



GAF9 Report

Transforming aquaculture and fisheries for gender justice

1-3 October 2025 Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand



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Acknowledgements

We, the organizing committee of the 9th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF9), would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who contributed to making GAF9 possible. Over the three days of GAF9, we were reminded that advancing gender justice in aquaculture and fisheries is not the work of one institution or one discipline alone, but a shared journey built through collaboration, dialogue, solidarity, and mutual learning across countries, disciplines, generations, and communities.

We sincerely thank all keynote speakers, presenters, panelists, moderators, and participants who shared their time, knowledge, experiences, and reflections throughout the conference. Your presentations and discussions created a vibrant and meaningful space at GAF9, creating a vibrant and meaningful space for learning, exchange, and collective reflection.

We are deeply grateful to our partner institutions, collaborating organizations, and supporting networks for their trust, cooperation, and continued support throughout the planning and implementation of GAF9. We also extend our sincere appreciation to our sponsors and supporters whose generous contributions helped make this conference possible and strengthened our collective efforts toward gender justice, collaboration, and sustainability in aquaculture and fisheries.

Special thanks are extended to the organizing committee and secretariat, student volunteers, and support staff whose dedication, patience, and hard work behind the scenes ensured the smooth running of the conference. From preparation and coordination to technical support and hospitality, your efforts were invaluable.

Finally, we thank everyone who joined us in Bangkok, Thailand, and became part of GAF9. We hope that the conversations, connections, friendships, and ideas shared during the conference will continue beyond these few days and inspire future collaborations toward gender justice in aquaculture and fisheries.

We look forward to continuing this journey together — and to seeing you again at GAF10

Message from the Chair



The GAF9 report highlights collective efforts from across the globe to advance stories, perspectives, and numbers of gender justice in aquaculture and fisheries. It brings together the passion for gender equality and humanity of early-career researchers, senior scholars, policymakers, practitioners, civil society organizations, academicians, and development partners. It showcases pieces of evidence, innovations, and practical strategies carefully written by the researchers to improve the lives and livelihoods of fishers, aquaculture workers, their families, and the wider communities.

The 9th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF9), organized by the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society, was guided by the theme “Transforming aquaculture and fisheries for gender justice.” The conference addressed five thematic streams: (1) Women and Gender in the Blue Economy; (2) Gender and Climate Change; (3) Nature-Based Solutions; (4) Innovative Frameworks and Methodologies for Gender Research; and (5) Counting and Discounting Men’s and Women’s Work in Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe, PhD

Chair

Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries Section (GAFS) of the Asian Fisheries Society

About GAF9

In 2025, the Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF) marked a meaningful, refreshing milestone with the convening of its 9th edition (GAF9) in Bangkok, Thailand. This gathering came more than two decades after the inaugural GAF1 conference held in Penang, Malaysia, in December 2004, and more than three decades after the seminal 1990 workshop on Women in Fisheries in India, which sparked the creation of the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society (GAFS).

GAFS organized the GAF9 in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) as the host institution. The conference was held from 1 to 3 October 2025 and was co-organized with key partners, including the Department of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Kingdom of Thailand, the University of the Philippines Visayas, the Faculty of Fisheries of Kasetsart University, the Crawford Fund for a Food Secure World, Dried Fish Matters, and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). The event was supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC/CRDI) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) as platinum sponsors, AquaStar Smart Seafood as a silver sponsor, and The Nature Conservancy as a bronze sponsor.

From modest beginnings focused on women in fisheries, GAF has evolved into a leading global platform for critical dialogue and conversations on gender in aquaculture and fisheries. GAF9 reflected this evolution by expanding its analytical and political scope to include men and masculinities, queer and trans studies, and the relational dynamics among diverse gendered individuals. This shift signals a broader commitment to advancing humane, inclusive and collective, and sustainable aquaculture and fisheries in a rapidly changing world in the Anthropocene.

GAF9 took place at a pivotal historical moment. The sector is facing accelerating climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, digitalization, and growing socio-political tensions around gender, equity, and inclusion. Against these scenarios, GAF9 sought to reimagine gender research and practice in fisheries and aquaculture, moving beyond binary and siloed approaches toward intersectional, transformative, and more-than-human perspectives.

The conference attracted 192 delegates from 36 countries and featured 125 papers across five thematic streams, to wit:

- a. Women and Gender in the Blue Economy
- b. Gender and Climate Change: Navigating Impacts on Fisheries and Aquaculture
- c. Nature-Based Solutions in Aquaculture and Fisheries
- d. Innovative Frameworks and Methodologies for Gender Research
- e. Counting and Discounting: Men’s and Women’s Work in Fisheries and Aquaculture

Why GAF9 Matters?

Despite decades of advocacy and research, gender equity and equality in aquaculture and fisheries remain unevenly mainstreamed in policy, practice, and knowledge systems. While gender equality is recognized as a core global priority under Sustainable Development Goal 5, dominant approaches in the sector often remain gender-insensitive, fragmented, and disciplinary siloed. The need for sensitive, responsive, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approaches to be embedded in research, governance, and development interventions is just becoming important as time goes by.

This need is compounded by persistent gaps in high-quality, sex- and gender-disaggregated data across local, national, and global scales. Many gendered contributions, especially informal, unpaid, and care-based labor, remain invisible in statistics, policies, and value chain analyses. On the other hand, growing anti-gender and anti-feminist discourses threaten to roll back gains in gender justice, further constraining policy commitments and implementation.

Policies that promote gender equality in fisheries and aquaculture are often weakly implemented, under-resourced, or disconnected from local realities. As the sector transitions into an era shaped by digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and rapidly evolving governance systems, existing gender frameworks risk becoming outdated if they fail to engage with emerging socio-technical transformations.

Never has the need for knowledge sharing and collective reflection been stronger. Fisheries and aquaculture systems are increasingly exposed to unpredictable and compounding risks, including climate change, disasters, ecological degradation, market volatility, and other challenges. These risks intersect with gendered power relations, social inequalities, and

political structures in complex ways that demand new analytical tools, methodologies, and partnerships.

GAF9 brought together diverse scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and community agents to explore innovative, intersectional, and transformative approaches to gender in aquaculture and fisheries. The discussions highlighted the importance of integrating social, political, cultural, economic, and ecological dimensions, recognizing context-specific realities, and embracing participatory and gender-transformative pathways. Emerging themes included men and masculinities, queer and trans perspectives, human rights frameworks, gendered value chains, artificial intelligence, and more-than-human approaches to sustainability.

How GAF9 Works?

In response to persistent gender inequalities, data gaps, weak policy implementation, and emerging challenges such as climate change and digital transformation in aquaculture and fisheries, GAF9 aimed to strengthen gender-responsive research, policy, and practice. The conference sought to do the following:

- a. Advancing gender-responsive research and policy in aquaculture and fisheries**
through strengthening evidence-based, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approaches to inform policies and practices across the Blue Economy, climate adaptation, nature-based solutions, and gendered value chains.
- b. Generating and sharing evidence, tools, and good practices on gender equality and inclusion**
by showcasing innovative frameworks, methodologies, and empirical findings—including intersectional, participatory, and more-than-human approaches to address persistent gender gaps in aquatic food systems.
- c. Fostering cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary collaboration**
through building partnerships among researchers, governments, development agencies, civil society, and private sector actors to co-develop solutions for gender-transformative fisheries and aquaculture.
- d. Identifying priority actions to transform aquatic food systems**
by defining strategic research, policy, and practice priorities to advance equitable, climate-resilient, and socially just aquaculture and fisheries, with attention to women, men, and diverse gender identities.

PART I - Setting the stage

Opening the Conference



GAF9 was officially opened by Deputy Director-General of Thailand's Department of Fisheries (DoF), **Dr. Thitiporn Laoprasert**. Welcoming participants from around the world, she reflected on the long-standing collaboration between the Department of Fisheries, the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section (GAFS), and the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS), noting that GAF9 marked two decades of partnership dedicated to *“ensuring that women's work in aquaculture and fisheries is recognized, valued, and rewarded.”*

In her remarks, Dr. Thitiporn highlighted two conference themes that are particularly relevant for Thailand: gender and climate change, and nature-based climate solutions. Referring to rice-fish farming and integrated multi-trophic aquaculture as examples of Thailand's approach to sustainable aquaculture transformation, she emphasized that these initiatives can strengthen food security and environmental resilience while also creating greater opportunities for women's participation in decision-making and livelihood activities.

Participants were also welcomed by AIT President **Prof. Pai-Chi Li**, who emphasized the importance of integrating sustainability and inclusion in addressing global development challenges. Reflecting on the conference theme, he noted that *“sustainability cannot be achieved without women's participation, as true sustainability must embrace both the ecosystem and human lives.”* His remarks highlighted the important role that gender equality plays in shaping resilient and sustainable futures for fisheries and aquaculture, reinforcing many of the themes that would emerge throughout the conference.

Setting the stage

Advancing Gender Justice, Visibility, and Accountability in Fisheries and Aquaculture:

The keynote session brought together three distinguished speakers who examined gender justice in fisheries and aquaculture from research, policy, and implementation perspectives.

Dr. Holly Hapke from the University of California-Irvine addressed the role of gender research in advancing justice and resilience across fisheries value chains. **Angela Lentisco** from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for Asia and the Pacific focused on the practical integration of gender into fisheries policy, programming, and institutional frameworks. **Dornnapha Sukkree** from MAST Human highlighted justice beyond production, emphasizing technology-enabled accountability, labor rights, and multi-stakeholder collaboration in fisheries supply chains. Together, the keynotes framed gender as a structural, policy, and justice issue central to sustainable and equitable fisheries and aquaculture systems.

Keynote 1

Advancing Gender Research to Support Gender Justice in Fisheries and Aquaculture

by Dr. Holly Hapke



Dr. Holly Hapke, University of California-Irvine

Dr. Holly Hapke, Director of Research Development, School of Social Sciences, University of California-Irvine emphasized that women play integral roles across fisheries value chains, particularly in post-harvest processing and trade. However, their labor remains systematically concealed and undervalued. She highlighted persistent gender inequalities in research, technology, and policy that marginalize women's contributions and limit the scope of fisheries science.

She stressed the importance of studying masculinities and intersectionality, noting that gender interacts with caste, class, age, and identity to shape access to opportunities and risk exposure. Dr. Hapke called for the use of feminist commodity chain analysis to capture unpaid labor, informal work, and domestic contributions that conventional economic models overlook. She concluded that recognizing women’s labor strengthens equity, ecological resilience, and economic sustainability, and she challenged participants to rethink future directions for gender research and development in fisheries and aquaculture.

Keynote 2

Learning to See: Practical integration of Gender in Fisheries

by Angela Lentisco



Angela Lentisco, FAO

Fishery and Aquaculture Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for Asia and the Pacific, delivered the second keynote, drawing on professional experience and institutional policy frameworks. **Lentisco** highlighted the diverse yet often invisible roles of women in fisheries, including gleaning, aquaculture production, seaweed farming, post-harvest processing, marketing, and household decision-making on fish consumption and sales. She emphasized that women’s fisheries-derived income directly supports household nutrition, education, and healthcare.

She framed gender as both a technical and justice issue and outlined FAO instruments supporting gender integration, including the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines), FAO’s Policy on Gender Equality, and the alignment of SDG 5 with SDG 14.

Lentisco demonstrated how gender strategies increase visibility, expand access to opportunities, strengthen women’s participation in decision-making, and improve sustainability outcomes. She presented gender mapping of fisheries value chains, which showed women’s dominance in processing but limited participation in aggregation, wholesaling, and export, alongside concerns related to youth and child labor. She concluded with three future scenarios—status quo, regression, or transformation—and urged stakeholders to pursue transformative pathways toward gender equity in fisheries.

Keynote 3

Justice Beyond the Catch: Technology, Collaboration and Gender Equality in Fisheries

by Dornnapha Sukkree



Dornnapha Sukkree, MAST Human

Dornnapha Sukkree, Co-founder and Executive Director, Multi-Stakeholder Initiative for Accountable Supply Chain of Thai Fisheries (MAST Human), delivered the third keynote focusing on labor justice and technological innovation. **Sukkree** identified five key drivers of human trafficking and forced labor in fisheries: vulnerability of migrant workers, isolation at sea, weak regulatory oversight, invisibility of offshore abuses, and systemic exploitation. She emphasized that these factors create conditions for debt bondage, abuse, and coercion. She presented the MAST Human Intelligence App, a technology-enabled tool designed to prevent trafficking and empower fishing communities. The application includes emergency alerts, witness reporting, and educational resources to increase awareness and protection. **Sukkree** stressed that technology alone is insufficient and called for coordinated action among governments, industry actors, labor organizations, and civil society to enforce policies, uphold ethical labor standards, and support victims. She underscored collaboration as essential to achieving gender equality and human rights in fisheries supply chains.

PART II - Thematic Sessions

Thematic Session 1: Women/Gender in the Blue Economy

This thematic session examined how women participate in and shape the blue economy across fisheries, aquaculture, seafood value chains, and coastal livelihoods. Presentations analyzed structural gender inequalities, socio-cultural norms, labor segmentation, and governance gaps that constrain women's economic, social, and political participation. The session also highlighted innovative institutional, technological, and collective strategies to advance gender-transformative aquatic food systems.

Several presentations emphasized integrating gender equity into sustainability standards, governance systems, and policy frameworks. **Corey Peet** from the United States presented emerging strategies to integrate women's economic empowerment into seafood sustainability certification and market-based initiatives, outlining timelines, evaluation criteria, and potential market claims linked to verified gender-responsive standards. This highlighted the growing recognition that sustainability certification must incorporate social and gender dimensions alongside environmental criteria.

At the policy level, **Stephanie Achieng** from AU-IBAR presented the Continental Gender Strategy on Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation, emphasizing policy reform, capacity building, and gender mainstreaming in biodiversity governance. **Hellen Guebama** from AU-IBAR further discussed gender and youth integration within Africa's Policy Framework and Reform Strategy, including trade and value-chain development under the AfCFTA, underscoring the need for structural gender integration in regional fisheries governance.

Gendered vulnerabilities linked to unsustainable fishing practices and occupational hazards were highlighted across diverse contexts. **Chadapa Piyamath** from Kyoto University used an intersectional gender framework to demonstrate how unsustainable fishing practices in Thailand exacerbate women's livelihood risks and intensify hidden gender inequalities.

