

# Recognizing Gender Roles in the Fisheries Value Chain: local fishing communities of Thailand in focus

Jariya Sornkliang, Rattana Tiaye, Thana Yenpoeng, Varuntorn Kaewtankam,  
and Jasmine Pholcharoen

Recently, the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) through its Training Department (TD) has been advocating gender equality in its programs and activities by making sure that the knowledge gaps and opportunities for women and the youth could be identified as well as their capacity needs in order to attain gender equity in fisheries in the future. In the Resolution on the Future of SEAFDEC: Vision, Mission and Strategies Towards 2030, which was adopted by the SEAFDEC Council of Directors during its Special Council Meeting in November 2017, the Strategies which would be used by SEAFDEC as basis for the development of its programs and activities in the future, included a provision viz: to recognize the importance of small-scale fisheries in the Southeast Asian region, SEAFDEC should promote gender equality in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Such promulgation had therefore facilitated the adoption by the SEAFDEC Council of Directors during the Fiftieth Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council in March 2018, of the SEAFDEC Strategy “*Support for the Integration of Gender Perspectives in Fisheries within SEAFDEC and its Member Countries*,” which was developed through the SEAFDEC-Sweden Project “*Fisheries and Habitat Management, Climate Change and Social Well-being in Southeast Asia*.” Under such initiative, the SEAFDEC Gender Working Team (GWT) was established comprising technical staff from TD. The activities of the SEAFDEC GWT started with the two-year (2017-2018) regional field study on gender in fisheries in collaboration with partners, which aims to explore the gender patterns in coastal and marine resources management in the Southeast Asian region. Initially implemented in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand, the study intends to collect field data to be used in analyzing the gender issues as well as the structural causes of gender inequities and inequalities in the fisheries sector of Southeast Asia.

Gender is one of the many forms of social differences in our society, the others being class, caste, age, ethnicity, race, etc. (MFF, 2018). In analyzing the gender perspectives in local fishing communities, it should be understood that as a social difference, gender is also a form of power relationship that creates gender-based hierarchies and inequalities, among others (MFF, 2018). Gender inequality is present when the roles of women and men in all sectors of society vary not only in terms of participation in economic endeavors but also in decision-making, and when the behaviors, aspirations and needs of men and women are expressed variably (ILO, 2000). Since it has become necessary to address the concerns on gender equality for the sustainability of fisheries, especially small-scale fisheries which dominate the fisheries sector of the Southeast Asian region, SEAFDEC has therefore implemented

activities that take into consideration the new paradigm in sustainable small-scale fisheries development that aim for gender equity in the fisheries sector.

At the global level, concerns on gender inequality in fisheries are now being addressed by incorporating gender considerations in the FAO “*Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*” or SSF Guidelines for short. The Guidelines “*calls for equal participation of women in decision-making processes and organizations, appropriate technologies, and supportive policies and legislation; and encourages the compliance with relevant international human rights law and the development of monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of legislation, policies and actions for effectively addressing and mainstreaming gender issues in programs and activities*” (FAO, 2015).

ILO (2000) defined gender equality as the state when men and women have equal access to resources and opportunities, as well as control over the resources. In this regard, the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women would involve the adoption of policies on gender mainstreaming, which is defined as “*...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality*” (UN, 2002).

Nonetheless, FAO (2013) prescribed that “*gender mainstreaming is not only a question of social justice but is also necessary for ensuring equitable and sustainable human development. The long-term outcome of gender mainstreaming will be the achievement of greater and more sustainable human development for all.*”

As a first step in gender mainstreaming, gender analysis should be carried out to be able to explain the mechanisms that result in gender inequality and the ways with which social groups of men and women act and change their existing roles, relationships and processes in their own interest. Gender analysis is a systematic way of examining the differences in: the roles and norms of women and men, as well as those of girls and boys; the social groups of men and women based on

caste, class, age, race etc.; the levels of power held by men and women, and their needs, constraints, and opportunities; and the impact of these differences in their lives. Specifically, the SSF Guidelines promulgates that gender equality is achieved in the entire fisheries value chain.

