interpersonal communication contributes significantly to strengthening openness, participation, and social interaction processes. Likewise, (Tambunan & Hamad, 2025) found that trust becomes an important factor influencing social acceptance and participation in communication-based activities.

Within coastal communities, women's empowerment frequently encounters structural and cultural challenges. Women often experience a dual burden in which they remain responsible for domestic responsibilities while simultaneously participating in productive economic activities. In addition, patriarchal social structures continue to shape unequal gender relations and limit women's participation within institutional and community decision-making processes (Reftantia et al., 2023). Consequently, women's empowerment requires not only economic participation but also broader social transformation capable of strengthening women's recognition, participation, and institutional inclusion within

community development processes. (Prafitri et al., 2023) further explained that women workers frequently experience economic vulnerability and unequal gender expectations during periods of economic instability and social change.

Sustainable development within coastal communities also requires the integration of gender-responsive community empowerment and inclusive village development strategies. (Warsono & Agustina, 2024) explained that SDG implementation in Indonesian villages depends heavily on participatory development practices and institutional collaboration among community stakeholders. Similarly, (Hakim, 2023) emphasized that sustainable development frameworks should integrate environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and community participation simultaneously. In the context of women's empowerment, (Novilasari, 2024) found that strengthening women's organizational capacity and small-scale entrepreneurship contributes positively to local economic sustainability and social participation. (Jayn, 2021) also argued that women-centered community programs can strengthen social empowerment and increase community resilience within local development processes. Furthermore, (Sabariman et al., 2021) explained that sustainable women's empowerment requires the integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions through inclusive community institutions and participatory development approaches.

Bone-Bone Village in Baubau City, Southeast Sulawesi, represents a coastal community where women actively participate in fisheries-related economic activities supporting household livelihoods. Women in the village are involved in fish processing, seafood marketing, shellfish collection, and other fisheries-supporting activities contributing to household economic sustainability. However, despite their significant contribution, women continue to experience limited institutional participation and unequal social recognition because fisheries activities remain socially associated with male-centered production systems.

The Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in Baubau City has implemented several communication-based empowerment programs targeting coastal communities and women fishers. These programs involve counseling activities, interpersonal communication, community participation, and empowerment initiatives aimed at strengthening household livelihoods and women's economic participation. Communication approaches are therefore expected to strengthen women's participation while supporting the implementation of SDG 5 concerning gender equality and women's empowerment.

Previous research provides important but fragmented explanations of women's empowerment in coastal and community development contexts. Indonesian studies have emphasized household economic resilience, participatory communication, and local empowerment (Safrida & Safrida, 2022; Juliani, 2023; Rodiah, 2024), but they largely describe participation and program implementation without specifying how communication mechanisms interact with gendered institutional barriers. International fisheries research reveals a similar limitation from a different direction. (Mangubhai & Lawless, 2021) found that many gender-inclusive initiatives in Melanesian small-scale fisheries merely reached women without necessarily producing empowerment or transformation, while (House et al., 2024) showed in Timor-Leste that relationship-building within participatory fisheries monitoring can generate awareness, advocacy, and collective action. In coastal Kenya, (Chambon et al., 2025)

further demonstrated that formal participation can remain constrained by socio-cultural, economic, and institutional exclusion. These findings indicate that participation alone is insufficient unless communication practices also address power relations, access, and institutional recognition.

Against this literature, the research gap is not merely the limited number of studies conducted in Baubau City. Existing communication and empowerment studies tend to examine participatory communication in broad community settings, whereas international fisheries studies focus more strongly on governance inclusion, monitoring, or gender participation. Limited attention has been given to how interpersonal trust, local language, informal social networks, institutional communication, and continuity of facilitation operate together as an integrated communication model for women fishers' livelihood empowerment. Moreover, few studies explicitly connect these communication mechanisms with SDG 5 at the village level. This study addresses that conceptual and contextual gap by deriving a participatory and gender-responsive communication approach model from the lived communication practices and institutional experiences of women fishers in Bone-Bone Village.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the communication approach model implemented in improving the livelihoods of women fishers based on SDG 5 principles in Bone-Bone Village, Baubau City. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to participatory communication and women's empowerment studies while also providing practical recommendations for strengthening gender-responsive coastal development and sustainable fisheries empowerment programs in Indonesia.