Naila M. Bhat from ICAR-CIFE documented severe occupational hazards among fisherwomen in Dal Lake, including frostbite, injuries, biological risks, and psychosocial stress, while also revealing gender-differentiated priorities in livelihood aspirations and household security. These findings underscore the need for gender-sensitive occupational safety policies and social protection mechanisms in fisheries.

Women's central roles in fisheries livelihoods and informal economies were explored across multiple geographies. **Nadiya Azmy** from the Center for Poverty Analysis examined gendered seafood market dynamics in Sri Lanka during economic and environmental crises, showing that women traders played critical roles but remained excluded from decision-making and compensation mechanisms.

Sruthi P from ICAR–CIFT documented women's informal gleaning activities in Kerala, revealing environmental and occupational risks and the lack of formal policy recognition. **Liberty N. Espectato** from the University of the Philippines Visayas similarly documented women's contributions across crab fishing households, processing, and marketing, reinforcing the invisibility of women's labor in fisheries statistics and policy.

Several studies demonstrated how collective action and capability-building mechanisms contribute to women's empowerment. **Vijaykiran Vijayan** from ICAR–CIFT applied Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to show that women's self-help groups in Kerala increased income, bargaining power, and social recognition, though structural constraints persisted.

Adjie Dharmasatya from Masyarakat dan Perikanan Indonesia Foundation documented how fisherwomen in South Sulawesi formed business groups and gained leadership roles in cooperatives, illustrating empowerment pathways in patriarchal contexts. **Amala Anna Alex** from the University of Kerala presented the Ayalkootam collective model, showing how women-led collectives strengthen financial independence, entrepreneurship, and resilience.

Gender bias and structural barriers across the seafood value chain were recurrent themes. **Angela L. Russell** from the New Zealand Rock Lobster Industry Council explored women's lived experiences across the seafood value chain in Aotearoa New Zealand, including Māori women's roles in customary fisheries, highlighting persistent underrepresentation and structural gender bias despite progress in leadership and sustainability initiatives.

Gray from the University of East Anglia examined gendered and migrant labor in Scotland's fish-processing industry, showing how gender and migration shape labor roles, household dynamics, and well-being among local and migrant women. **Lucy Njogu** from the University of East Anglia and WorldFish further emphasized that participation in mariculture does not

necessarily translate into empowerment, given persistent gender gaps in income, time use, and resource access.

Technology and innovation were discussed as both opportunities and barriers for women. **Shalini Singh** from Gujarat Maritime University reported that technological development in fisheries enhanced women's empowerment but remained constrained by socio-cultural norms and structural barriers. **Poonam Jayant Singh** from ICAR–NBFGR demonstrated how ornamental fisheries-based micro-enterprises under Mission Navshakti improved livelihoods and resilience among marginalized women, highlighting the role of targeted innovation programs in economic inclusion.

Human development and well-being outcomes were analyzed through gender lenses. **Samiran Mukherjee** from ICAR–CIFE used a Human Development Index framework to show how governance regimes shape maternal health and gendered development outcomes in fish-farmer households. **Basanta Kumar Das** from ICAR–CIFRI highlighted women's contributions across inland fisheries and aquaculture and their links to Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing women's roles in production, processing, marketing, and community management.

Blue justice and gender-responsive governance were emphasized as critical frameworks. **Lilian J. Ibengwe** from the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Tanzania presented initiatives promoting women's blue justice, including women's associations, community banking, and gender desks, while identifying gaps in data and legal frameworks.

Lovin Kobusingye from AWFishNet highlighted the role of women's fisheries organizations in governance and conflict resolution, emphasizing the need for institutional support and structured mechanisms. **Dina Muthmainnah** from Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries underscored women's contributions to inland fisheries and the need for gender-inclusive policies and mainstreaming strategies.

Structural gender vulnerabilities and power relations were also addressed. **Arthur M. Moonga** presented a qualitative assessment of fish-for-sex exchanges and teenage marriages, highlighting governance gaps and the need for multisectoral interventions. **Anisa Indira Prameswari** from Masyarakat dan Perikanan Indonesia Foundation presented behaviour change initiatives in women's coastal communities, demonstrating pathways toward inclusive blue economy transitions.





Key Messages

1. The blue economy is gendered, and women’s contributions remain undervalued and underrecognized.

Women play critical roles across fisheries and aquaculture value chains, yet their labor is often informal, low-paid, and excluded from official statistics and policy frameworks.

2. Participation does not guarantee empowerment.

Women’s high participation in post-harvest processing, marketing, and governance-adjacent roles does not translate into decision-making power, leadership, or equitable economic returns.

3. Structural barriers persist across regions and scales.

Gender norms, unequal access to finance, technology, land, and markets, and weak governance systems systematically constrain women’s opportunities and benefits from blue economy transitions.

4. Collective action and women-led organizations are powerful pathways for transformation.

Cooperatives, savings groups, and women’s networks strengthen income generation, bargaining power, governance participation, and climate resilience.

5. Gender-responsive governance and blue justice frameworks offer emerging tools but remain weakly implemented.

Policy frameworks exist, but gaps in enforcement, financing, and data hinder meaningful gender mainstreaming in fisheries governance and blue economy strategies.

6. Digitalization and value addition create opportunities but risk widening gender divides.

Technological innovations and digital platforms can increase women's market access and income, but unequal digital literacy and infrastructure threaten to exclude marginalized groups.

7. Climate change, market shocks, and governance reforms disproportionately affect women.

Women experience higher post-harvest losses, market exclusion, and livelihood vulnerability due to limited infrastructure, capital, and institutional support.

Thematic Session 2: Gender and Climate Change: Navigating the Impacts on Fisheries and Aquaculture

This thematic session examined the gendered impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, with a focus on vulnerability, adaptive capacity, governance, livelihoods, and food security. Presenters highlighted how climate variability, extreme events, and environmental degradation exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities, particularly affecting women through livelihood insecurity, unpaid care burdens, health risks, and constrained access to resources and decision-making spaces.

At the same time, women were identified as key actors in adaptation and resilience-building through conservation practices, climate-smart aquaculture, household food security strategies, and community-level governance. The sessions emphasized that adaptive capacity is shaped not only by gender but also by governance structures, social capital, financial access, and socio-cultural norms. Overall, the discussions underscored the need for intersectional, gender-responsive, and governance-sensitive approaches to climate adaptation in aquatic food systems.

Urban expansion and coastal infrastructure development were examined as emerging drivers of ecological and livelihood transformation in fishing communities. **Raymundo R. Pavo** from the University of the Philippines presented an urban-focused case study on coastal road development in Davao City, documenting women's narratives of ecosystem change, declining fish habitats, and altered coastal vegetation. Women expressed concerns about vessel docking safety and disruptions to fish vending livelihoods, while also demonstrating adaptive leadership through mangrove planting initiatives and locally designed floating docking devices. The study highlighted women's environmental stewardship and intersectional ties between urban development, ecological change, and gendered livelihoods.

Women's roles as climate leaders and solution providers were highlighted across multiple contexts. **Neyra Solano** from COBI documented 53 locally developed climate solutions across Mexican fishing communities, with women actively engaged in pollution reduction, conservation, and monitoring initiatives. These women-led solutions were aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, underscoring women's contributions to climate governance and sustainability frameworks.

Similarly, **Emma Rice** from Virginia Tech analyzed women's fisheries organizations in Uganda as platforms for empowerment and adaptive capacity. Organizational effectiveness was shaped by social norms, awareness levels, access to financial and social capital, and value chain integration. Leadership was linked to education and governance quality, with organizational models ranging from savings-only groups to integrated savings-loans-investment structures, demonstrating institutional pathways for women-led adaptation.

Several studies examined gendered disparities in adaptive capacity and governance structures. **Jonathan G. Low** from Virginia Tech reported that women in Lake Victoria fishing communities experienced lower adaptive capacity and greater negative impacts on income and food security due to unpaid care labor, limited mobility, and restricted access to financial capital. Men's greater access to transport and markets enabled broader economic engagement, while women relied on localized adaptation strategies.

Elizabeth A. Nyboer from Virginia Tech further demonstrated that governance legitimacy and gender equity are critical determinants of adaptive capacity. Women's fisheries organizations contributed to improved management outcomes, but inequitable rules, low trust, and weak social cohesion constrained adaptation. Gender mediated governance shocks, with women increasingly influencing market standards and accessing higher-value markets under changing governance conditions.

Household-level gendered impacts of climate change were documented across Southeast Asia and South Asia. **Zumilah Zainalaludin** from Universiti Putra Malaysia reported climate-induced distress including floods, sea-level rise, forest fires, and health impacts, with women adopting poverty eradication strategies such as livelihood diversification, migration, asset sales, and program participation. Vulnerable groups included older adults, youth, persons with disabilities, and caregivers, with women disproportionately represented among those with poor health outcomes.

Nur Aqilah Amalina Jaafar from Universiti Putra Malaysia analyzed gender disparities in food consumption under climate stress, showing gendered differences in dietary patterns shaped by affordability, availability, and cultural norms. Female-headed households relied more heavily on staple proteins such as fish, while male-headed households had greater access to diverse food items.

Structural inequalities were identified as risk multipliers under climate change. **Sizwile Khoza** and **Mahbub Haque** from the Stockholm Environment Institute highlighted hydrological changes, habitat loss, extreme weather, and increased competition for resources, with marginalized fishers facing elite capture, restricted access to licenses, and market barriers. Climate change was framed as a risk multiplier that exacerbates pre-existing gender and socioeconomic inequities.

Abhilash Arun Sapre from Gujarat National Law University reported that women constitute nearly half of India's fisheries workforce but are concentrated in lower-value activities and earn significantly less than men. Climate disruptions intensified income losses, health burdens, and time poverty for women, reinforcing economic marginalization and gendered labor segmentation.

Marion Antonette A. Daclan from the University of the Philippines provided an intersectional analysis of women fishers' adaptive capacities, highlighting declining production, coastal privatization, typhoon impacts, gender-based violence, and dual productive and reproductive labor burdens. Strengthened government social and economic interventions were recommended to enhance women's adaptive capacity and resilience.

Technical climate adaptation strategies in aquaculture were also presented. **Sunila Rai** from Agriculture and Forestry University, Nepal demonstrated that manipulating stocking density and species composition in flood- and drought-prone areas increased aquaculture yields. With a high proportion of female farmers involved, the study highlighted climate-smart aquaculture as a practical and gender-inclusive pathway for enhancing resilience and productivity.





Key Messages

1. Climate change disproportionately intensifies gender inequalities in fisheries and aquaculture.

Women experienced greater income losses, health risks, and unpaid labor burdens, underscoring the need for gender-responsive climate policies.

2. Women are indispensable actors in climate adaptation and resilience-building.

Women-led conservation, governance, and livelihood strategies demonstrated significant contributions to sustainable aquatic food systems.

3. Governance legitimacy and social capital are critical determinants of adaptive capacity.

Equitable institutions, trust, and inclusive decision-making structures enhanced resilience, particularly for women's organizations.

4. Intersectional vulnerabilities require tailored adaptation strategies.

Adaptive capacity varied across gender, class, age, disability, and marital status, highlighting the need for differentiated policy responses.

5. Climate-smart aquaculture technologies can enhance resilience and productivity when gender-inclusive.

Technical adaptations, combined with gender-responsive extension services, offer scalable pathways for climate-resilient aquaculture.

6. Gendered food security outcomes reflect structural inequalities in access and resources.

Policies must integrate nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches to address climate-induced food insecurity.

Thematic Session 3: Nature-Based Solutions in Aquaculture and Fisheries

This thematic session examined how gender-responsive and inclusive nature-based approaches can strengthen resilience, livelihoods, and sustainability in aquatic food systems. Presentations highlighted that nature-based solutions, such as seaweed farming, climate-resilient aquaculture practices, and ecosystem-based management, offer opportunities for economic empowerment, climate adaptation, and environmental sustainability. However, gender and social inclusion gaps persist, particularly in access to knowledge, technology, infrastructure, and decision-making. Across Southeast Asia and South Asia, women were shown to be central agents in nature-based aquatic livelihoods but remained constrained by structural inequalities and resource limitations. The session emphasized the need for policy reforms, targeted capacity-building, and institutional support to ensure that nature-based solutions are equitable, scalable, and transformative.

National-level gender and social inclusion gaps in aquaculture governance were highlighted through policy and data-driven assessments. **Ubolratana Suntornratana** from the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia Pacific conducted a preliminary assessment of gender and social inclusion in Thailand's aquaculture sector, reviewing national policies, analyzing sex-disaggregated data, and surveying marginalized groups. The study identified persistent gender-based barriers in access to innovation, knowledge, and decision-making, shaped by restrictive social norms and institutional gaps. Recommendations included policy reforms, targeted capacity-building, and strengthened institutional mechanisms to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in aquaculture governance and registration systems.

Women's adaptive responses to climate change through aquaculture innovation were examined through qualitative case studies. **Ana Mendes Pinto da Silva** from WorldFish, Timor-Leste documented women's early adoption of climate-resilient seaweed farming innovations on Atauro Island through the Ikan Adapt Project. Despite facing heavy manual labor, limited technical knowledge, and dependence on unpredictable marine conditions, women improved cultivation practices through targeted training, reducing physical burdens and increasing productivity. The study emphasized the need for infrastructure, tools, and sustained technical support to strengthen women's climate resilience and livelihoods.

In a related multi-community study, **da Silva** further analyzed women's roles in fisheries, seaweed farming, and aquaculture across Timor-Leste, highlighting their substantial contributions to household economies and food security. However, women faced limited access to climate information, production inputs, and technical training, with climate stressors exacerbating vulnerabilities and constraining adaptive capacity. The findings called for sustainable interventions, improved resource access, and awareness-raising to enhance women's economic and climate resilience.

Seaweed farming was presented as a gender-inclusive pathway for economic empowerment and blue economy development. **Shahroz Mahean Haque** from Bangladesh Agricultural University demonstrated that women represent approximately 70 percent of seaweed producers and collectors in coastal Bangladesh, performing key roles across production and post-harvest processes. Economic analysis showed high profitability and low capital requirements, making seaweed farming accessible to women with limited formal education. However, structural barriers such as limited market access, inadequate transport and processing infrastructure, and dependence on middlemen constrained women's ability to capture value. The study recommended women-focused training, improved processing facilities, and market diversification to enhance women's agency and contribute to sustainable blue economy outcomes.