In this context, fisheries value chain refers to “*all the activities and services – from input supply to production (capture fisheries and aquaculture farming), processing, wholesale, and finally, retail,*” and FAO (2015) advocated that the role that women play in the post-harvest sub-sector and support improvements should be made part of the whole fisheries value chain, which are to be considered in carrying out any gender analysis. Moreover, since the statistics on the number of women involved in the whole fisheries value chain including the entire fisheries-related works are not readily available, it is necessary to collect data and information on gender, to be able to qualify and quantify the important roles that women play in the fisheries sector. Through such data, the multidimensional nature of work undertaken by women in fishing communities could be captured so that policies could be formulated with such realities in mind (ICSF, 2018).

### The Regional Field Study on Gender in Fisheries

Under the SEAFDEC-Sweden Project, TD through the SEAFDEC GWT implemented in 2017 the two-year Regional Study on Gender in Fisheries (2017-2018) in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) through the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) of Sweden with funding support from the Government of Sweden. The regional study is aimed at exploring the gender patterns in coastal and marine resources management, and improving one’s understanding of the roles that women and men play in environmental decision-making as well as the structural challenges that prevent the equitable opportunities for men and women in the coastal and marine fisheries sub-sectors in Southeast Asia. The project was initially implemented in three SEAFDEC Member Countries: Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand.

With study sites in Kep Province in Cambodia, Kawthaung Province in Myanmar, and Trat Province in Thailand, the study made use of gender analysis as a tool to assess the roles of women and men in fishing activities. A questionnaire was used to interview the sampled men and women in coastal fishing communities and compile the necessary data. Specifically in Kep Province, Cambodia (Fig. 1), sixty coastal households in Thmey Village, Sangkat Prey Thom; and Okra Sa Village, Sangkat Okra Sa, were involved in the study of which the household leaders were interviewed. In Myanmar, 80 persons from Pu Lone Tone Tone Village, Kawthaung Province (Fig. 2) were interviewed. The village is in an island located in the southernmost part of Myanmar connected to the main land



Fig. 1. Study sites in Kep Province, Cambodia: Thmey Village, Sangkat Prey Thom; and Okra Sa Village, Sangkat Okra Sa  
Source: Google Maps; FAOSTAT, 2018a

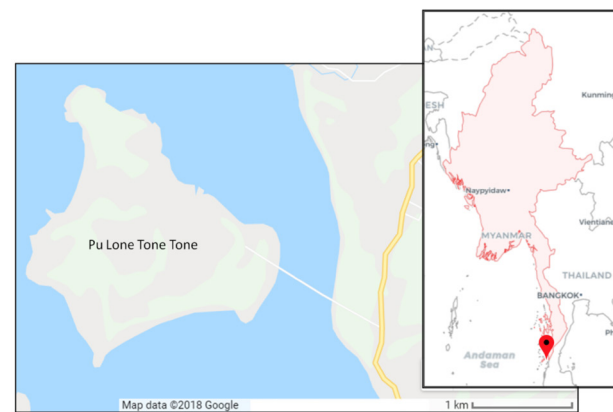


Fig. 2. Study site in Kawthaung Province, Myanmar: Pu Lone Tone Tone  
Source: Google Maps; FAOSTAT, 2018b

by a wooden bridge. The population of the village is about 1,000 households and their main livelihoods are fisheries and agriculture. Eighty percent of the villagers are engaged in exploiting the fisheries and other natural resources along the coastal areas and marine waters (DoF, 2016).

