

## **EXPLORING INDONESIAN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO INLAND FISHERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY**

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The development of Indonesia's marine and fisheries sector is strategically aligned with the national vision of Indonesia Emas 2045, as outlined in the president's mission through points 2 to 8 of Asta Cita. This vision prioritizes the development of superior human resources, strengthening food sovereignty through a Blue Economy approach, and the development of sustainable marine and fisheries infrastructure. As an integral part of the Blue Economy, freshwater fisheries hold significant potential to support national food security and improve the well-being of rural communities. Environmentally friendly fishing practices in rivers, lakes, and wetlands are not only crucial for maintaining biodiversity but also for empowering local economies and promoting the sustainable use of freshwater resources. Based on scientific management, resource mapping, and community participation, freshwater fisheries can make a vital contribution to the national economy in line with the core principles of the Blue Economy. The role of women in freshwater fisheries is increasingly prominent, particularly in fish farming and post-harvest processing.

This study explores the participation, challenges, and potential of Indonesian women in supporting sustainable inland fisheries development within the framework of the Blue Economy. SEAFDEC/IFRDMD has conducted numerous studies on the role of women in increasing income from the freshwater fisheries sector. In Riau Province, for example, women in Kampung Patin are actively involved in fish farming activities such as feeding, monitoring water quality, scaling, and packaging smoked fish, which significantly increases household income and supports community development. In South Sumatra, women lead small-scale fish processing businesses, producing traditional fish-based products such as fish crackers and salted fish. They are involved in the entire value chain—from raw material procurement, processing, to marketing, including leveraging digital platforms and e-commerce to expand market access. In the eel fishery sector in areas such as Bengkulu, West Java, Central Java, Bali, and Central Sulawesi, women also play a crucial role in the processing and marketing of anguillid eels. Despite limited access to training and formal decision-making forums, their contributions are fundamental to the sustainability and profitability of this sector.

The study identifies how women contribute to ecological preservation, food security, and rural livelihoods through their involvement in small-scale aquaculture, fish processing, and community-based resource management. To strengthen women's capacity and expand their role in freshwater fisheries, SEAFDEC/IFRDMD has implemented participatory training programs. These initiatives equip women with technical knowledge on freshwater fish farming and environmentally friendly handling practices, enabling them to participate more actively in fisheries governance and resource management. Integrating gender equity into the Blue Economy paradigm is thus not only a matter of justice but also a strategic approach to maximize the productivity and resilience of Indonesia's inland fisheries sector. By integrating women throughout the fisheries value chain and promoting gender-inclusive policies, freshwater fisheries can become more sustainable, equitable, and resilient—ultimately contributing to the achievement of national development goals and community well-being.