Key Messages

1. Nature-based solutions offer climate-resilient and accessible livelihood pathways for women and marginalized groups in aquaculture and fisheries.

These approaches can enhance household income, food security, and adaptive capacity when supported by enabling policies and infrastructure.

2. Women play central roles in seaweed farming and aquaculture value chains but remain constrained by limited access to technology, credit, training, and physical assets.

These structural barriers reduce productivity and limit women's ability to capture economic value.

3. Targeted capacity-building and climate-smart technical training significantly improve women's knowledge, productivity, and resilience to climate impacts.

Training must be accompanied by tools, boats, and infrastructure to reduce physical labor burdens and enhance scalability.

4. Market systems and value chains continue to reproduce gender inequalities, with women concentrated in low-value segments and dependent on intermediaries.

Strengthening women's market access, processing facilities, and branding strategies is essential to increasing their economic returns.

5. Current policy and governance frameworks are insufficiently mainstream in gender and social inclusion in nature-based aquaculture strategies.

Policy reforms, institutional coordination, and gender-responsive regulatory mechanisms are needed to ensure equitable participation and benefit-sharing.

6. Nature-based aquaculture and fisheries interventions have transformative potential when combined with institutional support, financing, and inclusive governance.

Scaling inclusive nature-based solutions can simultaneously advance gender equality, climate adaptation, and blue economy objectives.

Thematic Session 4: Innovative Frameworks/Methodologies for Gender Research in Fisheries and Aquaculture

This thematic session examined innovative conceptual, methodological, and analytical frameworks for advancing gender research and practice in fisheries and aquaculture. Presenters introduced participatory, intersectional, political economy, digital, and governance-oriented approaches that challenge traditional gender analyses and seek to produce more transformative, policy-relevant knowledge.

Across empirical case studies and methodological reflections, the session highlighted the importance of moving beyond descriptive gender analyses toward frameworks that interrogate power, norms, governance, and structural inequalities. Collectively, the session emphasized that methodological innovation is critical for translating gender research into transformative policy and practice in aquatic food systems.

Participatory and feminist research methods were presented as critical tools for amplifying marginalized voices and challenging epistemic exclusion. **Cécile Brugère** from Soulfish Research and Consultancy (UK) demonstrated how photovoice in Brazil enabled women fishers to document lived experiences of marginalization, aspirations for blue justice, and struggles for sustainable livelihoods. The method increased visibility, confidence, and collective advocacy through public exhibitions, illustrating participatory research as both a knowledge and empowerment tool.

Several studies examined how entrenched gender norms shape labor, remuneration, and decision-making. **Kate Barclay** from the University of Technology Sydney showed that Indonesian fishing communities exhibit equal labor participation but unequal pay due to complementarian gender ideologies. She argued that gender-transformative change must be community-led, supported by external facilitators rather than imposed interventions.

Askiah Binti Jamaluddin from Universiti Putra Malaysia analyzed predictors of micro-entrepreneurship in climate-affected communities, identifying gender-differentiated vulnerabilities linked to demographic factors and occupational exposure. She recommended skills diversification and targeted training for female-headed households to reduce climate-induced economic risks.

Digital technologies and entrepreneurship were highlighted as pathways for women's economic inclusion, although structural barriers persist. **Yumi Vivien V. De Luna** from Partido State University reported that women entrepreneurs in the Philippines underutilize digital tools for marketing and payments due to limited awareness, digital literacy, and broadband infrastructure. She recommended integrated capacity building, financial literacy programs, and investments in digital infrastructure to support inclusive entrepreneurship.

Household-level gendered power relations were explored as determinants of livelihood outcomes. **Cannee Jane Sonido** from the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development demonstrated that men dominate decisions over physical and financial capital in small-scale fishing households, while decisions over human capital are more gender-balanced. She recommended institutionalized gender mainstreaming, recognition of unpaid care work, and strengthened sex-disaggregated data systems to inform policy.

The private sector was presented as a key actor in advancing gender equity. **Becca Williams** from Seafood and Gender Equality (SAGE) shared corporate gender strategies that improved organizational understanding, collaboration, and leadership engagement. Tools such as the Gender Equity Index and the WAVES initiative were highlighted as mechanisms to institutionalize gender equity across seafood value chains.

Gendered informal labor was examined as a foundational but undervalued component of aquatic food systems. **Seum Kim** from Seoul National University described women fish vendors in Dar es Salaam operating in liminal economic spaces that underpin urban food provisioning and social networks. Their agency in shaping informal markets challenges narratives of marginalization and highlights the relational nature of labor.

Institutional approaches to gender integration were discussed through project and policy frameworks. **Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit** from GAFFS/AFS presented lessons from the USAID SUFIA TS program, emphasizing systematic GESI integration, regional collaboration, and intergenerational capacity building as continuous processes rather than one-time interventions.

W. Peni Lestari from Wildlife Conservation Society Indonesia described the integration of GEDSI into Indonesia's Ocean Accounts, noting strong institutional coordination but persistent male-dominated leadership and systemic barriers for marginalized groups. She proposed multi-phase strategies to institutionalize GEDSI across national frameworks.

Critical political economy perspectives highlighted limitations of representation-based approaches. **Victoria Syddall** from Ocean Research Consulting Advisory mapped ideal typologies of women's roles in fisheries and applied political economy frameworks to analyze market dynamics, governance structures, and intersectional inequalities. She further emphasized that women's presence in governance does not guarantee gender equality, advocating for contextualized gender-responsive approaches and researcher advocacy.

Innovative ethical frameworks were introduced to expand gender analysis beyond human-centered approaches. **Renzo Prudenciano** from the Asian Institute of Technology reframed jellyfish hazards through a gender-inclusive and more-than-human One Health lens, identifying differentiated vulnerabilities and recommending gender-responsive training, equitable health service access, and ecological stewardship integration.

Gendered dynamics in value chains and post-disaster contexts were examined through feminist theory. **Rima Jessamine M. Granali** from the University of the Philippines Tacloban College used a Feminist-Bourdieusian framework to show how emotional capital strengthened women's agency in fisheries value chains after disasters, while domestic norms continued to marginalize women's economic positioning.

Rights-based approaches and policy implementation gaps were emphasized across regions. **Colette C. C. Wabnitz** from the University of British Columbia reviewed women's contributions and human rights across 28 countries, identifying disconnects between policy commitments and practice. She highlighted community co-development and regional collaboration as pathways to inclusive implementation.

Jee Grace B. Suyo-Diala from the University of the Philippines Visayas conducted an intersectional policy analysis of the Philippine Seaweed Industry Roadmap, revealing that gender and equity are largely implicit and insufficiently transformative. She recommended interrogating policy silences and reframing discourse toward structural justice.

Methodological innovations in vulnerability assessment were presented to inform policy. **Gay Defiesta** from the University of the Philippines Visayas compared gendered vulnerability assessment methods, showing that VEP and SOVI provide complementary economic and social insights. She recommended integrating gender-sensitive indicators into national policy frameworks and scaling assessments.



Key Messages

1. **Innovative gender research frameworks are essential for uncovering power relations and structural inequalities in fisheries and aquaculture.**

Transformative methodologies enable gender research to inform policy and practice more effectively.

2. **Participation and representation do not automatically translate into gender equality outcomes in governance and value chains.**

Structural norms, political economy dynamics, and institutional barriers continue to shape unequal outcomes.

3. **Digital, entrepreneurial, and corporate gender strategies offer promising pathways for women’s economic inclusion but require enabling infrastructure and institutional support.**

Without systemic reforms, these strategies risk reinforcing existing inequalities.

4. **Intersectional and feminist analytical frameworks reveal invisible labor, emotional capital, and policy silences that shape gendered outcomes in aquatic food systems.**

These insights are critical for designing inclusive and equitable policies.

5. **Participatory methodologies strengthen women’s visibility, agency, and advocacy in fisheries and aquaculture research and governance.**

Such approaches foster community-driven transformation and knowledge co-production.

6. **Institutionalizing GEDSI integration requires accountability mechanisms, sustained capacity building, and multi-level governance coordination.**

Long-term commitment is necessary to translate gender research into systemic transformation.

Thematic Session 5: Counting and Discounting: Men's and Women's Work in Fisheries and Aquaculture

This session highlighted thematic session examined how men's and women's labor in fisheries and aquaculture is counted, undervalued, or rendered invisible across diverse socio-cultural, ecological, and political-economic contexts. Presentations highlighted gendered divisions of labor, unpaid and informal work, intersectional inequalities, and structural barriers that shape participation, recognition, and benefits across aquatic food systems.

The session underscored that gender norms, institutional biases, and data gaps systematically discount women's contributions while reinforcing male dominance in decision-making, resource control, and formal governance. Speakers emphasized the need for gender-responsive data, policies, and transformative governance frameworks to ensure equitable recognition, participation, and livelihood outcomes.

Speakers consistently demonstrated that gendered divisions of labor persist across fisheries and aquaculture systems, with women concentrated in post-harvest, domestic, and informal sectors while men dominate capture fisheries and governance. **Ariel S. Sefil** from the University of the Philippines Visayas showed that women dominate blue swimming crab picking but receive unstable output-based wages, while men receive fixed income for physically intensive tasks, reinforcing gendered economic insecurity. **Kanchana** from the University of Kelaniya reported that Sri Lankan culture-based fisheries remain male-dominated, with women confined to unpaid domestic and post-harvest roles due to cultural and safety norms. Similarly, **P. Seenivasan** from ICAR-CIFE highlighted gender disparities in dry fish processing productivity and income distribution.

Accounting studies further revealed that women's unpaid reproductive and community labor substantially contributes to household economies. **Gebiemar P. Maghupoy** from the University of the Philippines Visayas demonstrated that when unpaid labor is included, women's total economic contribution nearly equals that of men, challenging conventional productivity metrics.

Several presentations emphasized that women's care work sustains fisheries and aquaculture livelihoods but remains invisible in policy and economic accounting. **Carolina Astri** from the World Resources Institute Indonesia described how patriarchal norms render women's care and youth labor in shrimp aquaculture invisible despite their central role in maintaining production

and social capital. **Josielou Chan-Leonida** from the University of the Philippines Visayas documented domestic labor burdens that limit women's participation in economic activities. **Cherry Pilapil Añasco** from the University of the Philippines Visayas further reported gendered differences in disaster resilience linked to differential access to information and resources.

Gendered power asymmetries were evident across governance and decision-making structures. **Ruby P. Napata** from the University of the Philippines highlighted women's participation in fisheries law implementation in Southern Iloilo but noted persistent male dominance in formal governance. Ria Fitriana from Indonesia discussed hybrid governance models as pathways to engage women in marine conservation. **Dinusha N.B. Ekanayake** from the University of Kelaniya demonstrated systemic exclusion of women from fisheries societies in Sri Lanka, while **Meas Chanthavy** from UNIDO showed that women dominate post-harvest MSMEs but rarely hold decision-making power.

Conversely, **Valentina Inostroza** from WWF Chile presented legal reforms recognizing women in small-scale fisheries governance, illustrating emerging institutional pathways toward gender equity.

Intersectional analyses revealed that gender intersects with class, caste, migration, and geography to shape labor experiences. **Rashmi Sridar** from Azim Premji University emphasized caste, migration, and class as structuring fisherwomen's identities and vulnerabilities. **Roksana Hoque** from BRAC documented mobility constraints and limited asset ownership among Bangladeshi fisherwomen. Tran Van Hao from Nha Trang University identified gender gaps in asset ownership and training in Vietnam's capture fisheries sector.

Environmental stressors were shown to have gender-differentiated impacts. **R. Dinesh** from ICAR-CIFE reported occupational health risks for fisherwomen arising from invasive mussel bioinvasion. **Rejula K.** from ICAR-CIFT discussed infrastructure constraints and environmental degradation affecting inland fisheries livelihoods. **Widyaningsih Peni Lestari** from IPB University highlighted policy contradictions between conservation and livelihoods that disproportionately affect women.

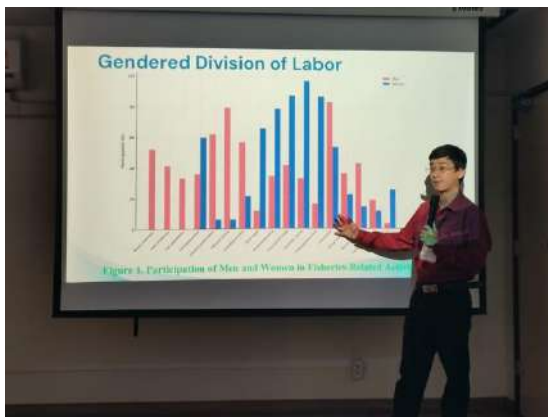
Several studies challenged hegemonic gender norms. **Sunae** from Miyazaki Municipal University documented women-centered hegemonic identities in Japanese diving fisheries, where men integrated into female-dominated traditions. **Renz Prudenciado** from the Asian

Institute of Technology introduced the concept of caring masculinities among male fishers, emphasizing ethical environmental stewardship and relational gender practices.

Persistent data gaps and gender-blind policies were highlighted as structural barriers. **Jariya Sornkliang** from SEAFDEC reported limited sex-disaggregated data and male-dominated decision-making in Southeast Asia. Samiran Mukharjee from ICAR-CIFE mapped global gender research gaps, particularly in the Global South. **Cécile Brugère** from The Nature Conservancy presented gender-transformative conservation approaches that strengthened women's leadership. **Nilanjana Biswas** from Charles Darwin University traced historical commercialization processes that marginalized women in Australia's seafood industry.

Community-based leadership and cooperative models were presented as mechanisms for empowerment. **Chloe Ann Dulos** from the University of the Philippines Visayas examined women leaders in fisherfolk associations, identifying social norms and leadership experience as key enabling or constraining factors. **Muhammad Alzaki Tristi** from Yayasan Masyarakat dan Perikanan Indonesia highlighted women's roles in seafood trading and crisis resilience in cooperatives, recommending gender-equal governance interventions. **Jose Marie A. Eslopör** from the University of the Philippines Visayas demonstrated gendered roles in marine turtle tourism, with men controlling infrastructure and women contributing to marketing and community engagement.