METHOD

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the communication approach implemented to improve the livelihoods of women fishers based on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 principles in Bone-Bone Village, Baubau City, Southeast Sulawesi. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding communication practices, women's participation, empowerment experiences, and social interaction processes within the socio-cultural context of a coastal community. This approach enables researchers to examine social phenomena contextually and interpret participants' experiences within their natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was conducted in Bone-Bone Village, Batupoaro District, Baubau City. The location was purposively selected because it represents a coastal community in which women actively participate in fisheries-related economic activities, including fish processing, seafood marketing, shellfish collection, and other household-based fisheries activities. At the same time, women in the village continue to experience limitations related to access, participation, and institutional recognition within fisheries development processes.

Informant Selection

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct knowledge, experience, and involvement in the communication and empowerment processes examined

in this study. The final sample consisted of eight informants, comprising three officials from the Marine and Fisheries Office of Baubau City and five women fishers from the Bone-Bone coastal community. The three government informants were selected because they were directly involved in the fisheries development and women's empowerment programs examined in this study. Their institutional positions included the Head of the Marine and Fisheries Office, the Head of the Research and Development Division, and the Head of Human Resources Supervision. The five women fishers were selected because they were directly involved in fisheries-related livelihood activities and had experience participating in community-based empowerment activities.

The number of eight informants was considered sufficient for the focused scope of this qualitative study because the selected participants represented the two principal perspectives required to address the research objectives: the institutional perspective of program implementation and the community perspective of women fishers experiencing the empowerment process. The adequacy of the informants was not determined by numerical representativeness but by the relevance, consistency, and richness of the information obtained in relation to the research questions.

Each informant participated in four interview sessions, resulting in a total of 32 interview sessions. Repeated interviews were conducted to obtain clarification, explore emerging issues in greater depth, and confirm information obtained during previous interviews. Data saturation was considered to have been achieved when the information obtained across the repeated interviews became consistent and no substantially new information relevant to the research objectives emerged. The repeated consistency of the informants' responses supported the adequacy and validity of the information used in the analysis.

The initial research design identified women fishers, fisheries extension officers, village government representatives, and community members as potential sources of information. However, the final informant composition was limited to three officials from the Marine and Fisheries Office and five women fishers because these two groups provided the most direct and relevant information concerning the empowerment programs and communication processes under investigation. Village government representatives, other community members, and other potential participants were therefore not included in the final sample because their perspectives were not directly required to address the specific institutional and community-level dimensions examined in this study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with all eight informants using a semi-structured interview guide developed in accordance with the research objectives. Each informant was interviewed four times, allowing the researchers to clarify previous responses, explore emerging issues, and examine the consistency of information across repeated interactions. The interviews addressed communication practices, women fishers' participation, livelihood conditions, knowledge, attitudes, socio-cultural conditions, access to

information, gender relations, and interactions between the Marine and Fisheries Office and women fishers.

The interviews were documented through brief written notes taken during and after the interview sessions. These notes were subsequently reviewed and organized according to the research themes. The researchers also conducted direct observations to examine community activities, women's fisheries-related livelihoods, and communication practices in their natural setting. Relevant documentation, including institutional records, reports, photographs, and other supporting materials, was used to complement and cross-check the interview information.

The combination of repeated interviews, observation, and documentation allowed the researchers to examine the consistency of information across different data sources and to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of communication and empowerment processes.

Data Sources

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained directly from the 32 interview sessions, field observations, and documentation involving the eight selected informants. Secondary data were obtained from scientific journal articles, books, institutional reports, and previous studies related to communication, women's empowerment, gender equality, participatory development, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Data Analysis

Data analysis combined thematic coding with the interactive qualitative analysis model of (Miles et al., 2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis began with repeated reading of interview notes, observation records, and documentary materials to identify meaningful units related to communication practices, participation, trust, local culture, information access, digital literacy, gender relations, institutional recognition, collaboration, and empowerment.

