Gender Roles in MalaysiaN Aquaculture industry: Exploratory Study in Kuala Besut, Terengganu, Malaysia

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An exploratory study was conducted in Kuala Besut, Terengganu Malaysia from May to June 2011. This study was conducted through collaboration with the Fishery Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM). The objective of this study was to explore gender roles in Malaysian aquaculture society. Focused Group Discussion (FGD) among field officers of LKIM was done as an input for questionnaire development. Ten field officers serving at the Besut District were invited to a 3-hour FGD on activities involved. The data collection was conducted through group activity whereby 200 aquaculturists under the governance of Besut LKIM office and their spouses were invited to attend a meeting at the LKIM Besut Complex on the 22th June 2011. They were given the self-administer questionnaires and were. assisted by LKIM officers who participate in the FGD session. A total of 275 respondents (men and women) completed the questionnaire. The respondents comprises of 157 cage operators, 95 fish pond operators, 12 hatchery operators, 9 open sea fishermen and 2 boat operators. Out of 275, there were 180 men and 95 women respondents. A small percent of the men were single (17.3%) and there was only one widowed among woman respondent. The majority of respondents had low level of education and all of the male respondents were involved in aquaculture, either in cage or pond management as a full time or part time. In addition, there were 14 out of 95 women who had indicated that they were involved in aquaculture activities. The study also solicited information on who does what in the household as well as in the aquaculture activities. The data clearly revealed that women and men were involved in traditional household chores in different roles. A different set of questions were used to obtain information on who does what in the aquaculture activities. In general, when the husbands completed the questionnaire they are under estimate the contribution of their wife for both the cage as well as in the pond management activities. Although there were only 10 women involved in the cage and 7 women in the pond management activities, only one husband indicated his wife’s involvement. Qualitative research methodology need to be conducted to gain a better understanding of gender’s roles in aquaculture practices in Malaysia to enable appropriate accounting of men and women’s roles in this sector. There is also a need for research on gender’s role on a larger population to get a better cross country perspective of the issue.