Key Messages

- 1. Women’s labor across fisheries and aquaculture remains systematically undervalued and undercounted, particularly in post-harvest, informal, and unpaid domains.**

Recognizing and accounting for invisible labor is essential for equitable and sustainable aquatic food systems.

- 2. Gender norms and institutional structures continue to concentrate decision-making power and resource ownership among men, despite women’s substantial contributions.**

Transformative governance reforms are required to ensure inclusive participation and equitable benefit sharing.

- 3. Intersectional factors such as caste, migration, class, and geography shape differentiated labor experiences and vulnerabilities.**

Policies must move beyond binary gender frameworks to address intersecting inequalities.

- 4. Environmental change, disasters, and bioinvasions create gender-differentiated risks and health burdens.**

Gender-sensitive adaptation and occupational safety policies are critical for resilience.

- 5. Data gaps and weak gender mainstreaming hinder evidence-based policy design and implementation.**

Systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data and integration of gender into fisheries science are priority actions.

- 6. Gender-transformative approaches, including feminist-informed policies, legal recognition frameworks, and caring masculinities, offer promising pathways to equitable aquatic food systems.**

Scaling these approaches requires institutional commitment and cross-sectoral collaboration.

PART III - Special Sessions

Special Session 1: Gender in Nature-based Aquaculture — Evidence from Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines (GeNA Project)

This session examined the Gender Monitoring Schema developed under the Gender in Nature-based Aquaculture (GeNA) project led by the Asian Institute of Technology. Speakers demonstrated how the framework captures gender-transformative change in Nature-based Climate Solutions (NbCS) aquaculture beyond traditional monitoring indicators.

Session Overview

Dr. Nikita Gopal from ICAR Central Institute of Fisheries Technology introduced the Gender Monitoring Schema as a gender-responsive monitoring framework for NbCS aquaculture. She emphasized that conventional monitoring frameworks fail to capture subtle shifts in gender roles, agency, and power relations. She presented the schema's five domains, which measure women's awareness, agency, vision of change, attitudes toward NbCS aquaculture, and perceptions of climate change.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Thailand: Rice-Fish Culture*

Dr. Malasri Khumsri from Thailand presented findings from monitoring 31 women engaged in rice-fish farming in Maha Sarakham. She reported that women increased participation across production, marketing, and decision-making. Women gained technical knowledge, improved climate adaptation skills, and developed greater confidence through training and continuous monitoring.

Chollada Wongpanich from the Asian Institute of Technology highlighted implementation challenges and opportunities. She emphasized that water management and farm location shape rice-fish outcomes. She reported that women lacked supportive spaces to experiment and access technology but became more proactive through regular field visits. She noted that women used diaries to monitor farms and engaged in more open household decision-making.

◆ ***Cambodia: Rice-Fish Culture***

Ouly Thorng from the Cambodia Institute for Research and Development (CIRD) presented results from 23 farmers across Takeo, Kampong Cham, and Siem Reap, including women and persons with disabilities. She reported that women increased confidence, applied scientific observation in feeding and farm management, and engaged in joint decision-making with spouses. She stated that women began future planning and promoted rice-fish farming in their communities.

◆ ***Philippines: Seaweed Farming***

Dr. Alice Joan Ferrer from the University of the Philippines Visayas presented gender research in three coastal barangays in Iloilo. She reported that women depended on seaweed farming as a primary income source, while men treated it as secondary. She highlighted gendered income disparities and male dominance in marketing and transport.

She reported that monitoring 35 women using the Gender Monitoring Schema deepened understanding of gendered knowledge and practices. She noted that the schema enabled diverse research methods, supported women-led monitoring, and documented community-level changes such as the emergence of input supply stores.

◆ ***Cross-Cutting Insights***

Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe from the Asian Institute of Technology synthesized findings and emphasized that the schema treats women as co-producers of knowledge rather than beneficiaries. She stated that the framework captures dynamic, context-specific gender change and fosters reflexivity among researchers.

Discussion Highlights

Participants questioned income dependence in seaweed farming, attribution of change to the schema, sampling limitations, and men's engagement. Speakers clarified that women reported limited livelihood alternatives, changes resulted from collective action, larger samples could improve representativeness, and the schema effectively captures men's involvement in women's activities.

This session demonstrated that gender-responsive monitoring transforms NbCS aquaculture by strengthening women's agency, knowledge, and leadership. Evidence from Southeast Asia

shows that participatory monitoring frameworks improve climate resilience, household collaboration, and sustainable production outcomes. The Gender Monitoring Schema offers a scalable tool for integrating gender equity into NbCS programming and policy.



Key Messages

1. Speakers demonstrated that gender-transformative monitoring captures changes in women's agency, confidence, and decision-making that conventional MEL systems overlook.
2. Evidence from Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines shows that women actively lead NbCS aquaculture when projects provide supportive, participatory monitoring structures.
3. The Gender Monitoring Schema strengthens household collaboration and community-level diffusion of sustainable aquaculture practices.
4. Researchers and practitioners must treat women as knowledge producers and leaders in NbCS interventions.

Special Session 2: Telling the Story — A Gender Perspective on Involvement in International Fisheries R&D Projects (ACIAR)

This session examined how gender-responsive approaches in international fisheries research and development (R&D) strengthen livelihoods, resilience, and governance across the Indo-Pacific. Speakers showcased evidence from ACIAR-supported projects demonstrating that women's leadership and inclusion improve fisheries outcomes and community sustainability.

Session Overview

Faka'anaua Lakai, President of the Vava'u Pearl Association in Tonga, opened the session with a lived experience narrative on women's empowerment through Mabe pearl farming. **Dr. Asda Laining** from the National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia presented South-South capacity-building initiatives in sustainable mariculture. **Pranesh Kishore** from Fiji, **Josephine Laka** from Papua New Guinea, **Thuy Mai Nhu** from Vietnam, **Henslynn Pwea-Boseto** from Ecological Solutions, **Toaiti Vanguna** from Kiribati, and **Chesika Kanchana** from Sri Lanka presented gender-focused fisheries R&D interventions across the region.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Tonga: Women's Leadership in Mabe Pearl Farming*

Faka'anaua Lakai from the Vava'u Pearl Association described how ACIAR-supported pearl farming transformed women's livelihoods and leadership roles. She highlighted women's roles as farmers, artisans, marketers, and entrepreneurs. She emphasized that women built resilience during COVID-19 disruptions and framed pearl farming as a pathway to financial stability, professional growth, and personal healing.

◆ *Cambodia-Indonesia-Australia: South-South Capacity Building*

Dr. Asda Laining from the National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia presented a Transfer Capacity Building initiative using Work Integrated Learning between Indonesia and Cambodia with Australian support. She reported that trainees improved communication skills, published mariculture research, and delivered training modules on sustainable aquaculture development in Cambodia.

◆ *Fiji: Women-Led Mabe Pearl Culture*

Pranesh Kishore from Fiji presented a women-led Mabe pearl culture project involving spat collection, seeding, and handicraft production. He reported that women gained technical skills from production to marketing and increased their capacity to generate income from pearl-based products.

◆ *Papua New Guinea: Women-Led Value Chain Innovation*

Josephine Laka from Papua New Guinea presented a project on tilapia and mud crab aquaculture in the Fly River region. She highlighted that women remained marginalized in fisheries value chains despite active fishing roles. She presented a hub-and-spoke business model that strengthens women's bargaining power, shortens market chains, embeds savings mechanisms, and integrates sustainability. She emphasized that women's leadership drives resilience in fisheries systems.

◆ *Vietnam: Gendered Labor in Sea Cucumber Farming*

Thuy Mai Nhu from Vietnam presented gendered labor dynamics in sandfish production. She reported that technical training empowered women and households to overcome economic barriers and increase participation in sea cucumber farming.

◆ *Solomon Islands: Gender Inclusion in Natural Resource Governance*

Hensllyn Pwea-Boseto from Ecological Solutions described advocacy for gender inclusion in natural resource management in Solomon Islands, where patrilineal land tenure limits women's participation. She reported that women now contribute to community decision-making processes.

◆ *Kiribati: Community-Based Fisheries Management*

Toaiti Vanguna from Kiribati presented a gender-informed community-based fisheries management project that established women's associations and integrated women into fisheries planning. He reported that women expressed increased satisfaction with fisheries outcomes, symbolized by the phrase NEI TENGARENGARE (women and happiness).

◆ *Sri Lanka: Gender Equity in Reservoir Fisheries*

Chesika Kanchana from Sri Lanka presented opportunities and constraints for gender-equitable livelihoods in reservoir fisheries. She highlighted safety concerns, climate impacts,

governance gaps, and the need for institutional transformation to enforce gender equality policies.

Discussion Highlights

Participants emphasized that organized women’s groups facilitate project implementation and sustainability. Speakers highlighted the importance of government support and noted that men increasingly value women’s contributions to decision-making in fisheries governance.

This session confirmed that integrating gender perspectives in fisheries R&D strengthens livelihoods, governance, and resilience. Evidence across the Indo-Pacific shows that empowering women in fisheries value chains and decision-making processes enhances sustainability and equity. Gender-inclusive fisheries R&D represents a critical pathway to resilient coastal and aquatic food systems.



Key Messages

1. Speakers demonstrated that gender-inclusive fisheries R&D increases resilience, productivity, and community well-being.
2. Women actively lead innovation across aquaculture, fisheries governance, and value chains when projects provide capacity building and institutional support.
3. Gender-responsive governance structures and organized women's groups strengthen sustainability and collective action.
4. Positive shifts in male attitudes toward women's leadership improve decision-making and project outcomes.

Special Session 3: Measuring Gender Justice in Aquaculture and Fisheries—Tools and Lessons from Practice (IDRC)

This session examined innovative tools and frameworks to measure and advance gender justice in aquaculture and fisheries. Speakers presented gender indices, participatory mapping, supply chain analysis, and nature-based solutions that integrate Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles. The session emphasized methodological rigor, participatory approaches, and policy-relevant metrics to support equitable and climate-resilient fisheries systems.

Session Overview

Madiha Ahmed from IDRC opened the session and highlighted IDRC’s support for gender-transformative research in fisheries and aquaculture. Speakers from Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines demonstrated practical tools to measure empowerment, inclusion, and gender justice across fisheries value chains.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Measuring Women’s Empowerment in Fisheries*

Assoc. Prof. Zumilah Binti Zainalaludin from Universiti Putra Malaysia presented the Malaysian Women’s Empowerment in Fisheries Index (M-WEFI). She reported that climate change-driven poverty disproportionately affects women in coastal and riverine communities. She explained that M-WEFI adapts WEFI and A-WEFI with eight context-specific indicators to guide gender-responsive policies and climate adaptation programs. She invited expert feedback to strengthen and scale the index.

◆ *Participatory Livelihood Mapping for Inclusive Shrimp Aquaculture*

Carolina Astri from the World Resources Institute Indonesia presented participatory livelihood mapping as a tool to move beyond nominal participation toward genuine inclusion. She reported that women and youth play critical but overlooked roles in shrimp aquaculture and that climate change intensifies their vulnerabilities. She demonstrated that training and resource access can reposition shrimp farming as inclusive and sustainable.

◆ *Gender Mainstreaming in Fisheries Supply Chains and Conservation*

Dr. Stephanie S. Pimentel from Capiz State University presented findings on gender roles across fisheries supply chains. She reported that men dominate fishing and conservation while

women lead post-harvest handling, marketing, and selected production tasks. She highlighted constraints related to unpaid care work, poverty, and risk exposure. She recommended gender-inclusive innovations and stronger community organizations to promote equitable and sustainable fisheries development.

◆ *Nature-Based Solutions and Gender Justice*

Dr. Surendran Rajaratnam from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia presented lessons from the CAINA project on gender-responsive nature-based solutions. He emphasized participatory co-learning, sex-disaggregated data collection, stakeholder workshops, and interdisciplinary collaboration. He highlighted continuous reflection, communication, and data-driven accountability as key drivers of transformative social and ecological outcomes.

Discussion Highlights

Dr. Kyoko Kusakabe from the Asian Institute of Technology emphasized participatory and holistic approaches to recognize marginalized groups. She highlighted that gender justice requires clarity of concepts, awareness of deprivation, and longitudinal measurement of empowerment. Participants stressed socioeconomic stratification within gender groups, methodological rigor, and integrating gender perspectives across all research domains.

This session demonstrated that measuring gender justice is essential for equitable and sustainable fisheries systems. Gender-responsive indices, participatory tools, and nature-based solutions provide actionable pathways to empower women and youth and inform policy. Integrating gender across research agendas and strengthening methodological rigor will accelerate gender-transformative outcomes in fisheries and aquaculture.





Key Messages

1. Women and youth play critical but under-recognized roles across fisheries and aquaculture value chains.
2. Gender-responsive measurement tools such as M-WEFI and participatory livelihood mapping enable evidence-based policy and programming.
3. Gender justice requires empowerment, awareness of deprivation, and systemic change in social norms and institutions.
4. Robust methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches strengthen gender-transformative research and policy impact.

Special Session 4: Engendering Climate Justice in Aquaculture through Inclusive Nature-Based Solutions

This session examined how inclusive nature-based solutions (NbS) in small-scale aquaculture can advance both climate justice and gender justice. Speakers presented feminist political ecology, gendered vulnerability analyses, and participatory adaptation approaches across Southeast Asia. The session emphasized intersectionality, participatory governance, and evidence-based NbS to support socially equitable and climate-resilient aquaculture systems.

Session Overview

Dr. Rebecca McMillan from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) inaugurated the session and introduced the AQUADAPT initiative. She framed the discussion around the role of inclusive nature-based solutions (NbS) in advancing climate justice and gender justice in small-scale aquaculture.

Speakers examined gendered vulnerabilities, adaptive strategies, and governance gaps in aquaculture systems. They emphasized participatory and feminist approaches to ensure women and other marginalized groups are recognized as knowledge holders and leaders in climate adaptation. The session highlighted the need to integrate gender perspectives into NbS interventions to achieve socially equitable and ecologically sustainable aquaculture outcomes.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Gender, Feminist Political Ecology, and Climate Resilience in Northeast Thailand*

Associate Professor Kanokwan Manorom from Ubon Ratchathani University analyzed gendered participation in aquaculture across contrasting socio-ecological contexts in Thailand. She showed that women actively manage aquaculture in accessible water bodies but face restricted engagement in large reservoirs due to safety and socio-cultural constraints.

