AFRAQ26 SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

AWFISHNET Women and Youth Pavilion 2026

The role of women in advancing aquaculture in Africa

Item	Detail
Event	AWFISHNET Women and Youth Pavilion at World Aquaculture Tanzania 2026 with AFRAQ26, whose theme is "Aquaculture Driving Blue Transformation"[1]
Pavilion theme	The role of women in advancing aquaculture in Africa
Date, time and room	Wednesday 2 December 2026, 9.00 to 10.40 am, before the conference opening ceremony. Katavi room, Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre (JNICC), Dar es Salaam[2]
Convenor	African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET)
Host	Tanzania Women Fish Workers Association (TAWFA), with the Government of Tanzania, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries
Partners	GIZ, FAO, SWISSAID, AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD, WWF and the World Bank's PROBLUE. Regional Economic Communities and regional bodies are invited
Participants	More than 300, including women from across Africa, TAWFA women, the Government of Tanzania, development partners, researchers, the private sector and conference delegates
Moderator	Technical Director, AWFISHNET
Languages	English, with Kiswahili interpretation
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1 About AWFISHNET

The African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) is the continental network of African women who process, trade and farm fish, with a secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya. It was established in 2017 with support from the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) under its Fisheries Governance project, after women at continental workshops in 2016 asked for one platform to raise their voice and grow intra-African fish trade[3]. AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD and WorldFish supported its creation. The network works through national chapters, and the Cabo Verde[4] and São Tomé and Príncipe chapters, launched in July 2026, are its 45th and 46th. Its elected leadership comes from East, Central, West, North and Southern Africa.

AWFISHNET's mission is to organise, represent and strengthen African women fish processors, traders and producers through leadership development, policy advocacy, enterprise competitiveness and strategic partnerships. Its Strategic Plan 2026 to 2031, endorsed in May 2026, has five pillars, namely institutional consolidation and governance reform, policy and advocacy leadership, enterprise competitiveness and economic empowerment, climate resilience and sustainable value chains, and financial sustainability and strategic partnerships[5]. It aims to contribute to improved livelihoods of its members by raising their incomes from fulfilling and dignified employment in fisheries.

AWFISHNET brings women's voices to the meetings where fisheries and aquaculture policy is shaped. In June 2026 it ran an exhibition of women's fish products from Uganda, Egypt, Senegal and Madagascar at the 11th Our Ocean Conference in Mombasa, and its President spoke on a panel of the PROBLUE Global Engagement Forum on small-scale fisheries[6,7]. The Women and Youth Pavilion is its space at the World Aquaculture Society's conferences in Africa.

2 Why the Pavilion matters

2.1 Women advance aquaculture across Africa, but are rarely counted

Women were 24 per cent of fishers and fish farmers worldwide in 2022 and 25 per cent of people working in aquaculture. Across small-scale fisheries they are about 40 per cent of workers and half of all post-harvest workers, and they are 62 per cent of fish processing workers where data exist[8]. In Africa they make up around 40 per cent of the small-scale fish production workforce[9]. Their share of fish farming

itself stays low. In East Africa, women's access to credit, extension services and modern technologies remains constrained, and men control most productive assets[10]. In Zambia, women who run their own fish farms lack land and credit and carry a double work burden[11].

2.2 The host country is growing aquaculture

Tanzania's farmed aquatic production rose from 33,525 tonnes in 2022/23 to about 43,400 tonnes by April 2024, from 34,417 ponds and 1,215 cages[12], and the 2026/27 budget counts 53,992 aquaculture farmers[13]. Yet the country faces an annual fish deficit of more than 700,000 tonnes[14], Tanzanians ate about 10 kg of fish per person in 2025[15], half the world average of 20.7 kg[16], and no public figure shows how many fish farmers are women. TAWFA, launched in April 2019 with FAO support[17], hosts this Pavilion and brings Tanzanian women fish farmers, processors and traders into it.

2.3 More fish on family plates and in school meals starts with women

Thirty per cent of Tanzanian children under five are stunted, and only 8 per cent of children aged 6 to 23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet[18]. Inland fish are among the most important animal-source foods for rural children in sub-Saharan Africa[19]. A school meals financing assessment for Tanzania lists school production projects, including aquaculture, among ways to fund meals[20], yet fish is rarely served in school meals because of its price[21]. In Malawi, fish powder added to school meals was highly accepted, at about USD 0.02 per child per week[22]. Women play a central role in the meals families eat, and 64 per cent of married Tanzanian women take part in decisions on major household purchases[18]. Women who farm, process and sell fish are the link between the water and the plate.

2.4 Women's voices are spread thin across the AFRAQ conference

Of the 446 abstracts in the conference programme list of November 2026, ten deal with women or gender. They come from six countries, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, and are spread across five sessions and the poster session. Few papers address human nutrition, and none deals with household or school meals[2]. FAO's Blue Transformation Roadmap calls for a growing participation of women in aquaculture decision-making and for aquatic foods in national food security and nutrition policies[23]. This Pavilion gives women's work a recognised home in the programme, open to every woman presenting at the conference, whichever country she comes from.

2.5 The Pavilion is held annually

At AFRAQ25 in Kampala, AWFISHNET's Women and Youth Pavilion drew more than 150 participants from government, research, the private sector and development partners, with support from GIZ and Lattice[24]. Participants asked for women's sessions early in the programme and for more time for dialogue[24]. Keeping the same name each year builds a space that delegates look for at every World Aquaculture Society conference in Africa. For 2026 AWFISHNET expects more than 300 participants, and the Pavilion is one of the first events of the opening day.