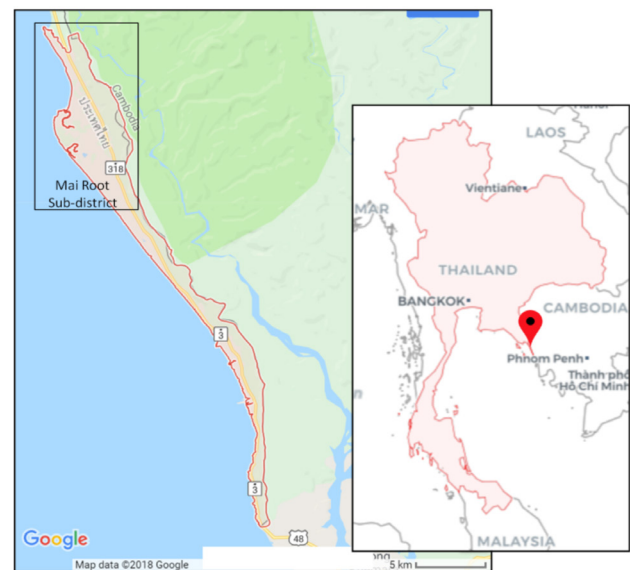


Fig. 3. Study site in Trat Province, Thailand: Mairoot Sub-district, Klong Yia District  
Source: Google Maps; FAOSTAT, 2018c

The study site in Thailand is in Mai Root Sub-district in Klong Yia District of Trat Province (Fig. 3) in the eastern part of the country. It is adjacent to the Thailand-Cambodia border bounded by Bunthad Mountain and close to the Gulf of Thailand. A total of 91 respondents were interviewed, which comprise 10% of the total fishing households in the study site.

### Roles of men and women in fisheries activities

Analysis of the roles of men and women in fisheries and their levels of participation in the whole fisheries value chain could only be done for the pilot activity in Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand, considering that data validation is still ongoing in the other study sites, *i.e.* in Cambodia and Myanmar, in view of some delays in data compilation. As a result, the data collected from Ban Klong Manow, Ban Ruam Suk, Ban Mai Root, Ban Huang Bon, Ban Nong Muang, and Ban Huang Som (Fig. 4) had been analyzed in details. Summary of the participation of women and men in the fisheries value chain in the project sites, more particularly in Mairoot Sub-district had been extracted from the compiled data.

Data collection in Mairoot Sub-district was carried out by the SEAFDEC GWT in cooperation with the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF) of Thailand and local fisheries staff, from 10 to 21 October 2017. The results



Fig. 4. Households in Mairoot Sub-District where respondents were obtained for the study

Table 1. Involvement of respondents in various livelihoods from Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand in various livelihoods

	Female	Male	Total
Fisheries and fisheries-related activities	12	14	26
Agriculture	5	7	12
Business (middlemen)	3	4	7
Casual labor (in Thailand)	10	5	15
Casual labor (outside Thailand)	3	11	14
Business owner	10	5	15
Employee	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>91</b>



indicated that the respondents have been involved in various livelihood activities as shown in Table 1. The compiled data were validated in a subsequent workshop attended by all the stakeholders in the community.

As shown in Table 1, the numbers of women and men engaged in fisheries-related activities were almost the same, as well as in the other types of livelihood activities. However, the roles of men and women, especially in terms of access to properties and services (Table 2) indicated that men have more access to properties and services (14 out of 17) than the women although the latter have the same access with men, in terms of finances and insurance, with women having more access to

Table 2. Level of access and control of women and men in properties and services: Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand

	Men	Women	Both
Land: access	20.00	16.00	64.00
Ownership	56.00	24.00	20.00
Control	29.17	25.00	45.83
Land of house: access	27.27	12.12	60.61
Ownership	55.17	24.14	20.69
Control	25.93	22.22	51.85
House: access	14.52	17.74	67.74
Ownership	46.43	41.07	12.50
Control	24.56	24.56	50.88
Car: access	26.92	19.23	53.85
Ownership	43.48	36.96	19.57
Control	16.00	28.00	56.00
Money: access	11.84	11.84	76.32
Ownership	19.72	16.90	63.38
Control	23.44	15.63	60.94



**Table 2.** Level of access and control of women and men in properties and services: Mairroot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand (Cont'd)