She highlighted that local women have long practiced nature-based solutions through traditional and community knowledge, yet global NbS frameworks often overlook these contributions. She called for inclusive governance that recognizes women's expertise, ensures equitable access to resources, and strengthens women's leadership in sustainable aquaculture.

◆ *Women's Roles in Sustainable Aquaculture in the Red River Delta, Vietnam*

Ly Bui and **Hue Le** from VNU-CRES emphasized that women play a central role in small-scale aquaculture and household food security in the Red River Delta. They demonstrated that women remain concentrated in low-skilled and precarious roles due to limited access to training, information, and higher-paying positions.

They highlighted that patriarchal norms constrain women's decision-making power. They argued that inclusive NbS must explicitly recognize women's contributions to achieve climate resilience and gender justice.

◆ *Gender, Poverty, and Exposure to Climate Events in Selangor, Malaysia*

Saidi and **Zainalaludin** from Universiti Putra Malaysia presented empirical evidence showing that gender, vulnerability, and poverty shape exposure to climate hazards. They reported that men experience slightly higher exposure to droughts, storms, and high tides, while women experience similar but marginally lower exposure levels. Floods, storms, and high tides emerged as the most frequent climate events affecting households. They used binary logistic regression to confirm that gender and poverty significantly predict climate exposure. They called for targeted, gender-responsive adaptation strategies and interdisciplinary research to drive systemic change through participatory NbS approaches.

◆ *Gender and Climate Vulnerability in the Philippines and Cambodia*

Blesshe L. Querijero, Fisheries and Aquaculture Consultant and Gender Specialist, presented early lessons from the AQUADAPT PhilCam project. She emphasized that assuming uniform impacts across gender identities leads to ineffective aquaculture interventions. She demonstrated that integrating gender analysis improves technical feasibility and social inclusiveness. She highlighted gendered barriers in access to resources, decision-making, and benefits, while identifying opportunities for gender-responsive NbS to strengthen resilience and equity in aquaculture systems.

Discussion Highlights

Dr. Sizwile Khoza from the Stockholm Environment Institute Asia Centre highlighted the strong policy relevance of the presented evidence. She emphasized the importance of intersectionality and noted that disabled men may face higher vulnerability than women in some contexts. She called for strong partnerships and advocacy to position evidence for policy influence. Participants stressed the need to identify and quantify NbS and distinguish them from other sustainability approaches.

This session demonstrated that inclusive nature-based solutions can advance both climate justice and gender justice in aquaculture. Gendered vulnerabilities, intersectional inequalities, and socio-cultural barriers shape adaptation outcomes. Participatory and feminist approaches, supported by robust evidence and interdisciplinary collaboration, can catalyze equitable and climate-resilient aquaculture systems.



Key Messages

1. Women are central actors in small-scale aquaculture but remain undervalued and constrained by socio-cultural norms and institutional barriers.
2. Gender, poverty, vulnerability, and disability shape climate exposure and adaptation capacity, requiring intersectional approaches.
3. Inclusive and participatory NbS design must recognize local knowledge and empower marginalized groups.
4. Evidence from gender-transformative research must inform policy, practice, and financing for climate-resilient aquaculture.
5. Clear identification and quantification of NbS are essential to demonstrate their added value over other sustainability approaches.

Special Session 5: Gender Justice on Stage - Participatory Theatre for Social Change in Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAO)

This session explored participatory theatre as a tool to advance gender justice, social justice, and climate justice in fisheries and aquaculture. Facilitators demonstrated interactive theatre-based methods to raise awareness, foster community participation, and challenge gender inequalities in small-scale fisheries communities.

Session Overview

Rachel Matheson from FAO opened the session and highlighted the collaboration between FAO, Voices from The Shore Theatre Collective, and Circus Zambia. Facilitators showcased participatory theatre techniques to engage communities in identifying gender, social, and climate injustices in fisheries and aquaculture.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Participatory Theatre for Community Engagement*

Michelle Barrow from Voices from The Shore Theatre Collective introduced Voice of the Sea and explained how theatre engages communities to address blue economy injustice, social injustice, and climate injustice. **Mercy Kambulu** from Circus Zambia presented community-based theatre and circus activities that integrate daily practices and cultural expressions to raise awareness and provide education for children.

◆ *Interactive Activity: Language and Communication*

Facilitators led an exercise where participants learned to greet each other in different languages. **Barrow** emphasized that effective community engagement requires learning local languages and cultural contexts to foster participation and co-learning.

◆ *Interactive Activity: Gendered Burdens of Labor*

Facilitators conducted a balloon exercise to demonstrate gendered divisions of labor. Female participants identified daily tasks performed by women, while male participants identified tasks performed by men. The exercise revealed that women carry disproportionate workloads and receive limited recognition, particularly in fisheries.

◆ *Interactive Activity: Theatre and Gender Injustice*

Participants formed groups and performed short theatrical pieces to depict gender injustices. Participants highlighted gender-based violence, discrimination, limited access to marine resources and markets, invisibility of women’s labor, and the need for equal recognition of fisherwomen and fishermen. Facilitators emphasized that theatre helps communities identify problems and co-create solutions.

◆ *Reflections on Methodology and Ethics*

Dr. Moenieba Isaacs from PLAAS reflected on participatory theatre as a research and engagement tool. She emphasized that theory must align with lived realities and that researchers must prioritize ethics, consent, and trust-building. She cautioned against romanticizing women’s roles and highlighted intra-gender power dynamics. She emphasized that social and economic justice requires women’s full participation.

Discussion Highlights

The session used interactive exercises rather than a conventional panel discussion. Participants reported that theatre-based activities enhanced awareness of gender inequalities, facilitated dialogue, and encouraged collective reflection on solutions. Facilitators emphasized that community participation generates actionable insights and empowers marginalized voices.

This session demonstrated that participatory theatre is a powerful tool for advancing gender justice in fisheries and aquaculture. Theatre-based approaches help communities recognize invisible labor, gender-based violence, and structural inequalities while fostering collective action. Ethical, culturally grounded, and participatory methods can strengthen social inclusion and climate justice outcomes.





Key Messages

1. Participatory theatre enables communities to recognize gender, social, and climate injustices in fisheries and aquaculture.
2. Women carry disproportionate workloads and remain undervalued and invisible in fisheries systems.
3. Gender-based violence, discrimination, and unequal access to resources persist across fisheries value chains.
4. Effective gender justice interventions require cultural sensitivity, trust-building, ethics, and community consent.
5. Women's participation is essential to achieving social and economic justice in fisheries and aquaculture.

Special Session 6: Exploring and Expanding Understandings of Gender Identity and Expression in Fisheries (FAO)

This session examined how gender identity and expression intersect with fisheries and aquaculture beyond binary gender frameworks. Speakers highlighted how heteronormative systems marginalize women and LGBTQ+ individuals, despite their active roles across fisheries value chains. The session called for inclusive policies, safe workplaces, and improved data collection to ensure dignity, equity, and visibility for all gender identities.

Session Overview

Ms. Jennifer Gee from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) moderated the session and framed the discussion on gender diversity in fisheries as a critical equity and governance issue. Speakers from academia, government, and regional organizations presented evidence on discrimination, invisibility, and emerging inclusive practices across fisheries systems.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Binary Gender Systems and Exclusion*

Dr. Christina Kenny from the University of New England (UNE) emphasized that binary gender frameworks exclude diverse gender identities and sexual orientations in fisheries and related value chains. She highlighted that discrimination and rigid gender norms undermine dignity and limit professional opportunities. She stressed that recognizing gender diversity improves accessibility, inclusion, and equity across fisheries systems.

◆ *Gender, Sexuality, and Structural Inequality*

Dr. Carmen Pedroza Gutiérrez from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) presented evidence that fisheries systems prioritize men and render women and LGBTQ+ actors invisible. She reported higher discrimination against lesbians due to gendered perceptions of femininity and highlighted barriers faced by women and LGBTQ+ individuals in accessing training, decision-making, and leadership roles. She emphasized that women and gender-diverse people contribute significantly to household income and community livelihoods despite structural exclusion.

◆ *Thailand: LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Aquaculture*

Dr. Malasri Khumsri from the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, presented Thailand's progress on LGBTQ+ inclusion, including the marriage equality law effective January 2025. She reported that aquaculture communities increasingly recognize performance-based contributions rather than gender-based roles, creating space for LGBTQ+ participation in fry nursing, pond management, marketing, and innovation. She called for anti-discrimination policies, awareness training, equal opportunities, and safe working environments.

◆ *Regional Perspectives on Gender Identity in Fisheries*

Ms. Jariya Sornkliang from the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) highlighted that fisheries governance frameworks remain heteronormative and rarely recognize diverse gender identities. She reported that LGBTQ+ individuals face stigma, limited representation, restricted access to credit and markets, and exclusion from producer organizations, particularly in rural areas.

Discussion Highlights

Participants emphasized the importance of distinguishing gender identity from sexual orientation to avoid conceptual confusion in policy and research. Speakers discussed methodological challenges in collecting sensitive data on sexual orientation and gender identity and highlighted the need for trust-based qualitative approaches and context-specific strategies. Participants noted that many LGBTQ+ individuals remain reluctant to disclose their identities due to stigma and safety concerns.

This session confirmed that gender diversity is central to equitable and resilient fisheries systems. Women and LGBTQ+ actors contribute critical labor, knowledge, and innovation but face persistent exclusion and discrimination. Moving beyond binary gender frameworks and embedding inclusive governance structures can strengthen fisheries sustainability, community resilience, and social justice.



Key Messages

1. Speakers demonstrated that binary gender frameworks obscure women's and LGBTQ+ contributions in fisheries and aquaculture.
2. Recognition of gender diversity strengthens resilience, innovation, and inclusivity in fisheries value chains.
3. Discrimination, stigma, and governance gaps continue to limit participation, leadership, and economic opportunities for gender-diverse groups.
4. Inclusive policies and safe workplaces are essential to ensure dignity and equity in fisheries systems.

Special Session 7: Gender Justice in 2026 - International Year of the Woman Farmer (FAO)

This session celebrated the designation of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer and identified priority barriers and solutions to advance women's leadership and participation in fisheries and aquaculture. Participants mapped systemic challenges and co-developed policy, grassroots, and market-based strategies to drive gender-transformative change.

Session Overview

Matteo Luzzi from FAO opened the session and highlighted the importance of 2026 as a global platform to accelerate gender justice in agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture. Participants discussed persistent and emerging barriers affecting women farmers and identified priority actions to transform governance, markets, and social systems.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Setting Priorities for the International Year of the Woman Farmer*

Erika Valerio from FAO emphasized that women contribute extensively across agricultural and fisheries value chains, yet their work remains undervalued and their voices marginalized. She called for collective action to build women's power, strengthen evidence, unlock access to resources, and ensure fair market treatment. She urged participants to define priorities to shape global actions for women farmers in 2026.

◆ *Access to Finance, Capital, and Markets*

Participants reported that women operate informal businesses, lack collateral, face high-interest loans, and have limited market access. Time constraints and regulatory barriers prevent women from obtaining licenses and accessing formal markets.

◆ *Data Gaps and Invisibility*

Participants highlighted the absence of gender-disaggregated fisheries data and recommended national fisheries censuses, gender indicators, and mixed-methods data systems to capture women's roles and empowerment trajectories.

◆ *Women’s Collective Action and Associations*

Participants emphasized that women’s groups strengthen voice, governance power, information sharing, and confidence. They recommended targeted support for processors, traders, aquaculture workers, and migrant women, with a focus on marginalized groups.

◆ *Climate Change and Other Shocks*

Participants identified habitat loss, declining resources, health risks, and governance gaps as major threats. They called for gender-integrated climate governance, climate-smart technologies, and long-term adaptation strategies that leverage women’s traditional knowledge.

Discussion Highlights

This session reaffirmed that women are central to fisheries and aquaculture systems, yet systemic barriers persist across finance, markets, governance, and data systems. Participants agreed that the International Year of the Woman Farmer in 2026 provides a critical global platform to advance gender justice. Priorities include strengthening women’s collective voice, closing gender data gaps, integrating gender into governance, and addressing gender-based violence, post-harvest losses, and climate change impacts. Coordinated policy, market, and grassroots interventions are required to achieve transformative change



Key Messages

1. Women's contributions to fisheries and aquaculture remain undervalued, invisible, and undercounted across value chains.
2. The International Year of the Woman Farmer provides a strategic opportunity to accelerate gender-transformative policy and practice.
3. Structural barriers persist in access to finance, markets, data, governance, and climate resilience.
4. Women's collective action, gender-disaggregated data systems, and integrated governance reforms are essential for systemic change.

Special Session 8: SEAFDEC's Initiative to Advance Gender Equality in Fisheries and Aquaculture in Southeast Asia

This session examined how the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) advances gender equality and social inclusion across fisheries and aquaculture in Southeast Asia. It highlighted institutional strategies, research initiatives, and community-based approaches that embed gender into governance, programming, and regional cooperation frameworks. It demonstrated how gender-responsive fisheries management strengthens sustainability, livelihoods, and social resilience.

Session Overview

The session presented SEAFDEC's efforts to mainstream gender across its organizational structure, technical programs, and regional partnerships. Speakers outlined institutional commitments, practical tools, and field-based research that integrate gender analysis into fisheries governance and aquaculture development. The discussion emphasized that gender equality requires systematic institutionalization, measurable indicators, and sustained political and financial commitment.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Institutionalizing Gender Mainstreaming Across SEAFDEC*

Jariya Sornkliang introduced SEAFDEC's institutional commitment to gender mainstreaming. She outlined the organization's history and governance structure and explained how SEAFDEC aligns its gender strategy with the Sustainable Development Goals. She emphasized that gender integration operates across all levels of the organization, with a focus on strengthening policies, programs, and operational frameworks.

