

GENDER, SOCIAL ECONOMY, AND THE MAKING OF DRIED FISH IN ASIA

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Social economy has guided the Dried Fish Matters project since its inception. Yet, the project has shied away from a precise definition of the term, preferring instead to see social economy as point of connection between a variety of perspectives that argue for economic activity as fundamentally interwoven with other features of human life. Without this plural understanding of economy, economic motivations and practices in dried fish production don't make sense and economic development interventions risk failure or worse.

In this presentation, we reflect comparatively on the patterns of gender identity and gendered work in the making of dried fish in Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines. The comparison foregrounds the contrasting variety in women's and men's work in and influence on dried fish production, distribution, and consumption. We address, in particular, how women's agency within dried fish social economies varies, the context that shapes that variation, and what the implications of women's varying power are for individual and collective wellbeing in our countries of focus.