



# **BOOSTING GENDER ROLES IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE FOR ADDRESSING POLICY GAPS AND EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES**



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# Introduction

- Small-scale fisheries and aquaculture are vital in Southeast Asia, supporting livelihoods and income for rural and coastal communities.
- The contributions of men and women within these sectors are often unequally recognized and valued.
- Women play vital but often undervalued roles in Southeast Asian fisheries and aquaculture—from post-harvest processing to local market chains, yet their work remains underrepresented in policies and data.
- Despite their significant contributions, women face systemic barriers, including limited access to resources, decision-making power, and equitable benefits, hindering sustainable sector growth
- There is growing recognition of gender disparities, with efforts to integrate gender perspectives into fisheries, habitat management, and livelihood programs.
- The SEAFDEC under the Japanese trust fund supported the project on Small-scale Fisheries Management for Better Livelihood and Fisheries Resources, which included promotion of gender inclusive fisheries management.
- Therefore, updating the role of women and men in small-scale fisheries since the SSF tries to promote gender equality is needed to understand the status/need/opportunity for gender equality and human rights as it implements the FAO SSF Guidelines

# Objective

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- To explore the gender division of labor and the need for more inclusive policies and recognition across SEAFDEC member countries
- To identify the gender inequality/need/gap in small-scale fisheries



# Methodology

- Gathering gender roles information from the presentation of 9 SEAFDEC member countries, namely: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam, from the Regional Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming in Fisheries in Southeast Asia on 8-10 October 2024 at SEAFDEC/TD
- Gathering the data from the JTF6.2 project on Small-scale Fisheries Management for Better Livelihood and Fisheries Resources



# Result : Brunei Darussalam

- Women are primarily involved in processing, marketing, and promoting fishery products locally
- Men engaged in fishing activities.



# Result: Cambodia

- Women face challenges in accessing resources and training. Still, they are supported by programs like the Post-Harvest Program, which aims to ensure equal participation and benefits for both genders.
- Men are involved in fishing and other fishery activities (fishing gear maintenance and fish sorting).



# Result: Indonesia

- Women play significant roles in fish farming, seaweed cultivation, and small-scale fisheries, and are active in fish farmer groups and smart fisheries villages.
- Men are engaged in fishing and other primary fishery activities like fish sorting.



# Result: Lao PDR

- Women participate in women's groups in reservoirs, earning additional income for their families, and are involved in decision-making processes and capacity-building programs.
- Men are involved in fishing and other primary fishery activities (fisheries resources enhancement).



# Result : Malaysia

- Women play key roles in processing and marketing fishery products, aligning with local cultural practices, and contribute significantly to local economic growth and job creation.
- Men are involved in fishing and other fishery activities (fishing gear maintenance, fish sorting on the boat, and meetings for the fisheries program ).



# Result : Myanmar

- Women face challenges in accessing resources and financial services, often concentrated in lower-paying jobs. Still, efforts are being made to improve their involvement in fisheries through targeted interventions and capacity building.
- Men are involved in fishing and other primary fishery activities (Gear maintenance).



# Result: The Philippines

- Women are supported by initiatives like capacity-building programs, improved market access, and financial assistance, but still face challenges such as unequal access to resources and limited representation in leadership roles.
- Men are involved in fishing and other fishery activities (fishing gear maintenance and fish sorting).



# Result: Thailand

- Women play key roles in small-scale fisheries, aquaculture, and fish processing, involved in activities such as preparing supplies, weaving nets, feeding aquaculture stock, and fish processing, but are underrepresented in decision-making positions.
- Men are involved in fishing and other primary activities such as gear maintenance, fish sorting, and resource enhancement).



# Result: Viet Nam

- Women are increasingly participating in the workforce and leadership roles, supported by programs like Project 939, which aids women in business, but still face economic inequality and limited representation in leadership.
- Men are involved in fishing and other fishery activities (Fish loading).



# Conclusions

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- Women are predominantly engaged in processing, marketing, aquaculture, and support activities,
- Men are mainly involved in fishing and other primary production tasks.
- In Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, women focus on processing and local marketing.
- In Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, women face barriers to resources but benefit from capacity-building and post-harvest programs.
- Indonesia and Thailand show strong female participation in aquaculture, small-scale fisheries, and community groups, though decision-making remains male-dominated.
- In the Lao PDR, women contribute through reservoir-based groups and local leadership.
- Viet Nam supports women's roles in business and leadership through national programs, though challenges persist.
- Across the region, men consistently lead in offshore fishing and other primary activities, while women's essential contributions, particularly in post-harvest and informal sectors, are often undervalued. Addressing this imbalance is key to achieving inclusive and sustainable fisheries development.

# Discussion and Recommendation

**Gender in Fisheries:** While men dominate offshore/high-visibility roles (e.g., fishing, boat operation), women are often relegated to undervalued onshore work (processing, marketing, post-harvest), perpetuating inequalities in resources, decision-making, and economic opportunities.



**Systemic Barriers & Solutions:** Case studies from Southeast Asia highlight systemic marginalization of women's contributions. Proposed strategies include:

**Better Data:** Sex-disaggregated data collection to make women's roles visible.

**Empowerment:** Promoting women's leadership in decision-making.

**Policy Integration:** Gender-responsive approaches in fisheries management.



**Equitable & Sustainable Outcomes:** Recognizing diverse roles fosters inclusive growth, ensuring food security and economic development leave no one behind.



Thank you for your attention