3 Goal and objectives

3.1 Goal

To advance women's place in Africa's aquaculture industry, as farmers, input suppliers, processors, traders and leaders, and to grow the AWFISHNET Women and Youth Pavilion as their recognised space at World Aquaculture Society conferences.

3.2 Objectives

3.2.1 Showcase the experience and innovations of women advancing aquaculture across Africa, through presentations, exhibits and posters.

3.2.2 Give women of the host country, through TAWFA, a platform to display their products and meet buyers, partners and government.

3.2.3 Make the case, led by women, for more aquatic foods on family plates and in school meals.

3.2.4 Broker partnerships and funding for women and youth in aquaculture through a partners' panel.

3.2.5 Raise AWFISHNET's visibility as a continental network.

4 Format of the Pavilion

The Pavilion is a 100-minute session on the opening morning, from 9.00 to 10.40 am, before the conference opening ceremony. The Technical Director of AWFISHNET shall moderate throughout, and an interpreter will work in English and Kiswahili. First, guests are welcomed and opening speeches follow. Women from across Africa then share their experience of advancing aquaculture in short presentations,

on subjects such as nutrition, women-led innovation, finance and fish welfare. A partners' panel follows, in the format AWFISHNET has used at its partners' meetings, with each partner mentioning one area of collaboration and one next step. After the wrap up, participants shall visit the women exhibitors and the posters in the room. Women will exhibit their products in the Pavilion itself.

5 Agenda

Time	Item	Who
9.00 to 9.10 am	Arrival and welcome of guests. Women exhibitors and posters on display	Moderator, with TAWFA as host
9.10 to 9.30 am	Opening speeches	TAWFA, the President of AWFISHNET, the Government of Tanzania (guest of honour) and a partner representative
9.30 to 10.00 am	Women's presentations. Experiences of women advancing aquaculture in Africa	Women from AWFISHNET chapters and from across Africa
10.00 to 10.25 am	Partners' panel. How partners will back women and youth in aquaculture	GIZ, FAO, SWISSAID, AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD, WWF, the World Bank and invited Regional Economic Communities
10.25 to 10.30 am	Wrap up and next steps	Moderator and the President of AWFISHNET
10.30 to 10.40 am	Visit to the women exhibitors in the room and the posters	All participants

After the session, participants walk to the opening ceremony in the Selous Hall at 10.40 am[2].

6 Participants and inclusion

More than 300 people are expected, up from more than 150 in 2025[24]. The Pavilion is open to everyone. It brings together women from AWFISHNET chapters and from across Africa, TAWFA women as hosts and exhibitors, the Government of Tanzania, development partners, continental and regional bodies, researchers, the private sector and conference delegates. The attendance register will record sex, age group and disability.

Women presenting at the conference who would like to exhibit their products or display a poster in the Pavilion are invited to contact AWFISHNET at info@awfishnet.org.

Group	Expected	How they are reached
Women from AWFISHNET chapters and from across Africa, including presenters	60	AWFISHNET chapters, women presenting at AFRAQ26, and Regional Economic Communities
TAWFA women from Dar es Salaam and nearby, as hosts and exhibitors	30	TAWFA, led by Hadija Malibiche and Lilian Ibengwe
Government of Tanzania	20	Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Directorate of Fisheries, through Lilian Ibengwe
Development partners and continental and regional bodies	30	Personal invitations from the President of AWFISHNET
Researchers, the private sector, young people and conference delegates	160	Conference programme, posters, social media and the Pavilion's name
Total	**300**	

7 Expected results and how they will be measured

Result	Indicator	Target
A full Pavilion	Participants registered, by sex, age group and disability	More than 300, at least half women
Women from across Africa are heard	Women presenting, and countries represented	At least 8 presenters from at least 5 countries
Women's products are seen	Women exhibitors in the Pavilion, including TAWFA members	At least 10
Partners commit to act	Partners naming a concrete next step on the panel	At least 5
The nutrition case is made	Brief on more aquatic foods on family plates and in school meals	1, within 2 weeks
AWFISHNET is visible	Branded materials distributed, and post-event report shared with partners and WAS	Report within 2 weeks
Follow-up	Partnership engagements and proposals developed from session commitments	At least 2, within 3 months

8 Roles of the partners

Partner	Role
AWFISHNET	Convenor. Design and moderation, visibility materials, the partners' panel and reporting
TAWFA	Host. Mobilises Tanzanian women presenters and exhibitors, led by Hadija Malibiche and Lilian Ibengwe, and supports Kiswahili facilitation
Government of Tanzania, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries	Guest of honour and opening remarks, through the Directorate of Fisheries
GIZ	Partner. Speaks on the partners' panel
FAO	Partner. Speaks on the partners' panel
SWISSAID	Partner. Speaks on the partners' panel
WWF	Partner. Speaks on the partners' panel
World Bank, PROBLUE	Partner. Invited to speak on the partners' panel
AU-IBAR and AUDA-NEPAD	Continental partners of AWFISHNET. Speak on the partners' panel
Regional Economic Communities and regional bodies	ECOWAS, the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) and the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) are invited to take part
World Aquaculture Society, African Chapter	Programme slot and room

9 Visibility and follow-up

AWFISHNET will make the Pavilion and the women in it visible with roll-up banners, T-shirts and jumpers, aprons for women processors and exhibitors, and umbrellas for the short rains of December. Brochures, the printed AWFISHNET strategic plan, resource materials and posters will be available to every participant. The Pavilion will be promoted through the conference programme and social media from mid-November. Within two weeks of the conference AWFISHNET will share a post-event report and a short brief on aquatic foods for family plates and school meals with partners and the World Aquaculture Society. Commitments made on the partners' panel will be tracked and reported at AWFISHNET's tenth anniversary celebrations in 2027.

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