Initial codes were compared within and across informant groups and then grouped into broader categories. Related categories were subsequently organized into themes that represented recurring patterns in the communication and empowerment processes. The themes were continuously compared with information from interviews, observations, and documentation. The thematic coding process was informed by the systematic approach to theme development proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2023), while the iterative movement among data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing followed (Miles et al., 2014).

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework was based on participatory communication and women's empowerment perspectives. Participatory communication emphasizes dialogue, social interaction, and active community participation within development processes (Juliani, 2023). In this study, communication was therefore understood not simply as a mechanism for

delivering information but as an interactional process through which trust, participation, access, and collective understanding could be developed.

The study also employed a women's empowerment perspective to examine whether communication practices created opportunities for women to gain access to information, participate in community and institutional processes, and obtain greater recognition of their productive roles. (Rodiah, 2024) explained that communication-based empowerment can strengthen women's awareness and participation in community development activities, while (Mustafa et al., 2025) emphasized the contribution of women's participation in productive sectors to household economic resilience and sustainable development.

Based on these perspectives, the analysis examined the relationships among communication, trust, access, participation, institutional recognition, collaboration, digital literacy, and sustainability. Particular attention was given to how trust may facilitate participation, how local language may improve communication accessibility, how digital literacy may expand access to information and opportunities, and how institutional recognition and communication continuity may shape the extent to which participation contributes to women's empowerment.

Data Credibility

The credibility of the data was strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods. Information obtained from the three government officials was compared with information obtained from the five women fishers. Interview information was also cross-checked with direct observations and relevant documentation. Repeated interviews with the same informants further enabled the researchers to clarify and confirm information obtained during earlier sessions.

Where differences emerged, the researchers re-examined the information in relation to the informants' institutional or community roles and the socio-cultural context of Bone-Bone Village. This process was intended to strengthen the credibility, consistency, and interpretive trustworthiness of the findings (Moleong, 2023; Tracy, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Before each interview, the researchers explained the purpose of the research, the intended use of the information, and the voluntary nature of participation. Interviews were conducted only after the informants agreed to participate. The identities and personal information of the informants were kept confidential in reporting the findings, and the researchers respected the socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants throughout the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Communication Conditions of Women Fishers in Bone-Bone Village

The findings indicate that women fishers in Bone-Bone Village play an important role in supporting household economies and coastal livelihoods. Women are involved in fisheries-related activities such as fish processing, seafood marketing, shellfish collection, drying fish

products, and household-based trading activities. Information obtained from the women participants indicated that their participation in these activities was associated with the need to support household income in the context of unstable fishing yields and household economic conditions. Thus, women's fisheries-related activities represent an important component of household livelihood strategies. This finding is consistent with (Renggo & Rewa, 2023), who reported that women's productive participation contributes to household income and family resilience.

The findings also indicate that women simultaneously perform productive and reproductive roles. The observed activities showed that women combined fisheries-related economic work with childcare, food preparation, and household management. This condition reflects a dual labor burden that may affect the time and opportunity available for women to participate in community meetings, training programs, and institutional activities. This interpretation is consistent with (Safrida & Safrida, 2022), who identified women's multiple social and economic responsibilities as a challenge to sustained participation in empowerment activities, and (Prafitri et al., 2023), who discussed the unequal workloads experienced by women under gendered social expectations.

Despite their economic contribution, the study found that women's roles within fisheries livelihoods remained relatively underrecognized. Several women participants described fisheries as a social domain in which men continued to occupy more dominant positions in decision-making, while women were more commonly associated with supportive or household-based roles. This finding suggests a distinction between economic participation and institutional empowerment: women may contribute substantially to household livelihoods without having equivalent influence in formal fisheries governance or community decision-making.

