



WOMEN IN CAMBODIAN FISHERIES - A FEMININE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

In Cambodia, fisheries is an important component both in the diet of the people as well as economy. Most families depend on fish for daily food needs. Though aquaculture is a relatively new activity in Cambodia, fishing and fish processing is as old as Cambodian history. Cambodia with rich aquatic resources once enjoyed the status of maximum fish availability for the consumption. Probably, owing to the large scale availability during a short period of time during the fishing season, traditional methods of processing have evolved to save the fish from spoilage for its use in the off season. Women actively participate in capture fisheries, processing and aquaculture. In capture fisheries while pre-fishing responsibilities remain with women, men undertake the actual fishing. Sometimes women also assist in actual fishing. After harvest of the fish women undertake the major responsibility of processing the fish into different products. In processing large majority of the activities are carried by women. Aquaculture, particularly culture of fish in cages is also partly assisted by women. Feeding of fish remains with women. Catching small fish for feeding fish is undertaken by them. In general, it was clear that women are an important force in all sectors examined and they deserve special support.

Introduction

With a view to understand the contribution of women to various sectors of fisheries in Cambodia, a preliminary study was undertaken to quantify the contribution of women. Three systems namely, fishing, fish processing, and marketing in aquaculture were identified as

the main systems in fisheries. In Cambodia, aquaculture contributes only about 10% of the total production of about 100,000 tones while much of the fish is consumed fresh appreciable amount of fish is processed into various traditional products.

Methods

Discussions were held with the owners of the units like fishing, processing and aquaculture were met and requested to identify various steps involved in each of the activity and contribution of both men and women.

Results

The results obtained from fishing, processing and aquaculture are presented separately in the Tables 1-3. In all activities, both men and women are involved, but in some cases like fishing though women play major role.

Discussion

Gender awareness is urgently needed to make awareness about the role played by women

VARIOUS STEPS	TASKS DONE BY WOMEN	TASKS DONE BY MEN
Initiative	- discuss with husband	- discuss with wife
Buying fishing equipment	- bargain the price of fishing net	
Pre-fishing activities	- make fishing net be ready to use - prepare food, basket, plastic sheet fishing net, etc. - repair fishing net when it is torn	
Fishing		- catch fish with fishing net - may stay at the lake at night - look after the fishing net (prevent form stealing)
Fish selling / Marketing	- know market price and adapt the price to the market	
Budget maintenance	- keep money & take care of family expenses	
Making decision in spending money	- make decision in spending on food, especially small expenses - discuss with husband for expenses related to high-cost items.	- discuss with wife when planning to buy high-cost items.

The table above shows that women are involved in all supporting activities of capture fishery. All this involvement is usually ignored and assumed that capture fishery is carried out by only men..

Activities: Fishing (use fishing net)
Place: Beung Bassac village, Sambour Meas commune, Kompong Cham town, Kampong Cham Province.
Interviewer: Sophea. Nhohn
Interviewees: Ms. Sok Hen (38) and Mr. Kon Then (49)
Date of interview: 30/09/1994

Role of women in fish processing (Fish paste production)

VARIOUS STEPS	TASKS DONE BY WOMEN	TASKS DONE BY MEN
Pre-process	- looking for budget, if no budget - buy jars and salt	
Transport		- transport fish by boat to the place
Lifting		- lifting fish from boat to the fish piles - lifting polished fish home
Dressing fish	- cut fish (always women)	
Pressing		- Polish/press fish by hand for small quantity of fish - by machine for big quantity
Fish preservation	- expose pressed fish to the wind for one night - salt fish - expose salted fish to be dripped and make it hard - salting - stuff salted fish in the jars	
Maintenance	- when salt water on the top evaporats, add salted water - maintain fish paste with salted water on the top	
Marketing	- looking for good price for both buying salt and jars and selling fish paste - sell fish paste in whole sale at home - sell fish paste in retail in the market	
Making decision in spending money	- pay the debt - decide to spend on food, clothes and low-cost items - discuss with husband in spending on high-cost items	- discuss with wife in spending on costly items

The table above shows that women are involved in almost all the process of fish paste production. According to my experience, they are also involved in the entire process of other fish preservation activities such as smoked fish production, salted fish, etc.

