

POVERTY ERADICATION IN THE FISHING COMMUNITIES: GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Jariah Masud,* Ismail Abd Latif, Tengku Aizan T.A.Hamid, Mohamed Shariff, and Zumilah Zainalaluddin,
Institute Gerontology, UPM. jariahmasud@yahoo.com; and University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia.

Malaysia expects to achieve the development status of a high income nation by 2020 and has made great achievements in terms of implementing poverty eradication programmes in both the rural and urban sectors including the fishery sector which has been identified by the Ministry of Agriculture as a sector to bridge the food trade gap. Despite all the efforts in poverty eradication, poverty remains an issue among agriculture and fishing communities. In Sabah for example it was estimated that about 3000 small and traditional fishermen are living under the poverty level. Several programmes have been carried out to help eradicate poverty but poverty remains persistent among fishing communities. Most fishing development programmes carried out have targeted the fishermen in improving fishing technology and increasing production. Fuel subsidies introduced to curb increased cost of production have benefitted the fishermen. As in other parts of the world, fishing industries involve mainly men and the role of women in fishing communities are invisible. Limited efforts are being carried out to empower women in fishing communities and enhance their roles in upstream or downstream activities. This paper will highlight the development initiatives in the fishing sector in Malaysia and provide analysis of these programmes from the gender perspectives. Since the final outcome of poverty eradication programmes is to improve well being of family members, this paper will highlight the gender issues in the fishing industries in Malaysia and propose possible programmes to enhance the role of both men and women in poverty eradication among the fishing communities.

Key words: poverty eradication, fishing communities, gender perspective