This pattern is consistent with (Reftantia et al., 2023), who argued that patriarchal social structures continue to shape unequal gender relations and constrain women's participation in institutional processes. (Putrawan, 2023) similarly linked gender inequality with broader socio-economic vulnerability. Therefore, the findings suggest that increasing women's participation in productive activities alone is insufficient to establish gender equality; participation also requires access to communication, institutional recognition, and opportunities to influence relevant decisions.

The findings are also comparable with international research on women's participation in fisheries. (Mangubhai & Lawless, 2021) found that gender-inclusive initiatives in Melanesian small-scale fisheries could reach women without necessarily producing transformative empowerment when institutional cultures and capacities remained restrictive. (Chambon et al., 2025) similarly demonstrated that women's participation in community-based fisheries management in Kenya was constrained by intersecting socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. In relation to Bone-Bone, these studies suggest that gendered exclusion may operate not only through formal decision-making structures but also through everyday access to information, communication opportunities, and recognition of women's fisheries-related work.

The study further found that women's productive economic activities contributed to household livelihood support. (Renggo & Rewa, 2023) showed that women's productive activities can strengthen household income and resilience, while (Nabila & Sonita, 2023) found positive contributions of women-centered economic programs to household welfare. (Mustafa et al., 2025) similarly emphasized the contribution of women's participation in productive sectors to household economic sustainability and sustainable development. These studies support the interpretation that women's fisheries-related economic activities represent an important livelihood resource, although such participation should not automatically be equated with broader empowerment.

Table 1. Women Fishers' Economic Activities and Livelihood Roles

Economic Activities	Empirical Description	Livelihood Relevance
Fish processing	Women process fish products as part of household-based economic activities	Supports household income
Seafood marketing	Women market seafood products through local trading activities	Expands household income opportunities
Shellfish collection	Women collect shellfish and other coastal products	Supports household livelihood
Household trading	Women engage in small-scale economic activities from or near the household	Provides supplementary income
Domestic responsibilities	Women combine productive work with childcare and household management	Creates dual labor responsibilities

Participatory Communication as a Community Empowerment Strategy

The findings indicate that communication in women fishers' empowerment activities was primarily conducted through interpersonal communication, counseling, community meetings, and informal social interaction. Direct face-to-face communication was important because it provided opportunities for women fishers to interact with institutional actors and facilitators within familiar social settings.

The interviews further indicate that interpersonal communication was associated with greater openness and trust. Women participants described informal communication as a more comfortable setting for expressing concerns, sharing experiences, and discussing economic difficulties. These findings suggest that trust can function as a relational mechanism linking communication and participation. Repeated interpersonal interaction can create familiarity and psychological comfort, which may encourage women to communicate their concerns and participate more actively. This interpretation is supported by (Haryana et al., 2025), who emphasized the role of interpersonal communication in openness, participation, and social interaction, and (Tambunan & Hamad, 2025), who identified trust as an important factor influencing acceptance and participation.

The use of local language and practical examples was also identified as an important characteristic of communication in the community. The findings suggest that communication becomes more accessible when information is presented in language and forms of explanation that are familiar to community members. Local language can therefore be interpreted as an accessibility mechanism rather than simply as a cultural feature of communication. It reduces

linguistic barriers and provides women with greater opportunities to understand information, respond to messages, and contribute to discussions.

The findings further suggest that participatory communication supported opportunities for women to exchange experiences, identify common livelihood problems, and discuss possible solutions. This is consistent with (Juliani, 2023), who emphasizes that participatory communication positions community members as active participants in development rather than passive recipients of information. (Rodiah, 2024) similarly highlights the contribution of communication-based empowerment to women's awareness and participation.

However, the evidence does not support a deterministic claim that communication alone produces empowerment. Rather, communication appears to create enabling conditions for participation. Whether participation develops into empowerment depends on additional factors such as access to institutional processes, recognition of women's roles, inclusion in decision-making, and continuity of support.

(Haryana et al., 2025) and (Tambunan & Hamad, 2025) support the relational importance of interpersonal communication and trust, while (Utomo et al., 2025) demonstrates how partnership communication can strengthen stakeholder engagement and collaborative community programs. These findings reinforce the interpretation that trust can connect communication with participation, while collaboration can connect participation with broader institutional support.