Activities: Fish paste production
 Place: Russey Keo district, Phnom Penh Municipality
 Interviewer: Sophea. Nhohn
 Interviewees: Nos Rorkies (39), Math Slai Man (41)
 Date of interview: 13/10/1994

Role of women in aquaculture (Fish raising in floating - bamboo cages)

VARIOUS STEPS	TASKS DONE BY WOMEN	TASKS DONE BY MEN
Pre-process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparing budget to buy fingerlings 1500 fingerlings costs 225,000 riels - discuss with her husband on fish culture plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discuss with his wife on fish culture plans (activities are started from July and completed in March)
Prepare materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - helping her husband to make cages and seeking small fish for fish feed - during nine months, she bought only 1.950 kg of small fish for feeding. It costs 975,000 riels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making cages -buying materials especially fishing net for finding small fish to feed the fish - buy fingerlings from the markets or from other villages.
Skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prepare feed, feeding, looking after fish every day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeking for small fish from river or lakes or sometimes bought it from markets
Selling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decide to sell fish at home, sometimes sell in markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - help his wife to sell fish in markets
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - account maintenance 	
Spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - buy food, clothes, medicines, materials for children going to school, festival, wedding, and other expenses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keeping some money to buy fingerlings and equipment's for reproduction.

Activities: Fish raising (in bamboo cages which float in the river)
 Place: Prek Khmeng village, Prek Khmeng commune,
 Lovea Em district, Kandal Province
 Interviewer: Ma Kol Chenda
 Interviewees: Ms. York Vanna (28), Mr, Chreng Soeun (33)
 Date of interview: 15/10/1994

ROLE OF WOMEN IN FISHERIES IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE

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Introduction

Battambang Province has been deriving majority of its requirement for fresh and processed fish from the Tonle Sap fishing zone. However, there is evidence that there has been a decline in catches of fish from this area especially for Grade I fish (snakehead, catfish etc.). Battambang Province has also experienced an increase in the human population both from the natural increases within the area and due to the return of people from the Thai border. This has led to an increase in the number of people attempting to raise fish in ponds both for domestic use and for marketing purpose. Many of these attempts have fallen short of expectations due to lack of technical knowledge and the reliance on the Thai border for supply of fingerlings and fish feed which often render the operation uneconomical.

Carere is working in all districts of Battambang Province in different areas of activities. Ek Phnom district is one of the target

areas of Carere work and is one of the lowest areas in Battambang Province. (close to the Tonle Sap Lake zone). The area is prone to flooding annually. In this area, people have small areas of land for agriculture and after the rice harvest they usually grow vegetables to increase the family income. However, they find it hard to find a market to sell their vegetable production and the market price of vegetables is usually low. The living conditions of these people are very hard especially for women who have a greater responsibility in family maintenance. As part of development effort, people are encouraged to culture fish to add to their agricultural production and improve their living condition. For example, more than 100 families in Ek Phnom district have dug ponds for raising fish and for watering vegetable gardens. Each family dug one pond with the dimensions of approximately 10 x 8 x 3 meters. After completion of digging ponds, water was pumped in from the Sangke River and fish species like common carp, silver carp and silver barb, sand goby, common climbing perch,

walking cat fish and swamp eel. Approximately 1-10 kg of these fish were put in to each pond with the assumption that they might start to reproduce and increase in their number. At the time of raising these fish, vegetables were also grown (such as cabbage, morning glory, corn and cassava) for use as fish feed. After 8-10 months, the fish were harvested. However, fish production was not good and much time and effort was wasted. This was because fish were raised with little technical knowledge with regard to feed, stocking density, pond management etc.

