Sharing Experience: Implementing Gender Awareness Workshop in Aquaculture Sector

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The workshop empowering vulnerable stakeholder groups is one of the work packages under the AqASEM09 (Asia−Europe Meeting Aquaculture Platform) –a European Commission supported project under the 7th Work-package (WP7) The project is being coordinated by Ghent University, Belgium, which involve nine partners from European and Asian institutions to work on an action-oriented agenda for co-operation and to develop a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue, networking and continued coordination concerning sustainable aquaculture between EU and Asia. The objectives of the workshop were to share country experiences and best practices regarding poverty eradication and gender issues; increase knowledge and skills in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming; identify strategies to promote appropriate technologies and greater women participation for vulnerable groups and to develop action plans towards empowering poor farmers and women in aquatic food production. The workshop conducted from the 6th to 10th February 2012 in Felda Residence Hotel, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, adopted participatory and integrative approaches to enable full and effective participation. The main topics covered in the workshop were poverty and gender issues in aquatic food production, empowerment of vulnerable groups, gender analysis tools and gender mainstreaming strategies. The respective ministries and agencies in the 10-Asian country were contacted to nominate two participants representing policy maker and two field officers or researcher. There was also a requirement of mix-gender participants. Due to lack of response and inability to identify the right person, only five countries (Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, India and Malaysia) could successfully respond to the offer. The workshop organizer also accepted participants from India upon request from the Network of Aquaculture Centre in the Asia Pacific (NACA). Based on the pre-test that was conducted, a majority of them, with the exception of those form India and the Philippines had no background on gender issues and awareness. After 5-day workshop the post-test revealed that the participants had increased awareness of gender issues and indicated that the workshop contents were useful in their work. From workshop organizers’ perspective, much more effort needs to integrate gender into the aquaculture activities and research. More gender disaggregated data and research are needed to provide better understanding of the gender issues. Much effort is required to increase gender awareness among those working in the aquaculture sector.