International evidence provides a similar perspective. (House et al., 2024) found that relationship-building in participatory fisheries monitoring in Timor-Leste created enabling conditions for awareness, advocacy, and collective action. (Matovu et al., 2024) similarly demonstrated that participatory co-design involving coastal fisherwomen can identify locally defined barriers and support context-sensitive responses. The Bone-Bone findings are consistent with these studies in emphasizing the importance of relational and context-sensitive communication.

At the same time, the findings reinforce an important distinction between participation and empowerment. Informal dialogue may strengthen openness and social inclusion, but participation may remain institutionally limited when women do not have sufficient access to formal decision-making processes or recognition as legitimate fisheries stakeholders. This interpretation is consistent with (Mangubhai & Lawless, 2021; Chambon et al., 2025), who emphasize that women's participation does not automatically lead to substantive empowerment.

Table 2. Participatory Communication Practices

Communication Practice	Empirical Description	Analytical Interpretation
Interpersonal communication	Direct interaction between facilitators/institutional actors and women	Builds familiarity, openness, and trust
Community meetings	Women participate in community discussions	Creates opportunities for participation
Local-language communication	Information is communicated using familiar language	Functions as an accessibility mechanism

Informal discussion	Everyday social interaction is used for information exchange	Supports openness and community engagement
Counseling activities	Information and guidance are communicated directly	Facilitates awareness and participation

Communication Barriers in Women Fishers' Empowerment

The study identified several communication barriers affecting women fishers' participation. One important barrier was limited experience with digital communication platforms, online marketing, and information technology. The findings indicate that limited digital literacy constrained women's ability to use digital channels to support fisheries-related activities and access broader opportunities.

Digital literacy is therefore conceptualized in this study as part of the Access dimension rather than solely as a barrier. Access to communication increasingly depends not only on the availability of information channels but also on the ability of individuals to use those channels effectively. For women fishers, digital literacy may influence access to markets, fisheries information, training programs, institutional information, entrepreneurship opportunities, networking, and communication with government institutions.

Digital communication may also provide opportunities for women to promote fisheries products, reach consumers beyond immediate local networks, communicate with institutions, and obtain information about training or assistance programs. However, the findings also suggest that digital communication should complement rather than replace interpersonal communication because face-to-face interaction remains important in the local social context.

The findings indicate that information regarding assistance programs, entrepreneurship activities, and training was sometimes obtained through neighbors and other community members rather than directly from formal institutional channels. This pattern suggests that dependence on informal information networks may create unequal access to institutional information. Strengthening women's digital literacy may consequently expand not only informational access but also their ability to establish broader social and economic networks.

The study also identified limitations in gender-responsive institutional communication. Fisheries activities were often socially associated with male-centered production, and women's economic roles received comparatively limited recognition in institutional processes. This finding is consistent with (Mangubhai & Lawless, 2021), who demonstrated that formal gender inclusion does not necessarily produce substantive empowerment when institutional cultures remain restrictive. (Chambon et al., 2025) similarly showed that institutional and socio-cultural structures can constrain women's participation in fisheries governance.

Institutional recognition can therefore be interpreted as an enabling condition for translating participation into empowerment. Communication can provide women with opportunities to express opinions and receive information, but its empowerment potential is limited when women's contributions are not recognized within institutional planning and decision-making.

The study further indicates that women's participation can be constrained by their overlapping productive and domestic responsibilities. Women manage fisheries-related economic activities while also carrying responsibility for childcare and household management. (Safrida & Safrida, 2022; Prafitri et al., 2023) similarly identify women's multiple roles and unequal workloads as barriers to sustained participation. Accordingly, gender-responsive communication should take into account not only what information is communicated but also when, where, and through what channels communication activities are conducted.

Another barrier concerns the continuity of empowerment communication. The findings indicate that some empowerment activities were temporary and were not always followed by continuous mentoring or communication. Although initial activities could facilitate participation and awareness, the weakening of interaction after program implementation may limit opportunities for continued learning, trust-building, and institutional engagement.