The role of women

In the above work, we have noticed that women have an important role in fish culture activity. For example:

- ♦ Approximately 50 % of the pond digging activity was carried out by women in poor families, widows and women whose husbands were handicapped.
- ♦ Approximately 50 % of the collection of fry or fingerlings was done by women who were head of families.
- ♦ Approximately 80 % of the work related to fish seed care of the fish was done by women.
- ♦ Approximately 90 % of the marketing was done by women (transportation and selling in the market).
- ♦ Additionally, approximately 95 % of the activities related to processing of fish is done by women :

- smoking
- drying
- making fish paste
- making fermented fish

These are methods of preserving fish for extended periods.

Women also have many other responsibilities, for example :-

- ♦ housework
- ♦ taking care of children
- ♦ working in fields
- ♦ managing family economics

From our experiences and observations, it is no surprise that women are often over-worked. Due to lack of technical knowledge in agriculture and aquaculture, women often spend much time in these activities without gaining much economic benefit. The type of technical knowledge extended is also another area that needs improvement. The technology should be simple and easily understandable by the community. The formation of women's groups for raising fish, will also assist women to improve their fish production and marketing and provide an opportunity for cooperation and exchange of ideas. Credit schemes could also help by providing money to purchase fingerlings or better quality food. Government departments such as Agriculture and Fisheries could also assist by providing technical advice and fingerlings.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE FISHERIES DEPARTMENT

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Abstract

The results of the survey indicate that women have a fair position within the DOF with good opportunities for training and promotion. However, it is felt that these results are probably biased due to the research methodology (and the assumptions on which it is based) leading to misleading responses made to the questionnaire. Further it would appear that women within the DOF are strongly influenced by the same cultural/traditional influences which not only deter them from working, but also influence of cultural and traditional influences need to be investigated if action can be taken to improve the status of women within the DOF in the future.

Introduction

The Department of Fisheries (DOF) is under the ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and is situated in Phnom Penh. There are by provincial fisheries offices in the 12 main fish producing provinces. However, the personnel working within the DOF are considered as central department staff. Personnel working in the Provincial Fisheries Officers are paid employees of the provincial offices.

The DOF manages both fresh water and marine capture and aquaculture/

mariculture fisheries (in the Kingdom of Cambodia). A total of 504 people work for the DOF (in Phnom Penh), one hundred and twenty of which are women (23.8%).

Methodology

After discussion, it was decided that research was necessary to discover, the ratio of women to men the opportunities for women and the problems faced by women, working in the DOF. A questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was filled in

during confidential semi-formal interviews on a one-to one basis. A total of 32 women were interviewed. These were randomly selected although the selection will have been biased since a) only those women attending work were interviewed (¹on an average only 66% of women personnel registered as working for the DOF actually turn up to work everyday) and b) those women working for the Fishery Company (a commercial arm of the DOF concerned with selling fish) were too busy to be interviewed. The qualitative and quantitative results were then analyzed by comparing the answers in the questionnaires against each other and from other information obtained from the DOF. Especially various data from the four groups of women working within the DOF (i.e. senior and junior officers and skilled and unskilled support staff) were compared against each other.

Results

Qualifications

There are two M.Sc's within the DOF; these are held by men.

There are 87 personnel holding a B.Sc qualification (from the RUA or other

universities) within the DOF; 26 of these are women (30%).

There are 101 personnel holding a diploma qualification (from Prek Leap or other colleges) within the DOF; 29 of these are women (29%).

Fisheries agents are those who have attended colleges like in Prek Leap and completed a two year course. There are 31 fisheries agents working within the DOF; 5 of these are women (16%).

Skilled workers are defined as having one year training or are competent in a certain area; for example an electrician. There are 2 skilled workers working within the DOF - both are men.

There are 281 unskilled workers working for the DOF. (These are [people who do not have any qualification, although contrary to their title cover the major administrative responsibilities within the DOF). There are sixty women defined as unskilled workers (21%).

Age of women

There are no women under the age of 20 working in the DOF. This is because the DOF is only employing women with a degree. All the women unskilled workers present in the department were employed

¹ Initial findings of a study presently being conducted within the DOF.

immediately after the Pol Pot regime and at present, no unskilled workers are employed.

