

SEAFDEC's Initiative to Advance Gender Equality in the Fisheries Sector and Aquaculture in Southeast Asia

Introduction

The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) has recognized the critical role of gender equality in achieving sustainable fisheries and improving the livelihoods of coastal communities. In response, SEAFDEC launched targeted initiatives to mainstream gender perspectives across its programs and activities in Southeast Asia. Beginning with capacity-building workshops and gender-sensitive policy advocacy in the early 2010s, SEAFDEC collaborated with member countries to integrate gender considerations into fisheries management, research, and development. These efforts include the development of tools such as the **Gender Analysis Toolkit for Fisheries** and promoting sex-disaggregated data collection to inform inclusive policymaking. By fostering institutional change and supporting grassroots participation, SEAFDEC aims to ensure that both women and men in the fisheries sector benefit equally from sustainable development efforts.

Objectives

- To promote and institutionalize gender equality and women's empowerment in the fisheries and aquaculture sector of Southeast Asia
- To amplify gender sensitivity and responsiveness in Southeast Asia
- To foster regional cooperation and knowledge sharing on gender equality practices and innovations.

Tentative Schedule

Time	Topic	Panelist
15 min	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce the SEAFDEC Gender mainstreaming initiative. - Introducing the session. - Invite and introduce the panelist 	Jariya Sornkliang (Moderator)
30 min	Panelists' opening statement: The panelists will present their work and perspectives on Gender integration and women's empowerment for gender equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Nurwanti (IFRMD) - Dr. Arlene - Ms. Hana Matsubara (University of Tokyo, Japan) - FAO (not confirmed yet)
20 min	Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Nurwanti (IFRMD) - Dr. Arlene - Ms. Hana Mustubara (University of Tokyo, Japan) - FAO (not confirmed yet)
15 min	Audience questions/discussion	- all
10 min	Summary: Panelists will be requested to provide their views to strengthen gender equality	Moderator and Panelist

List of participants and short presentation details

Chair/Moderator: Ms. Jariya Sornkliang, Fisheries management scientist and Gender focal person from the Training Department of Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

Panelists:

1. Representative from SEAFDEC, Inland Fisheries Development and Management (SEAFDEC/ IFRDMD) and representing the SEAFDEC member Country *Ms. Nurwanti Dewagga*,
2. The SEAFDEC/IFRDMD projects encompass initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality within the fisheries sector of Southeast Asia. These initiatives particularly highlight women's involvement in inland fisheries in the Lao PDR and their participation in anguillid eel fisheries. During the Training Course, it was observed that women primarily engage in post-harvest activities, fish processing, and marketing. In contrast, men are mainly involved in fishing activities. However, the Training Course also acknowledged that some women participate in fishing, primarily for household consumption.
3. Partners (FAO and University of Tokyo, Japan)
The Policy on Gender Equality underscores the significance of gender equality in achieving sustainable development. Its primary strategies involve incorporating gender considerations into all regional programs and projects, embedding gender perspectives in policies, advocating for technologies that benefit women, and fostering female leadership. Additionally, it addresses challenges like restricted access to resources and calls for the creation of more inclusive and gender-sensitive initiatives. The field project adopts a gender-inclusive approach to promote gender equality.
4. Dr. Arlene Satapornvanit, a Gender specialist with experience working with SEAFDEC.
Dr. Satapornvanit worked on projects that focused on enhancing gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in fisheries management across Southeast Asia and the Coral Triangle region. The most recent one was the USAID-funded activity, Sustainable Fish Asia Technical Support (SuFiA TS), which integrated GESI in its strategic approaches on strengthening regional sustainable fisheries policy frameworks and implementation, enhancing coastal livelihoods, climate change adaptation, private sector engagement, combating IUU fishing, and maritime security. Specifically, USAID SuFiA TS facilitated the establishment of regional hubs for Gender Equality, Small-Scale Fishers, and Youth Ambassadors in partnership with regional fisheries and civil society organizations. These initiatives aimed to foster inclusive fisheries management by involving marginalized groups, such as women, youth, small-scale fishers, and stateless fishers. Key challenges identified include cultural norms, a lack of awareness, and insufficient legal frameworks that support GESI within the agenda of various fisheries initiatives. The project addressed these challenges through capacity building, leadership visibility, partnerships, development of legacy knowledge products, and intergenerational mentorship to overcome these barriers and create sustainable, inclusive development in fisheries.