The findings therefore suggest that communication continuity should be understood as a sustaining condition rather than as a statistical moderator. Because this study uses a qualitative design, it does not test moderation statistically. Instead, continuity is interpreted as a condition that may help maintain the communication relationships, information exchange, and participation necessary for sustained empowerment. (Novilasari, 2024) similarly emphasizes the importance of continuous organizational support and long-term community-based capacity strengthening.

These findings are consistent with international studies showing that participatory arrangements can remain limited by institutional and socio-cultural barriers. (Chambon et al., 2025) demonstrate how gender norms can constrain women's participation and leadership, while (Mangubhai & Lawless, 2021) emphasize the importance of organizational commitment and accountability. (House et al., 2024), in contrast, demonstrate how sustained relationships can support awareness, advocacy, and collective action. Taken together, these studies suggest that communication continuity is important for maintaining the relational infrastructure supporting participation and empowerment.

Table 3. Communication Barriers and Their Implications

Communication Barrier	Empirical Description	Implication
Limited digital literacy	Limited experience using digital platforms and online marketing	Restricts market, information, and institutional access
Unequal institutional communication	Fisheries communication tends to emphasize male-centered activities	Limits women's recognition and participation
Dual labor burden	Productive and domestic responsibilities are performed simultaneously	Limits available time for participation
Dependence on informal information networks	Information may be obtained indirectly through community members	Produces unequal access to institutional information
Limited communication continuity	Some empowerment activities lack sustained mentoring	Weakens continued participation and support

Communication Approach Model Based on SDG 5

Based on the findings, this study proposes a participatory and gender-responsive communication approach model for improving the livelihoods of women fishers in Bone-Bone Village based on SDG 5 principles. The model retains five interconnected dimensions: participation, access, inclusion, collaboration, and sustainability.

First, participation should form the foundation of communication-based empowerment. Women fishers need opportunities to express their experiences, identify livelihood problems, formulate priorities, and contribute to discussions and decision-making processes. Participation is therefore understood not merely as attendance but as meaningful involvement in communication and development processes.

Second, access should encompass interpersonal, community-based, local-language, and digital communication. Digital literacy is explicitly incorporated into this dimension because it influences women's capacity to access information, markets, entrepreneurship opportunities, fisheries knowledge, institutional communication, networking, and digital decision-making spaces. Local-language communication also functions as an accessibility mechanism by reducing linguistic barriers and facilitating understanding.

Third, inclusion requires that women fishers be recognized as legitimate actors within fisheries and community development. The findings suggest that communication opportunities have greater empowerment potential when women's economic contributions and perspectives are recognized institutionally. Thus, inclusion connects participation with the possibility of influencing formal institutional processes.

Fourth, collaboration connects community-level participation with institutional resources and support. Communication among government institutions, fisheries actors, community organizations, facilitators, and women fishers can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources, and responsibilities. This interpretation is consistent with (Sabariman et al., 2021; Warsono & Agustina, 2024; Utomo et al., 2025), who emphasize participatory collaboration and institutional support in sustainable community development.

Finally, sustainability requires continuous communication, mentoring, adaptive facilitation, and long-term institutional commitment. In the present study, communication continuity is interpreted as a sustaining condition that helps maintain trust, information exchange, learning, and participation beyond individual empowerment activities. (Novilasari, 2024) emphasizes the importance of continuous organizational support for sustainable women's empowerment.

The theoretical contribution of the model lies not in proposing participation, access, or gender inclusion as entirely new concepts, but in specifying how communication-related mechanisms may connect these dimensions to women's empowerment. The findings suggest the following pathway:

Accessible and culturally appropriate communication → trust and understanding → meaningful participation → institutional recognition and inclusion → sustained empowerment and livelihood opportunities.

Within this pathway, trust functions as a relational mechanism connecting communication and participation; local language functions as an accessibility mechanism;

digital literacy constitutes a contemporary component of communication access; institutional recognition functions as an enabling condition for translating participation into institutional empowerment; and communication continuity functions as a sustaining condition rather than a statistically tested moderator.

