

**CATALYSING GENDER JUSTICE THROUGH NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS:
LESSONS FROM GESI MAINSTREAMING AND CASE STUDY FROM
MALAYSIA**

Surendran Rajaratnam*
Senior Lecturer, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
*surendran@ukm.edu.my

This presentation explores ways nature-based solutions can catalyze gender and social justice by implementing gender-responsive and socially inclusive research. Drawing on a case study from Malaysia—and informed by the comprehensive gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) plan implemented within the Climate-Adaptive, Inclusive, Nature-based Aquaculture (CAINA) research project—a gender-responsive or even potentially transformative approach goes far beyond reducing immediate harms to the communities we work with. It provides an opportunity for aquaculture research to address systemic power dynamics by integrating environmental justice with inclusive social transformation. By implementing a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework within the project, we aim to demonstrate the potential of participatory and inclusive methodologies.

Key insights include, but are not limited to, co-learning and discussing about GESI with project partners, sharing the value of engaging both women and men in aquaculture as experts, collecting larger bodies of sex-disaggregated data, and facilitating inclusive stakeholder workshops that include the voices of marginalized communities. These strategies ensure that interventions are co-designed with local actors, addressing not only ecological challenges but also the deep-rooted gendered and harmful social norms that contribute to their vulnerability. In summary, this presentation emphasizes the need for nature-based solutions to be aligned with gender-responsive and transformative research principles to catalyze lasting change in communities and beyond.