	Men	Women	Both
Loans from Banks: access	33.33	16.67	50.00
Ownership	34.78	17.39	47.83
Control	34.78	13.04	52.17
Loans from SMEs: access	31.71	24.39	43.90
Ownership	24.24	30.30	45.45
Control	18.18	27.27	54.55
Lending money: access	27.66	25.53	46.81
Ownership	22.50	20.00	57.50
Control	17.50	27.50	55.00
Insurance: access	23.40	23.40	53.19
Ownership	21.43	23.81	54.76
Control	19.05	26.19	54.76
Hospital: access	17.57	8.11	74.32
Control	16.67	7.58	75.76
Employment - labor: access	46.67	33.33	20.00
Control	40.00	26.67	33.33
Fishing gear: access	60.00	3.33	36.67
Ownership	70.00	10.00	20.00
Control	62.07	6.90	31.03
Fishing boat : access	68.97	6.90	24.14
Ownership	79.31	13.79	6.90
Control	75.86	0.00	24.14
Fishing boat engine: access	71.43	3.57	25.00
Ownership	75.00	14.29	10.71
Control	75.86	0.00	24.14
License: access	87.50	12.50	0.00
Control	87.50	12.50	0.00
Seed: Access	42.86	14.29	42.86
Ownership	42.86	14.29	42.86
Control	46.15	15.38	38.46
Generator-Engine: Access	66.67	0.00	33.33
Ownership	66.67	0.00	33.33
Control	66.67	0.00	33.33

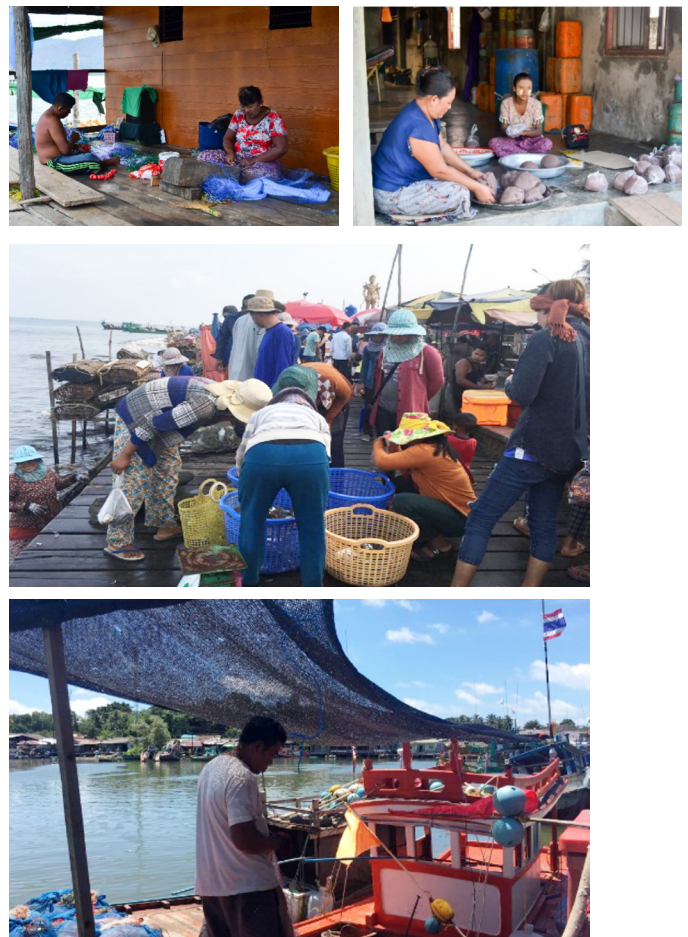
the land where their house is built. Men claim ownership in 12 out of 17 aspects of properties and services while women own only the money borrowed from SMEs and insurance. Therefore, men own almost all of the properties and could access almost all of the services; and have control in 12 out of 17 properties and services while women have control only in 4 out of 17, with women and men having equal control only in their residential house. In general therefore, men own, have access to, and control almost all of the properties and services in the fishing communities.