This interpretation is supported by (Juliani, 2023; Rodiah, 2024), who emphasize participatory communication as an important component of community empowerment. (Sabariman et al., 2021) further highlight the importance of integrating social, economic, and institutional dimensions in sustainable women's empowerment, while (Warsono & Agustina, 2024) emphasize collaborative and inclusive approaches in sustainable village development.

The model also builds on international evidence. (House et al., 2024) highlight relationship-building in participatory fisheries monitoring, (Mangubhai & Lawless, 2021) demonstrate the limitations of symbolic gender inclusion, (Chambon et al., 2025) identify socio-cultural and institutional barriers to women's participation, and (Matovu et al., 2024) emphasize participatory co-design based on fisherwomen's local perspectives. Building on these studies, the present model integrates participation, access, inclusion, collaboration, and sustainability within a communication-oriented framework for women fishers' livelihood empowerment.

The resulting contribution is therefore a mechanism-oriented interpretation of participatory communication. Communication is not assumed to directly produce empowerment; rather, its contribution depends on whether communication is accessible, trusted, participatory, institutionally recognized, digitally inclusive, and sustained over time.

Table 4. Participatory and Gender-Responsive Communication Model Based on SDG 5

Dimension	Communication Mechanism	Role in Empowerment
Participation	Dialogical communication enables women to express experiences and contribute to discussions	Creates meaningful opportunities for participation
Access	Local language, interpersonal communication, community networks, and digital literacy	Expands access to information, markets, entrepreneurship, fisheries knowledge, and institutions
Inclusion	Recognition of women as legitimate fisheries stakeholders	Connects participation with institutional decision-making
Collaboration	Communication among government, fisheries institutions, community groups, and women fishers	Connects community needs with institutional support and resources
Sustainability	Continuous communication, mentoring, and long-term facilitation	Maintains trust, learning, participation, and longer-term empowerment

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that women fishers in Bone-Bone Village, Baubau City, play a strategic role in sustaining household economies and strengthening coastal community resilience through fisheries-related activities such as fish processing, seafood marketing, shellfish collection, and household-based economic practices. Women's participation contributes significantly to household income and livelihood sustainability, particularly under unstable economic conditions experienced by traditional fishing communities.

The findings reveal that communication-based empowerment activities implemented within the community were primarily conducted through interpersonal communication, counseling activities, community meetings, and informal social interaction. Communication effectiveness was strongly influenced by interpersonal trust, local cultural values, social solidarity, and the use of local language during community interaction. Participatory communication approaches created more inclusive spaces for women fishers to exchange experiences, strengthen collective awareness, and participate in empowerment activities.

However, the study also found that women continued to experience structural barriers related to gender inequality, limited communication access, and insufficient institutional participation. Fisheries activities remained socially associated with male-centered production systems, while women's economic contributions frequently received limited institutional recognition. In addition, women often experienced dual labor burdens because they simultaneously managed domestic responsibilities and productive economic activities.

Several communication barriers also influenced the effectiveness of women fishers' empowerment programs, including limited digital literacy, unequal institutional communication, restricted access to information, and the lack of sustainable mentoring programs. These conditions indicate that women's empowerment within coastal communities requires not only economic participation but also broader communication and institutional transformation capable of strengthening women's participation, inclusion, and social recognition.

Based on the findings, this study proposes a participatory and gender-responsive communication approach model emphasizing participation, access, inclusion, collaboration, and sustainability as the primary dimensions supporting women fishers' empowerment based on SDG 5 principles. Communication therefore should not merely function as an information dissemination tool but also as a transformative social process capable of strengthening women's agency, community participation, and sustainable coastal development.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of participatory communication and women's empowerment studies within coastal community contexts by emphasizing the importance of inclusive and community-based communication practices in supporting sustainable development implementation. Practically, the findings provide recommendations for local governments, fisheries institutions, and community organizations to strengthen gender-responsive communication strategies, sustainable mentoring systems, and participatory empowerment programs for women fishers in Indonesia.

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