Position and influence of a high ranking officer within family

From the results, there are more women in the higher levels of management than the lower. However, this may be associated with those women having a high ranking officer as a member of their family.

Housing

Most women live within Phnom Penh within 3 kilometers from the office. This is associated with the view that the low expenditure would be required for transportation (ranked as approximately 7 on the list of expenditure) for transportation if stayed close to office.

Service in DOF, Numbers of working hours, training opportunities and Household jobs

From the result it would appear that women have a very good position in the DOF. Most women who have done long service are high up in the management position, they work a full day, but also manage to find time to do their expected

household duties at home. This will be discussed further in the conclusion.

Discussion

It is felt that cultural, traditional and social pressures have strongly influenced the the respondents answered the questionnaires and the actually feelings of the respondents to some of the questions.

First the influence of parents (and especially mothers and mother-in-law) cannot be under-emphasized as a strong influence on women who have to conduct their 'womanly duties as first priority and in a competent way. "This is further exacerbated by potential and actual husbands. No real respect is given to a women who is career minded or is totally professionally dedicated.

Further, there is a strong feeling that women are not interested in or indeed have the capacity to fulfil a responsible, full-time job. Further, it is thought that women to not have the capacity to be "powerful", to gain o respect or have professional influence In the work place.

Conclusion

From the results, it would appear that women have a good position in the DOF with relatively good training opportunities and opportunities for promotion. However, from working within the DOF, it would appear that these results are biased. Secondly, this was probably due to the interviewees wanting to appear as good

Cambodian women who undertake their sex assigned household duties. Also they probably did not want to take the risk that their immediate line of managers would find out the true nature of their work and feelings towards it. A further thorough investigation needs to take place to investigate the status of women in the DOF further.

		Manager/heads	Officer		Support staff	
			Senior	Junior	Skilled	Unskilled
Age	< 20	0	0	0	0	0
	20 - 30	0	10	7	4	2
	31 - 40	0	2	2	1	0
	> 40	0	3	0	1	0
Family mem	Infant	0	10	4	4	0
	< 15	0	11	10	1	4
	16 - 60	0	40	36	15	10
	> 60	0	3	3	1	0
High ranking officer within family		0	8	4	0	1
Housing	Within PP	0	14	9	5	4
	Outside PP	0	1	0	2	1
	Own House	0	12	6	1	1
	With relative	0	3	3	3	1
	Rented House	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0
Distance of house from work	1 - 3 km	0	10	4	4	3
	4 - 6 km	0	4	5	2	0
	7 - 10 km	0	1	0	0	0
Service in DOF (yrs)	< 5 yr	0	9	8	4	2
	5 - 10 Yr	0	2	0	1	0
	> 10 Yr	0	4	0	1	0
Number of Hours in work/day	< 3 hrs	0	0	0	0	0
	3 - 6 Hrs	0	5	1	2	0
	> 6 Hrs	0	8	8	4	2
Household Jobs (defined at more than 5 hrs/day)	cook food	0	13	6	5	2
	wash clothes	0	12	9	5	2
	clean house	0	12	6	4	2
	go to market	00	6	7	3	1
	wash dishes	0	10	6	5	1
	carry water	00	2	0	5	0
	take children to school	0	1	0	1	0

		Manager/ heads	Officer		Support staff	
			Senior	Junior	Skilled	Unskilled
Training opportunity (in country)	Seminar/ workshop	0	1	2	1	0
	Short-course	0	8	7	2	0
	Degree	0	0	0	0	0
Training opportunity (out country)	Seminar/ workshop	0	1	0	0	0
	short course	0	0	1	0	0
	Degree	0	0	0	0	0
Read, write speak English (in Work)	No	0	11	7	4	1
	Occasionally	0	2	1	2	1
	Frequently	0	2	0	1	0
	Always	0	1	1	1	0
Type: Khmer (in work)	No	0	6	8	1	1
	Occasionally	0	4	0	2	1
	Frequently	0	2	0	1	0
	Always	0	3	0	3	0
Type: English (in work)	No	0	11	7	5	1
	Occasionally	0	2	1	1	0
	Frequently	0	1	1	0	1
	Always	0	0	0	0	0
Salary	20000 - 29000	0	1	0	3	0
	30000 - 39000	0	8	9	2	2
	40000 - 50000	0	6	1	1	1
Other sources of income		0	5	0	1	0
Monthly expenses (ranked in order of Importance)	food	0	1	1	1	1
	water	0	7	7	5/7	6/7
	power	0	3	3	2	6/7
	transport	0	6	6	5/7	5
	medicine	0	2	2	3	3
	school-fees	0	5	5	5/7	2
	clothes	0	4	4	4	4
	others	0	0	0	0	0