Sornkliang described regional capacity-building initiatives that train fisheries officers on gender concepts and practical mainstreaming approaches. She highlighted the development of a Gender Analysis Toolkit for Fisheries and the use of field-based methods, including interviews and participatory assessments, to integrate gender into fisheries programs. She underscored that gender analysis addresses both women and men and promotes inclusive institutional transformation.

◆ *Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Fisheries Programs*

Dr. Arlene Nietes (Jigsz) Satapornvanit examined SEAFDEC’s work on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) within fisheries initiatives, including its engagement in the Coral Triangle Initiative. She emphasized that SEAFDEC embeds gender within broader fisheries programs rather than treating it as a stand-alone component.

Satapornvanit highlighted achievements in advancing women’s empowerment while acknowledging persistent implementation gaps. She stressed that gender integration requires engagement beyond social science disciplines and must involve technical experts, managers, and field practitioners. She identified capacity gaps in mentoring, training, and applied learning, as well as limited financial resources for implementing GESI commitments.

She underscored the need for gender-responsive indicators and stronger financial accountability mechanisms to measure progress. She challenged institutions to critically assess whether gender commitments translate into measurable, sustained change.

◆ *Making Women’s Contributions Visible in Inland Fisheries*

Nurwanti, representing SEAFDEC’s Inland Fishery Resources Development and Management Department (IFRDMD), presented findings from gender-focused research in inland fisheries and Anguillid eel value chains. She demonstrated that women play central roles in collecting, handling, grading, processing, marketing, and managing finances within inland fisheries systems, while men often dominate capture activities.

Nurwanti highlighted research conducted in Indonesia and the Philippines that combines gender analysis with socio-economic and market chain surveys. She explained that this evidence-based approach strengthens understanding of women’s economic contributions and informs targeted interventions.

She outlined capacity-building workshops, focus group discussions, and partnerships with universities and training institutions in South Sumatra and Riau. She emphasized SEAFDEC’s commitment to systematic data collection, network strengthening, and training programs that enhance women’s participation and improve family welfare and local livelihoods.

◆ *Gender Integration in Japanese Coastal Fisheries*

Hana Matsubara presented experiences from Japanese coastal fisheries and Fisheries Cooperative Associations (FCAs). She reviewed institutional developments supporting gender integration and described emerging policy measures that promote gender balance within fisheries communities.

Matsubara highlighted women's contributions to environmental protection, resource management, seafood promotion, and preservation of traditional knowledge. She presented case studies from Chiba, Nagasaki, Fukuoka, Ibaraki, and Toyama that illustrate collaboration between women and men in fishing operations, processing enterprises, cooperative leadership, and community-based restaurants.

She emphasized that collaboration across gender groups strengthens communication, integrates diverse knowledge systems, and enhances social, environmental, and economic sustainability. At the same time, she identified persistent structural barriers, including heavy care burdens, cultural norms, limited gender-friendly infrastructure, and risks of reproducing inequality through traditional roles. She concluded that comprehensive gender mainstreaming is necessary to transform coastal fisheries without reinforcing structural inequities.

Discussion Highlights

The discussion underscored that effective gender mainstreaming requires more than institutional goodwill. Sustainable progress depends on clear legal mandates, dedicated budget allocations, political commitment, and operational support for gender focal points. Participants emphasized that community-level engagement translates policy commitments into tangible results. Co-designing initiatives with fishing families, strengthening trusted networks and associations, identifying local champions, and applying gender-responsive indicators were identified as critical implementation strategies.

The discussion further recognized that traditional social norms continue to restrict women's participation in certain contexts. Structural inequalities, patriarchal expectations, and limited recognition of undervalued groups in inland fisheries require sustained advocacy and

institutional courage. Linking grassroots voices to decision-makers at local, national, and regional levels remains essential for transformative change.



Key Messages

1. Gender equality is central to fisheries sustainability.

Integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) into fisheries governance strengthens environmental stewardship, economic resilience, and social cohesion across coastal and inland communities.

2. Institutional commitment drives meaningful change.

Embedding gender mainstreaming across organizational structures, policies, and programs — supported by leadership, legal mandates, and clear strategies—ensures that gender integration moves beyond rhetoric.

3. Evidence makes women’s contributions visible.

Gender analysis, sex-disaggregated data, and value chain research are essential to recognize and quantify women's roles in fisheries and aquaculture, particularly in post-harvest, marketing, and financial management.

4. Capacity building must be cross-sectoral and continuous.

Gender integration is not the responsibility of social specialists alone; it requires engagement from technical experts, managers, researchers, and community leaders.

5. Accountability requires measurable indicators and financing.

Gender-responsive indicators, dedicated budgets, and transparent financial reporting are critical to track progress and ensure sustained impact.

6. Community-based collaboration accelerates transformation.

Working with trusted local networks, identifying champions, and co-designing interventions with fishing families enhances ownership and long-term effectiveness.

7. Structural barriers persist and require systemic solutions.

Deep-rooted social norms, unequal care burdens, and gender-insensitive infrastructure continue to limit participation and must be addressed through policy reform and advocacy.

Special Session 9: Community-Led Oyster Farms in Fiji — A Case of Gender-Responsive Aquaculture

This session examined how the AQUAPearl project in Fiji advances gender-responsive, community-led, nature-based aquaculture to strengthen climate resilience, ecosystems, and livelihoods. Speakers demonstrated how gender equality, social inclusion, private sector engagement, and policy alignment drive inclusive and scalable aquaculture systems.

Session Overview

Veronica Lo from the International Institute for Sustainable Development introduced the AQUAPearl project as a model for scaling gender-responsive nature-based aquaculture. She emphasized that the project integrates gender equality and social inclusion, community governance, private sector partnerships, and policy engagement to strengthen food security, ecosystem stewardship, and economic opportunities in Fiji.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Scaling Gender-Responsive Nature-Based Aquaculture*

Veronica Lo from IISD presented AQUAPearl’s strategy to scale inclusive, community-led nature-based aquaculture. She highlighted research on gender equality and social inclusion, oyster pathogen monitoring, quality assurance advocacy, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes, policy integration, and innovations that improve yields and diversify aquaculture systems. She outlined plans for business training, watershed restoration, shellfish safety certification, and strategic communications to accelerate replication.

◆ *Gender Equality Gaps and Entry Points*

Georgia Exell from IISD presented gendered vulnerabilities in Fiji’s aquaculture sector. She reported that women face disproportionate climate risks, lower economic power, restricted mobility, limited decision-making authority, and unequal access to finance and technical training. She emphasized that nature-based aquaculture can generate inclusive benefits only if projects intentionally address equity and social impacts.

◆ *Rights-Based Community Engagement*

Kinisemere Batibasaga from the Wildlife Conservation Society presented a rights-based community engagement approach grounded in Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. She reported that inclusive facilitation creates spaces for women, youth, and marginalized groups to participate in planning and governance. She highlighted that dialogue and participation challenge patriarchal norms and expand community leadership in aquaculture initiatives.

◆ *Policy Integration in Fiji's Aquaculture Development Plan*

Prashneel Chandra from the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries and Forests presented Fiji's Aquaculture Development Plan (2024–2028). He highlighted goals to expand aquaculture value, reduce imports, and increase exports. He reported that national policies integrate gender equality and social inclusion, collect GEDSI data, and address women's roles, health, and access to resources. He emphasized the need for community engagement, cultural recognition, and solutions to funding and outreach constraints.

◆ *Private Sector Partnerships for Women and Youth Leadership*

Justin Hunter from J. Hunter Pearls Fiji presented private sector models that empower women and youth to own and lead aquaculture enterprises. He highlighted inclusive economic opportunities where men support harvesting and operations. He emphasized a circular blue economy model that links ecosystem stewardship with sustainable livelihoods.

◆ *Cross-Sectoral Collaboration and Quality Assurance*

Roko Vuiyasawa and **Sakiusa Niwa Kiti** from the South Pacific Community and IISD presented cross-sectoral collaboration for scaling nature-based aquaculture. They reported that oyster grid lines enhance marine biodiversity and support local livelihoods. They emphasized that quality assurance systems enable market access, protect farmers' incomes, and integrate community farms into national food safety frameworks. They highlighted that quality assurance creates technical and leadership roles for women.

Discussion Highlights

Panelists highlighted integrated multi-species aquaculture systems, such as oysters combined with seaweed, as key to ecological and production efficiency. They identified challenges

including lengthy permitting processes and long cultivation periods. Panelists emphasized policy streamlining, monitoring targets, and scaling community-led farms. Speakers underscored gender justice interventions, including leadership training, flexible participation models, and support for women’s caregiving responsibilities.

This session demonstrated that gender-responsive, community-led nature-based aquaculture offers a scalable pathway for climate-resilient food systems. Integrated ecosystems, inclusive governance, private sector engagement, and policy alignment are critical for sustainable aquaculture expansion. Streamlined regulations and continued policy advocacy will accelerate implementation.



Key Messages

1. Speakers demonstrated that gender-responsive, community-led nature-based aquaculture strengthens climate resilience, ecosystems, and livelihoods.
2. Rights-based engagement and FPIC processes increase women's participation and challenge patriarchal governance structures.
3. Policy integration, private sector partnerships, and quality assurance systems enable scalable and market-ready aquaculture models.
4. Gender-inclusive technical and leadership roles increase women's income, visibility, and decision-making power.

Special Session 10a: Gender Dynamics in Social Economies of Dried Fish in South and Southeast Asia

This special session brought together researchers and students from the Dried Fish Matters (DFM) project to examine gender dynamics within the social economies of dried fish across South and Southeast Asia. The session challenged conventional economic perspectives by emphasizing that dried fish production, trade, and consumption are deeply embedded in social relations, cultural norms, legal frameworks, and power structures.

Session Overview

The session, chaired by **Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe**, explored how gender identities, artisanal knowledge systems, migration, occupational health, spatial access, and governance structures shape women's and men's experiences within dried fish value chains. Through comparative case studies from Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines, the panel demonstrated that economic activity in fisheries cannot be understood solely through profit or productivity metrics.

Divided into two thematic panels — Southeast Asia and South Asia — the session underscored the need for inclusive, socially grounded approaches to fisheries development that recognize women's agency, labor, and leadership.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Social Economy and Gendered Work in Dried Fish Production*

Dr. Derek Johnson, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, provided a conceptual overview of the DFM project's approach to social economy. He explained that the project treats social economy not as a fixed definition but as a framework that recognizes economic activity as fundamentally interwoven with social life.

Drawing on comparative research across Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines, **Dr. Johnson** examined patterns of gender identity and gendered division of labor in dried fish production, distribution, and consumption. He demonstrated that women's agency varies significantly across contexts, shaped by local histories, legal frameworks, market organization, and household dynamics.

He emphasized that development interventions risk failure when they overlook the embedded social relations that structure economic motivations and practices. Understanding variations in women's influence within dried fish economies is critical for improving individual and collective wellbeing.

◆ *Women's Artisanship in Boneless Danggit Production in the Philippines*

Jessie Varquez, PhD Candidate, University of Manitoba, examined women's artisanal labor in the production of boneless danggit (dried rabbitfish) in Bantayan Island, Cebu Province, the Philippines.

Based on sixteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, the study highlighted two critical artisanal processes:

- a. Timplada – the nuanced technique of salting and flavouring fish through embodied estimation and skill
- b. Pukyad – the dorsal splitting, degutting, and deboning process that transforms fresh rabbitfish into high-value boneless danggit

Varquez demonstrated that women's embodied knowledge and technical mastery underpin the distinctive quality and market value of the product. However, technological interventions in fisheries often overlook and undervalue these artisanal skills.

The presentation argued that recognizing women's artisanal expertise shifts the narrative from portraying women solely as vulnerable actors toward acknowledging their agency, capabilities, and central economic role in small-scale fisheries.

◆ *Livelihood Transitions Among Female Fish Processors at the Tonlé Sap, Cambodia*

Colleen Cranmer, University of Ottawa, analyzed shifting livelihoods among female fish processors around the Tonlé Sap Lake in Cambodia.

The Tonlé Sap, Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake, supports millions of livelihoods but faces ecological decline due to overfishing, dam construction, climate variability, agricultural intensification, and aquaculture expansion. As fish stocks decrease, traditional dried fish products such as trey neat (salted sun-dried fillet) are increasingly produced outside the lake region using aquaculture fish.

Cranmer documented how many micro-scale women processors have exited their businesses to work as laborers for larger operators or shifted to selling forage fish for aquaculture feed. Current development programs, which prioritize growth and profitability, often favor medium and large enterprises, reinforcing structural inequalities and marginalizing small-scale women processors.

The study posed critical questions: Who benefits from ecological and economic transformation? Who is excluded? What are the long-term implications for dried fish social economies?

◆ *Spatial Access and Social Positioning in Fish Markets*

Gayathri Lokuge applied a feminist geographical lens to examine spatial access and power relations in fish markets in Negombo, Sri Lanka, and Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Drawing on Doreen Massey's conceptualization of space as relational and socially constructed, the research demonstrated that market access depends not only on financial capital but also on social networks shaped by kinship, ethnicity, religion, and gendered labor histories.

Fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2023 revealed how spatial positioning—such as access to permanent stalls versus mobile corridor trading—reflects and reproduces social inequalities. Market spaces function as arenas of negotiation where power is continuously contested and reproduced.

Highlighting women's lived experiences, the study illustrated how spatial justice and mobility are central to understanding gendered economic participation in urban fish markets.

◆ *Gender Roles and Occupational Health Risks in Bangladesh*

Safina Naznin Haque, Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, examined gender roles and occupational health risks among women dried fish workers in Nazirartek, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Using a feminist political ecology framework, the study revealed a pronounced gender division of labor. Women are concentrated in physically demanding, low-paid positions with limited decision-making authority, while men dominate supervisory and managerial roles.

Women workers face significant health risks, including prolonged sun exposure, inadequate sanitation, limited access to clean water, lack of protective equipment, and insufficient workplace accommodations related to menstruation, pregnancy, and childcare. Exclusion from decision-making processes further restricts women’s ability to advocate for safer conditions.

The study called for gender-responsive governance reforms, improved infrastructure, recognition of informal labor, and participatory mechanisms that include women in workplace decision-making.

Discussion Highlights

The discussion reinforced that dried fish economies cannot be reduced to technical production systems. They are social systems structured by gender norms, legal frameworks, spatial politics, and ecological pressures.