The SEAFDEC GWT also compiled the information on the reproductive and productive roles of women and men in Mairroot Sub-district (**Table 3** and **Table 4**). The said

compilation took into consideration the ILO (1998) definition of *reproductive role* which includes not only biological reproduction but also care and maintenance of the work force and future work force in the households; as well as that of *productive role* which refers to work done for payment in cash or in kind, and includes market production.

With respect to the reproductive roles of men and women, it can be observed in **Table 3** that while men do mainly house maintenance and fish processing for household consumption, women do most of the other household chores or reproductive roles. However, men and women perform together in some reproductive tasks such as planting vegetables and grazing of animals/livestock. Since women are involved in 6 out of 10 reproductive tasks while men only do 2 out of 10, therefore, women are over-burdened with respect to doing the reproductive tasks. This could be because women are more familiar with many reproductive tasks than men, although men are more knowledgeable in terms of grazing animals/livestock and planting vegetables as well as house maintenance and fish processing for household consumption.

On the productive roles of men and women, **Table 4** shows that men do most of the tasks (7 out of 13) while women are mostly involved only in three (3) productive tasks, while both men and women share the same level in two (2) tasks. This is considering that men are more knowledgeable than women in



**Table 3.** Reproductive roles of men, women, boys, and girls in fisheries activities: Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand

Reproductive Roles	Men	Women	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
Child care	5.97	34.33	59.70			
Care of sick or elder persons in family	11.11	47.22	41.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cooking	5.19	70.13	23.38	0.00	1.30	0.00
Cleaning	5.41	71.62	21.62	0.00	1.35	0.00
Finding wood for fuel	33.33	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Planting vegetables	28.57	23.81	38.10	4.76	4.76	4.76
Grazing animals/livestock	28.57	14.29	57.14	0.00	0.00	0.00
Community activities	20.90	38.81	40.30	0.00	0.00	0.00
House maintenance	75.76	1.52	22.73	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fish processing for household consumption	60.00	20.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

**Table 4.** Productive roles of men, women, boys, and girls in fisheries activities: Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand

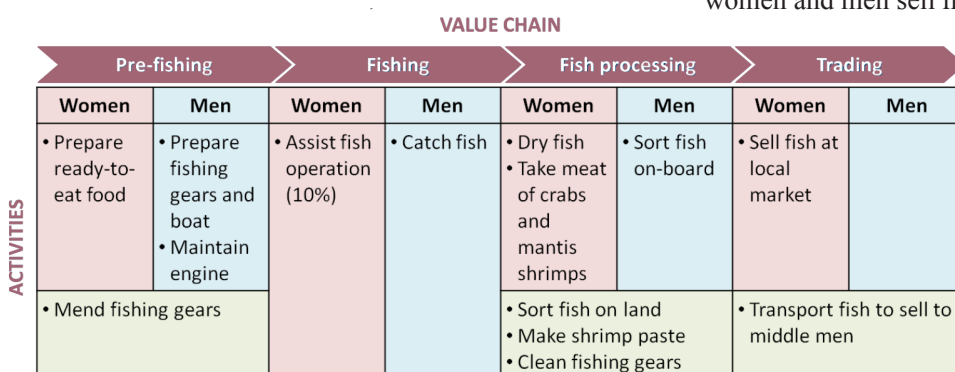
Productive Roles	Men	Women	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
Agriculture	31.58	21.05	36.84	5.26	5.26	0.00
Fisheries	59.38	15.63	21.88	0.00	3.13	0.00
Fishing around mangrove areas	37.50	12.50	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fish processing	0.00	43.75	43.75	0.00	12.50	0.00
Aquaculture	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Finding forest products	33.33	11.11	55.56	0.00	0.00	0.00
Selling: fish	35.29	35.29	29.41	0.00	0.00	0.00
fruits	28.57	57.14	14.29	0.00	0.00	7.14
forest products	25.00	25.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
others (sweets)	0.00	33.33	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prepare fishing gear	74.19	9.68	16.13	0.00	0.00	0.00
Clean fishing gear	90.32	3.23	6.45	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fix and repair fishing gear/cage	66.67	9.09	21.21	0.00	3.03	0.00

agriculture, fisheries, livestock, ecotourism (guide, boat driver, and cooking), and other fishing activities. However, both men and women are knowledgeable in aquaculture, selling fish and forest products. In terms of their productive roles, men are over burdened than women because the activities usually involve heavy works that are meant for income generation.