WOMEN IN FRESH FISH MARKETING IN PHNOM PENH CITY

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Introduction

The capital city Phnom Penh has a population of over one million and this population is growing rapidly with large migrations from various provinces to the capital city. Fish being the common diet of the people there is great demand for fish in the capital city. Hence, fish from various parts of the country are supplied to this capital city to meet the growing demand. Much of the city supply comes from the Great lake.

There are three important fish landing places in the city and two of these landing sites are river based another is a land based site. From these landing sites, fish are not only supplied for consumption within city, but also to several fish deficit provinces like Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Kompong Speu, Takeo, Kompot, Kompong Som and Koh Kong apart from exporting fish to Thailand and Vietnam. At the Svay Park landing site, altogether 5000-6000 tones of fish is landed

annually and most of it arrives from the Great lake region. Fish is landed at 5-10 tones/day during the period from December to August. The second important landing place in Chbar Ampov wherein about 500 tones of fish is landed annually. The land based fish landing site is Phsar Tuoch and it receives annually about 400-500 tones/year. The landing could vary from 0.5-1 tone/day in wet season and to about 20 tones/day in dry season

Total fresh fish supply to Phnom Penh city was estimated at 9,000-10,500 tones/year during 1991 including some small quantity supplied from various flood plain areas around the city during early cold season and the bag net fishing (dai). Recently catches are also coming from Stung Treng province meant largely for export. Though much of the fish arrives at Phnom Penh, it is not entirely consumed by urban people. About 10% of the supply is dispatched to

fish scarce provinces and about 20 - 40% of the fish is exported to Thai and Vietnamese markets. However, fresh fish needs of the city is high and there are nearly eighteen market places in the city which are catering the needs of consumers. Fish marketing being women dominated activity, it provides employment opportunity for many women in the city.

In this paper a preliminary effort has been made to understand the existing marketing situation, and understand the constraints faced by women and examine the ways to solve those problems.

Methodology

Ten fresh fish market places were selected for conducting this survey. These selected fresh fish market places were: Phsar Thmey, Phsar Chas, Phsar Doeum Kor, Phsar Doeum Thkev, Phsar Depo, Phsar Sileb, Phsar Pet Chen, Phsar Boeung Keng Kaang, Phsar Chbar Ampov, Phsar Tuol Tumpung.

Results

There are three different types of fresh fish retailers in the city

-Large scale retailer : Fish is kept for selling on a large iron bin or basket. Additional bins are also used to keep fish alive and sell throughout the day.

-Middle scale retailer : Fish is exposed for selling on a large iron bin or basket. No extra fish stock but some time have fish for sale for the whole day.

-Small scale retailer : Fish are sold by keeping them in small basket. Usually business is carried out in the morning.

From the table 1 presented, it is clear that women were actively involved in all types of retail sale, but they were more dominant in middle scale (91%) and large scale (100%) trading.

Fresh fish retailer interviews

Forty women were selected from the above types of fish traders and were interviewed to obtain information on various aspects. The people came from 8 Large scale retailers (Group1), 20 middle scale retailers (Group2) and 12 small scale retailers (Group3).