Participants emphasized that development interventions focused solely on productivity and market growth risk deepening inequality. Recognizing women’s artisanal knowledge, spatial negotiations, and embodied labor is essential to designing equitable policies

The panel also highlighted that ecological degradation, aquaculture intensification, and market restructuring disproportionately affect women, particularly micro-scale processors and informal workers. Addressing these impacts requires structural reform rather than short-term welfare measures.





Key Messages

1. **Dried fish economies are social economies.**

Production, trade, and consumption of dried fish are deeply embedded in kinship systems, artisanal traditions, gender norms, migration patterns, and governance structures. Economic analysis must move beyond narrow productivity metrics.

2. **Women’s agency varies across contexts but remains central.**

Across South and Southeast Asia, women play indispensable roles in processing, marketing, and value addition. However, their influence and decision-making power differ significantly depending on legal, social, ecological, and market conditions.

3. **Artisanal knowledge is undervalued in development policy.**

Women’s embodied skills—such as salting, deboning, drying, and quality control—directly determine product value and reputation. Technological modernization efforts often overlook these capabilities.

4. **Ecological and market transformations disproportionately affect women.**

Declining fish stocks, aquaculture intensification, and value chain consolidation are reshaping dried fish livelihoods. Micro-scale women processors face heightened vulnerability in these transitions.

5. Market spaces reproduce social inequalities.

Access to stalls, suppliers, mobility, and customer networks is mediated by gender, ethnicity, religion, and social capital. Spatial positioning within markets reflects broader power hierarchies.

6. Occupational health risks are gendered and systemic.

Women dried fish workers frequently occupy physically demanding, low-paid positions with limited protection, inadequate sanitation, and minimal participation in decision-making.

7. Growth-focused development models risk reinforcing inequality.

Policies that prioritize enterprise expansion and profitability without addressing structural gender inequities may marginalize small-scale women actors.

Special Session 10b: Gender, Agency, Policy, and Human Rights in Dried Fish Value Chains

This panel deepened the analytical lens of the Dried Fish Matters (DFM) project by examining patriarchal bargaining, capabilities in the informal economy, policy blind spots, and human rights frameworks in dried fish value chains across Bangladesh and India. Presentations emphasized that gender inequities are embedded in everyday negotiations, institutional structures, and governance systems, requiring structural—not merely technical—responses.

Session Overview

This session, chaired by **Dr. Derek Johnson**, examined gender dynamics within dried fish value chains across South and Southeast Asia through the interdisciplinary research initiative Dried Fish Matters (DFM). Chaired by **Dr. Derek Johnson**, the session brought together scholars from anthropology, economics, geography, development studies, and law to analyze how dried fish economies operate as deeply embedded social systems rather than purely market-driven enterprises.

The session was structured in two complementary panels. The first explored gendered work, artisanal knowledge, spatial access, ecological change, and occupational health in Southeast and South Asia. The second panel extended the discussion through analytical frameworks including patriarchal bargaining, the Capability Approach, gendered value chain analysis, and human rights-based governance.

Across case studies from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines, presenters demonstrated that women occupy central roles in processing, retailing, and micro-enterprise management. However, their labor remains systematically undervalued, informalized, and excluded from formal policy recognition. Ecological pressures, aquaculture intensification, export-oriented fisheries policies, and climate volatility are reshaping dried fish economies in ways that disproportionately affect women—particularly micro-scale processors and traders.

The session emphasized that advancing gender equity in fisheries development requires moving beyond productivity-centered interventions toward structural reforms grounded in social economy perspectives, gender-sensitive value chain analysis, and human rights frameworks.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Patriarchal Bargaining and Women's Agency in Teknaf, Bangladesh*

Aklima Akter from Jahangirnagar University explored women's agency in dried fish value chains in Teknaf, Bangladesh, through the lens of patriarchal bargaining. The study demonstrated that although female laborers operate under severe patriarchal constraints, they continually negotiate, resist, and adapt within these limits. Women employ context-specific bargaining strategies shaped by everyday engagements in the workplace and household. These strategies include leveraging skills and knowledge, forming women's associations, mobilizing networks, utilizing labor scarcity, negotiating through kinship relations (including relationships with owners' wives), managing savings through personal belongings, and asserting authority as single female heads of households.

Rather than existing outside patriarchy, these women produce, modify, and engage with existing social structures. Patriarchal bargaining functions as a dynamic strategy through which women pursue subjective, objective, and relational well-being. Importantly, these strategies are collective and cumulative, shaping opportunities for future generations of women entering dried fish value chains.

◆ *Capabilities and Informal Entrepreneurship in Andhra Pradesh, India*

Prof. Jeena T. Srinivasan, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, applied the Capability Approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum to analyze women's entrepreneurial roles in dried fish processing in Andhra Pradesh, India.

The study reframed women not merely as informal workers but as entrepreneurs who assume economic risks, make strategic decisions, and manage micro-enterprises. Despite this agency, women face structural barriers, including limited access to capital, infrastructure, formal recognition, and reliable market information.

Intersecting structures of gender, caste, and informal institutional arrangements shape access to raw materials, mobility, market space, and decision-making power. While capability deprivations are evident, women demonstrate resilience and adaptive strategies in navigating these constraints.

The findings underscore the importance of enhancing real freedoms — rather than simply income generation — by addressing structural and institutional barriers that restrict women’s capabilities.

◆ *Scanning the Policy Landscape in India Through a Gendered Value Chain Lens*

Tara Nair from Dried Fish Matters and Reimagining Food Systems projects showcased how the project examined India’s fisheries policy landscape using a gendered value chain approach, drawing from research in Gujarat.

She narrated how study highlighted a persistent policy paradox: although women’s contributions to fisheries are well documented in academic literature, policies continue to normalize asymmetric distributions of power and resources in favor of men.

Women dominate upstream post-harvest processing activities such as sorting, cleaning, and drying. However, their labor is often categorized as unpaid family work and treated as having negligible opportunity cost. As a result, women’s labor functions as a concealed subsidy within dried fish markets, rarely reflected in pricing structures or profit margins.

In downstream retail markets, women — often from socio-economically disadvantaged communities — operate under restrictive gender norms, mobility constraints, and administrative systems that fail to account for their specific needs. Climate volatility and fisheries uncertainty further heighten risk exposure.

The paper demonstrated how a gendered value chain approach can reveal structural inequities and serve as a precursor to rights-based and policy reform.

◆ *Human Rights and Social Economy Mapping in Valsad, India*

Mohammad Anas Shoebullah Khan from Dried Fish Matters, University of Manitoba, examined how a human rights-based approach, grounded in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines), can be operationalized through social economy mapping.

Using a localized dried fish value chain in Valsad, Gujarat, the research identified context-specific barriers to women’s rights in processing and retail segments. Women face

disproportionate challenges related to health, sanitation, and market access. These barriers intersect with caste, migration status, linguistic identity, and economic vulnerability.

The study emphasized that small-scale dried fish economies are often excluded from state-level policy discourse due to export-oriented fisheries narratives and industrial port development priorities. This neglect produces uneven consequences across actors in the value chain.

Mapping value chains through a gender-sensitive, actor-oriented social economy framework, the research demonstrated how human rights implementation can be strengthened through targeted public policy and strategic civil society engagement.

Discussion Highlights

The discussion reinforced that gender inequities in dried fish economies are not accidental but structurally embedded within patriarchal norms, caste hierarchies, informal labor systems, and export-oriented policy priorities.

Participants emphasized that women’s agency often manifests through negotiation rather than open confrontation. They also added that informality simultaneously enables flexibility and entrenches vulnerability. They argue that policy discourse frequently overlooks localized dried fish economies. They highlighted how human rights frameworks require context-sensitive mapping to identify real barriers.

The panel underscored that achieving gender justice requires transforming institutional structures, labor recognition systems, and governance frameworks—not merely enhancing productivity or welfare support.





Key Messages

- 1. Dried fish value chains are social systems, not merely economic systems.**

Production and trade are embedded in kinship networks, gender norms, caste relations, migration patterns, and local governance structures.

- 2. Women's labor underpins the sector but remains structurally undervalued.**

Women dominate post-harvest processing and retail segments, yet their work is frequently classified as unpaid family labor or low-skilled informal work, functioning as a concealed subsidy within markets.

- 3. Agency exists within constraint.**

Women engage in patriarchal bargaining, entrepreneurial risk-taking, artisanal innovation, and spatial negotiation to sustain livelihoods and pursue wellbeing, even under restrictive social and institutional conditions.

- 4. Structural inequalities shape access to markets and resources.**

Access to raw materials, capital, infrastructure, market stalls, sanitation, and mobility is mediated by gender, caste, ethnicity, migration status, and social networks.

5. Ecological and economic transitions are gendered.

Fish stock decline, aquaculture intensification, climate variability, and policy shifts toward export-oriented growth disproportionately impact small-scale women processors and traders.

6. Occupational health risks reflect governance failures.

Women workers face heightened exposure to unsafe working conditions, limited sanitation, and inadequate protective measures due to systemic neglect.

7. Policy landscapes often reinforce asymmetries.

Fisheries policies frequently prioritize industrial growth while overlooking localized dried fish economies and the rights of women engaged in informal segments.

8. Human rights frameworks require localized, gender-sensitive operationalization.

Mapping value chains through a social economy lens helps identify context-specific barriers and enables more effective implementation of rights-based approaches.

Special Session 11: Gender in Freshwater Fisheries (The Nature Conservancy)

This session examined gender dynamics in freshwater fisheries, with case studies from South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Speakers highlighted women's under-recognized roles, climate-driven vulnerabilities, governance gaps, and gender inequities across freshwater fisheries value chains.

Session Overview

Ms. Cecile Brugure opened the session and emphasized the importance of gender-responsive freshwater fisheries governance. Speakers presented empirical evidence on women's roles in inland fisheries, climate impacts on fisherfolk livelihoods, and gender inequities in governance and value chains across multiple regions.

Presentations and Key Evidence

◆ *Women in Freshwater Fisheries in South Asia*

Dr. Piyashi DebRoy from ICAR - Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute Kolkata, India, presented scoping case studies from India and Bangladesh. She reported that women's roles in freshwater fisheries remain less recognized than in marine fisheries. She explained that women mainly use indigenous gears and traps while men use larger-scale gears. She highlighted that climate change affects women's participation and livelihoods and that women's representation in fisheries governance remains symbolic, with men retaining decision-making power.

◆ *Gender and Climate Change Impacts on Fisherfolk Livelihoods*

Dr. Ayodele Oloko from the University of British Columbia presented findings from Nigeria and Cameroon. She reported that women face heightened risks from sea level rise, flooding, fisheries depletion, and rising temperatures. She documented gender-specific impacts, including maternal malnutrition, gender-based violence, displacement, child marriage, and increased HIV risk. She emphasized that poverty and limited government support exacerbate women's vulnerability.

◆ *Gender Dynamics and Women's Empowerment in Peru Freshwater Fisheries*

Natalia Briceño Lagos from The Nature Conservancy presented findings from Peru. She reported that men and women perform distinct fishing roles shaped by cultural beliefs,

fishing gears, and resource access. She highlighted that women assume dual roles when men migrate but remain marginalized in governance and decision-making. She identified education gaps, socioeconomic vulnerability, and limited intersectional research as key challenges.

◆ *Equity in Freshwater Fisheries in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Dr. Ayodele Oloko presented additional findings on gender gaps from subsistence to commercial fisheries in Sub-Saharan Africa. She reported that women dominate post-harvest activities, but their roles are framed as auxiliary. She highlighted cultural taboos, mining activities, and policy exclusion as barriers to women’s access to resources and governance. She called for inclusive and gender-responsive fisheries policies.

Discussion Highlights

Participants asked how women transition from invisibility to leadership. **Dr. Ayodele Oloko** noted that limited education constrains women’s leadership opportunities, but women organize informal support networks and cooperatives, with examples from Tanzania’s seaweed sector. Participants asked what drives women to take on men’s roles **Dr. Ayodele Oloko** reported that women assume fishing roles during male migration, widowhood, and single parenthood, demonstrating adaptive resilience.

This session demonstrated that gender inequities persist across freshwater fisheries systems. Women’s contributions remain undervalued, climate change intensifies social vulnerability, and governance systems exclude women from decision-making. Strengthening gender-responsive policies, education, and inclusive governance can enhance equity and resilience in freshwater fisheries.





Key Messages

1. Women play critical roles in freshwater fisheries but remain undervalued, underrepresented, and excluded from decision-making.
2. Climate change amplifies gendered vulnerabilities, including health risks, displacement, and social harms.
3. Women assume dual and leadership roles when men migrate, yet systems fail to recognize and support these contributions.
4. Cultural norms, poverty, and governance gaps limit women's access to resources, education, and policy influence.

PART IV – GAF9 Field Trip

As part of the GAF9 program, participants joined a full-day field trip on 4 October 2025 to learn from local communities engaged in women-led fish processing enterprises and integrated farming systems in Pathum Thani, Thailand.

To make the visits more interactive and manageable, participants were divided into two main groups, with each group further split into a small number of participants for transportation and discussion purposes. Translators accompanied each group to support communication and exchange between participants and the host communities. Each group visited one women-led fish processing enterprise and one integrated farming site, allowing participants to experience different community approaches to sustainable aquaculture and agriculture.

Participants in Group I visited **the Community Enterprise for Fish Processing, Moo 8, Klong Hok**, a women-led enterprise that emerged after the 2011 floods disrupted local livelihoods. Through determination and experimentation, women in the community began raising and processing fish to support their families, eventually developing a successful local enterprise. During the visit, participants learned about the group’s fish processing activities, including the production of sun-dried fish, fermented fish, and chili pastes. They also visited fish ponds and processing areas, where community members explained how they use locally available resources, including vegetable scraps from markets, as part of a more sustainable production cycle. Beyond the technical aspects, the visit highlighted the important role of women’s leadership, collective work, and community cooperation in building more stable livelihoods.





Group I also visited **Pu Yai Udom’s Integrated Farm and Kok Nong Na Baan Mana community market**. The integrated farm demonstrated how rice fields, fish ponds, crops, and livestock can work together within one farming system. Participants observed how pond water is used to support rice cultivation, while surrounding crops provide natural food sources for fish. The visit offered practical insights into integrated farming approaches, self-sufficiency, and local adaptation strategies. At Kok Nong Na Baan Mana, participants also had the opportunity to explore a small community market and enjoy meals prepared by local community members.