### Roles of gender in the fisheries value chain

In Mairoot District in Thailand, the women and men are both involved in every step of the fisheries value chain (Fig.

5). Many respondents indicated that some wives (10%) go fishing with their husbands because the fishing ground is not far from their homes. Before fishing, both women and men work together in mending the fishing gears, and the wives prepare their meals while the husbands prepare the fishing gears and boat, and maintain the engine of the fishing boat. After fishing, both men and women clean the fishing gears and sort the fish on land. For fish processing both women and men help each other, especially in making shrimp paste as a business venture, because men's strength is needed in some processes. The women sell the fish at local market, and both women and men sell fish to middlemen.



**Fig. 5.** Roles of women and men in fisheries value chain: Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand

## Recommendations

In Thailand, women participate in the fishing activities that take place along the coastline which is not far from their homes, because they want to stay close to their house. When not fishing, the women dominate in activities that support fishing, such as preparing food for their families especially for their husbands to take with them as they go fishing, mending and repairing the fishing gears, and sorting fish landed by their husbands. Moreover, women also participate in economic activities like fish processing and marketing.

However, in order to get a real picture of the actual role of men and women in fisheries activities, particularly in the whole fisheries value chain, data compilation in the other study sites should be completed, after which such data should be validated. From the data, the trend of the roles of women and men in fisheries could be established, and the picture of the gender situation in the three study areas is constructed. Moreover, in order that the picture would reflect the situation in Southeast Asia, the study should be replicated in the other Southeast Asian countries as well. With the data compiled from the initial three study sites, further analysis should be made especially in terms of the capacities and vulnerabilities of men and women in the fishing communities, taking into consideration their skills, the status of the productive resources, and the hazards that impede them from the efficient utilization of the resources. This should also include an analysis of the conservation efforts being carried out by men and women in their communities. Furthermore, the analysis should also include the social structure that influences the relationship between men and women in the fishing communities, especially their ability to promote changes in their communities in order to attain gender equity in fisheries. There is also a need to analyze the vulnerability of men and women and their capacity to cope with the impacts of climate change on the fishery resources and their fishing activities.

## Conclusion and Way Forward

Taking into account the experience in Mairoot Sub-district, Trat Province, Thailand, and from the analysis, the roles of men and women in fisheries could be divided by physical conditions, and as for their roles, it appeared that men are seen as fishers and women as fish processors and traders. This indicates that men and women have their respective roles to play in the value chain and are important in each component of the value chain. In most cases however, only the role of men is recognized while those of women remain invisible. It is therefore expected that through this study, the role of women in the fisheries sector would be appreciated, recorded, and valued. The SEAFDEC-Sweden Project would continue to support the activities of the SEAFDEC GWT, especially in the monitoring and evaluation of the programs and activities in the Southeast Asian region that take into consideration the results of this regional study on gender in fisheries development.

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### About the Authors

**Ms. Jariya Sornkliang** is the Focal Point for SEAFDEC Gender Working Team. She is also a Fisheries Management Scientist based at Training Department in Samut Prakan, Thailand.

**Ms. Rattana Tiaye** is a Member of the SEAFDEC Gender Working Team. She is also a Fisheries Management Scientist based at Training Department in Samut Prakan, Thailand.

**Mr. Thana Yenpoeng** is formerly RFPN Member for Thailand in 2017. He is a Fisheries Biologist at the Department of Fisheries, Thailand.

**Ms. Varuntorn Kaewtankam** is a Researcher at the Sustainable Development Foundation in Thailand.

**Ms. Jasmine Pholcharoen** is a Volunteer for Human Rights of the Sustainable Development Foundation in Thailand.