Most of the women in group two and three had more than one year experience in

the business. Considerable percentage of the population has been involved in business for more than 5 years. This indicates that women have been steady in this business owing to the fact that they were able to gain reasonable amount of profits. Most of the women in Group 1 and 2 were in business on a regular basis for a long time. Though the business among the Group 3 people was carried out independently, Group 1 had always partners. Among group 2 also, majority of them had partners. In regard to fish supply situation, while group one had no problem, group 2 and 3 expressed the opinion of displeasure that there is no assured supply of fish and hence, some time they faced the problem in earning livelihood to meet the family needs. This problem was more acute with those involved with small scale retailers.

There were also few questions in regard to the trade practices and table 2 provides a summary of the answers received from women.

All the retailers were anxious to find the best source of supply from where they could get the quality fish at cheaper rate with less competition. It was found that all retailers in Group1 and about 65% in Group2 were interested in product

diversification. None in Group 3 was interested in product diversification and technology improvement.

Conclusion

Many problems encountered by the women involved in fish marketing were noticed during this preliminary survey. The main problems were assured fish supply and capital to carry out the business. While large scale retail traders were more assured of profit, small scale traders faced the problem of obtaining adequate profits to make good living. Informal discussion held with these retail traders highlight the problems involved in fish procurement, transportation to the marketing place and withstanding the poor marketing facilities and inconvenience caused by the market authorities. Based on this preliminary investigation, it is suggested that to meet the shortage of fish supply, it is necessary to promote aquaculture on a commercial scale to ensure higher availability of fish on a regular basis. Further, market authorities should provide adequate facilities in terms of creating hygienic place and good environment for marketing of the product. Organization of cooperative structure to reduce cost in transportation and ensure assured supply of

fish would be good ideas for experimenting. Department of Fisheries should take active role in finding solutions to some of the problems faced by these fisherwomen in the marketing sector

The Phnom Penh city with a population of over one million is expanding rapidly. Fish being the main diet of the people, there is increasing demand for fish in this city and to meet this demand fish are transported from various provinces. It is reported that annually about 10,000 tones of fish is brought to this city and among this substantial quantity of fish is exported to Vietnam and Thailand. About 5000 - 6000 tones is estimated to have been consumed by the city dwellers. There are several retail fish

marketing centers in the city and these retailers meet the fish needs of the people. A preliminary survey was conducted to understand the problems faced by these retail traders in ten different markets. Unassured supply of fish, poor market hygiene, transportation of fish from whole sale center to retail center, uncooperative attitude of the marketing authorities were noticed as the major constraints. Among the three levels of retail traders noticed, large and middle scale retailers faced less problems, while small scale traders faced many problems and their living conditions was found to be poor. It is suggested strategies are made to solve these women problems and they should be assisted to overcome the difficulties and improve their business.

Table 1. Number of retailer of different scale of the selected fresh fish market

Market place	Large scale		Middle scale		Small scale			
	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Phsar Thmey	3	(12)	18	(21)	21	(9)	9	
Phsar Chas	7	(15)	21	2	(20)	18	(22)	22
Phsar Doeum Kor	6	(22)	30	(26)	26	(28)	28	
Phsar Doeum Thkov	2	(11)	15	1	(28)	27	(25)	25
Phsar Depo	4	(14)	20	(18)	18	(16)	16	
Phsar Sileb	1	(6)	8	(5)	5	(4)	4	
Phsar Pet Chen	2	(5)	6	1	(8)	7	(6)	6
Phsar Boeung KengKang	3	(10)	14	2	(12)	10	(12)	12
Phsar Chbar Ampov	11	(25)	32	3	(21)	18	(26)	26
Phsar Tuol Tumpung	2	(14)	14	2	(15)	13	(11)	11
Total	41	(134)	178	11	(174)	163	(159)	159

Note: Figure in the parenthesis indicates the total number of people involved in the business

Table 2. Difficulties encountered by women involved in the retail trade.

	Group1	Group2	Group3
More competition	9	7	12
Inadequate fish		11	12
Lack of transport		5	12
Increasing price of fish	9	20	12
High transportation cost	9	11	
Increased bargaining	5	14	12
Poor profit		10	12
Moderate profit	5	6	
Good profit	4	4	