Meanwhile, participants in Group II visited **Lam Sai Pattana Community Enterprise**, another women-led group specializing in catfish processing. The enterprise produces a range of value-added products such as catfish chips, catfish rolls, and sun-dried catfish using fish raised in their own ponds. Community members shared how the group developed through collaboration, training opportunities, and support from universities and government agencies. Participants joined hands-on fish processing activities and learned about product development, packaging, and marketing efforts that help strengthen local income opportunities.



Group II also visited **Ban Luang Moo 1 – Khok Nong Na Model**, a community learning site inspired by King Rama IX’s sufficiency economy philosophy. The site demonstrated an integrated and circular farming system where ponds, rice fields, plants, livestock, and waste management are interconnected. Participants explored different activities around the farm, including vegetable harvesting, natural fertilizer preparation, duck egg collection, and Black Soldier Fly larvae production for animal feed. The visit provided a hands-on learning experience and illustrated how integrated farming systems can support sustainability, reduce waste, and strengthen community self-reliance.



PART V - Addressing the GAF9 Report Objectives

1. Advancing Gender-Responsive Research and Policy in Aquaculture and Fisheries

GAF9 advanced gender-responsive research and policy by generating interdisciplinary evidence across the Blue Economy, climate adaptation, nature-based solutions, and gendered value chains. Across thematic streams, participants demonstrated that gender inequality remains embedded in governance systems, labor markets, technology access, and policy implementation. Empirical studies highlighted persistent gaps in sex- and gender-disaggregated data, undervaluation of women's labor, and weak integration of gender into fisheries and aquaculture governance frameworks.

The conference reinforced the need for intersectional, political economy, and governance-sensitive approaches to inform policy design. Presentations linked gender equity to improved sustainability outcomes, food security, and household well-being, aligning gender justice with SDGs 5, 14, and 13. Policy-relevant frameworks such as the SSF Guidelines, gender-responsive value chain analysis, and blue justice approaches were discussed as mechanisms to strengthen institutional accountability and policy coherence.

Bridging research, policy, and practice, GAF9 contributed to strengthening evidence-based pathways for gender-transformative fisheries and aquaculture governance.

2. Generating and Sharing Evidence, Tools, and Good Practices on Gender Equality and Inclusion

GAF9 served as a global platform for sharing innovative evidence, analytical tools, and good practices to address gender gaps in aquatic food systems. Participants presented participatory methods (e.g., photovoice), intersectional frameworks, feminist political economy analyses, digital tools, and more-than-human approaches that expand conventional gender research boundaries.

Empirical findings demonstrated effective practices, including women-led cooperatives, savings groups, climate-smart aquaculture technologies, digital market platforms, and gender-integrated corporate frameworks. Tools such as gender equity indices, vulnerability assessment frameworks, governance legitimacy analyses, and digital accountability applications illustrated how research can translate into actionable interventions.

The conference highlighted emerging digital-enabled applications for monitoring labor rights, value chain transparency, and gender data collection, signaling a new frontier for inclusive governance and policy innovation.

3. Fostering Cross-Sectoral and Transdisciplinary Collaboration

GAF9 fostered collaboration among academia, governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, and private sector actors. Keynote speakers and thematic sessions demonstrated how partnerships between policy institutions (e.g., FAO, AU-IBAR), research institutions, NGOs, and industry actors are essential for gender-transformative outcomes.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives in fisheries governance, labor accountability, and blue economy development showcased co-development of tools, policies, and interventions. Presentations emphasized the role of women's organizations, networks, and community groups as critical governance actors, while private sector frameworks highlighted corporate responsibility for gender equity.

The conference reinforced the necessity of transdisciplinary collaboration to address complex socio-ecological challenges, integrating social science, environmental science, economics, technology, and governance.

4. Identifying Priority Actions to Transform Aquatic Food Systems

GAF9 identified strategic priorities to advance equitable, climate-resilient, and socially just aquatic food systems. Key priorities include strengthening gender-responsive governance, scaling climate-smart and nature-based aquaculture practices, addressing gendered labor and market inequalities, and integrating gender into digital and technological transitions.

Participants emphasized transformative approaches that go beyond participation toward power redistribution, institutional reform, and accountability mechanisms. Priority actions included institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting, improving data systems, supporting women-led organizations, integrating intersectional vulnerability frameworks, and mainstreaming gender into blue economy and climate policies.

The conference also highlighted the need to recognize diverse gender identities, masculinities, and relational gender dynamics to ensure inclusive and socially just fisheries and aquaculture transitions.

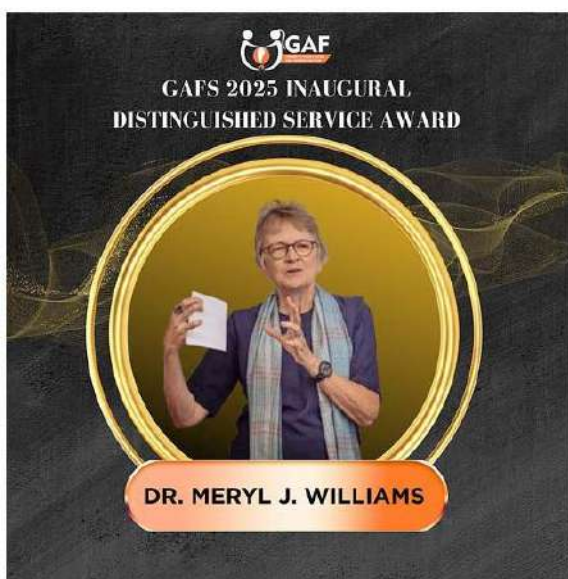
Unto the Next: Stakeholder Priorities for GAF10 and Capacity Development

A post-conference survey was completed by 56 respondents, representing 56 percent of GAF9 participants. Among the respondents, 26 identified as GAF members and 30 as non-members, providing a diverse range of perspectives across institutional affiliations, regions, and professional backgrounds. The survey aimed to inform the design and strategic direction of GAF10, including conference programming and capacity-building priorities.

PART VI – Recognition

The Recipient of GAFS 2025 - Inaugural Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Meryl J. Williams



Dr. Meryl J. Williams has been awarded the GAFS 2025 Inaugural Distinguished Service Award (DSA) in recognition of her unwavering dedication to raising the profile of women in fisheries and championing gender equality as a fundamental issue in fisheries and aquaculture development.

A Champion for Gender Equality

Dr. Williams stands as a champion in international fisheries policy. She has been working for over 40 years to embed a gender perspective into fisheries, aquaculture, aquatic resource conservation, and agricultural research and development. Her relentless dedication has successfully integrated gender equality considerations into the fisheries and aquaculture discussions, literature, and policy.

She has been a driving force in placing gender issues squarely on the fisheries economics agenda through her influential roles in the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society, the former Genderaquafish network, and numerous international non-

governmental organizations, as well as at the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on Fisheries (COFI).

The humble demeanor of **Dr. Williams** belies the impact she has made in advancing gender equality in fisheries and aquaculture. Her continuous commitment has amplified the voices of millions of women fishers worldwide, illuminating their experiences, sparking crucial debates, and driving transformative change across the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Recent Recognition

In July 2024, **Dr. Williams** was rightfully honored with two distinguished awards:

- The IIFET Distinguished Service Award, celebrating her remarkable achievements and substantial impact on the global fisheries community, including her pioneering work incorporating economics into global tuna fisheries conservation and management
- The Margarita Lizárraga Medal (2022-2023), presented during the opening of COFI's 36th Session at FAO headquarters in Rome, recognizing her vital role in enhancing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

Distinguished Career

An interdisciplinary researcher with a PhD in Zoology and Masters in Mathematical Statistics, **Dr. Williams** served as Director-General of the WorldFish Centre from 1994 to 2004, where she concentrated on eradicating poverty, improving people's nutrition, and reducing pressure on the environment. Through her career spanning 40 years, she has published over 150 research papers, technical reports, conference proceedings and books, and established Genderaquafish.org, a key global website on gender in aquaculture and fisheries.

She has long been committed to mentoring the younger generation of practitioners in the field and cultivating the next generation of policy makers. She has created opportunities and associated funding for early-career professionals to publish their research, attend conferences, and advance their careers, and has been especially supportive of women from developing countries.

Continuing Impact

Currently, **Dr. Williams** is spearheading projects that tackle gender disparities in fisheries economics research and improve the availability of sex- and gender-disaggregated data in the

field. She is the Inaugural Chair of the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society and Vice Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation.

GAF9 awardee names

Best Oral Presentation	<p>Awardee: Nilanjana Biswas</p> <p>Title: Counting the Uncounted: Gendered Labour in the Seafood Industry in Australia’s Northern Territory</p>
Best Poster award	<p>Awardee: Sunae Lee</p> <p>Title: Changing Gender Roles in Diving Fishing: A Case Study of Japan</p>
Best photo Prize	<p>Winner: Jessie Jr Varquez</p> <p>Photo Title: Arranging slipmouths on a drying rack in Bantayan Island, the Philippines. The exposure to extreme heat poses difficulty to women working in the post-harvest fisheries</p>

GAF9 Photo Competition Winners



Winner - Arranging slipmouths on a drying rack in Bantayan Island, the Philippines. The exposure to extreme heat poses difficulty to women working in the post-harvest fisheries by Jessie Jr Varquez.



1st Runner-up: Every morning in Karangasem, Bali, the wives of fishers wait for their husbands to return from the sea, joining them to pull the jukung (small boat) ashore. This daily scene highlights the vital role women play in sustaining both family livelihoods and coastal life by Muhammad Alzaki Tristi



2nd Runner-Up: Mending nets, making ends meet: She and her into every stitch
by Renz Prudenciado

GAF9 Research Poster Exhibit

Title	Author (s)
<i>Women/gender in the blue economy</i>	
The Women of the Seas: Unpacking the Role of Women-Led Fisheries Local Action Groups (Flags) in Empowering Female Oyster Farmers in Leyte, Leyte Philippines	Geralyn A. Merimilla
Sustainability through the Eyes of the Calamian Tagbanwa Indigenous Peoples	Farisal Ungkakay-Bagsit, Jerry Ian L. Leonida, Josielou Chan-Leonida and Fredel B. Mued
Nurturing Behavior Change for Inclusive Blue Economy: A Case Study from a Women’s Coastal Community in Bone, Indonesia	Anisa Indira Prameswari, Muhammad Alzaki Tristi and Yunita Mardiani
Advancing Indigenous Women-Led Conservation and Management in Calauit Island: Achievements, Challenges, and Strategies for the Future	Jerry Ian Leonida, Josielou Chan-Leonida, Farisal Ungkakay-Bagsit, Fredel Mued and Rosita Eguia
Blue Justice and Gender Equity in Tanzania’s Small-Scale Octopus Fishery	Bigeyo Kuboja, Modesta Medard, Mary Kishe, Lilian Ibengwe, and Innocent Mwaka
Empowering Rural Women through Micro-Enterprise: A Success Story of Ornamental Fish Village Project in Southern India	Nandana R, Ankush Lala Kamble, Anu Susan Sam, Karthik Kumar Gowd Palsam, Devi V S and Ramesh P
<i>Innovative frameworks/methodology for gender research in fisheries and aquaculture</i>	
Mapping Gender Roles in Coastal Livelihoods: A Gis-Based Analysis of Women’s Contribution to the Blue Economy in Bangladesh	Asmaul Husna Siddique and Md. Maksudur Rahman

Title	Author (s)
<i>Counting and discounting: Men's and women's work in fisheries and aquaculture</i>	
Changing Gender Roles in Diving Fishing: A Case Study of Japan	Sunae Ii
Challenging Blue Perceptions: A Gender Lens on Post-Harvest in Blue Swimming Crab Model Villages in Western Visayas, Philippines	Ruby P. Napata, Liberty N. Espectato, Ariel S. Sefil and Genna D. Serofia

PART VII - Annex

List of Committees and Secretariat

- GAF9 Co-Chairs**
- **Dr Nikita Gopal**
Chair, Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries Section (GAFS) of the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS)
 - **Dr Kyoko Kusakabe**
Vice-Chair, GAFS of the AFS
- GAF9 Local Organizing Committee**
- **Dr Kyoko Kusakabe**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
 - **Dr Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit**
Treasurer, GAFS of the AFS, Thailand
 - **Dr Malasri Khumsiri**
Department of Fisheries, Royal Thai Government, Thailand
 - **Dr Salin Krishna**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
 - **Dr Sirisuda Jumnongsong**
Kasetsart University, Thailand
- Fund-raising Committee**
- **Dr Ann Elizabeth Fleming**
WorldFish, Malaysia
 - **Dr Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit**
Treasurer, GAFS of the AFS
- Program Committee**
- **Dr Nikita Gopal**
ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, India
 - **Dr Kyoko Kusakabe**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
 - **Dr Kafayat Fakoya**
GAFS of the AFS

GAF9 Secretariat

- **Dr Alice Joan Ferrer**
University of the Philippines Visayas, Philippines
- **Dr Veena N**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
- **Ms Sijitha Mary**
Executive Officer, GAFS of the AFS
- **Ms Chollada Wongpanich**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
- **Ms Pawinnut Chaiyasuan**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
- **Dr Veena N**
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

List of student volunteers

- MC**
1. Renz Prudenciado (AIT)
 2. Naw Hsar Hay Gay (AIT)
 3. Samantha Gabrielle Baril (AIT)
- Event support**
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 2. Djolly Ma. Dinamling (AIT)
 3. Renz Prudenciado (AIT)
- Registration**
4. Ha Ngoc Huong Mai (AIT)
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 8. Kanticha Suknit (KU)
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 8. Tania Afrin Tony (AIT)
 9. Kanokkorn Seemala (KU)

10. Kanticha Suknit (KU)
11. Pathumma Udompornprasit (KU)

**Media
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18. Tanongsak Pimsorn (KU)
19. Thanwarat Yata (KU)

**Emergency
Runner**

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2. Kanticha Suknit (KU)
3. Nayanat Roektanee (KU)
4. Tanongsak Pimsorn (KU)



9th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries

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