

# Striving to Mainstream and Integrate Gender in Small-scale Fisheries of Southeast Asia: SEAFDEC initiatives on gender through the years

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The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) is an autonomous inter-governmental body established in 1967 with the vision of “Sustainable management and development of fisheries and aquaculture to contribute to food security, poverty alleviation and livelihood of people in the Southeast Asian region.” Moreover, SEAFDEC is supporting the ASEAN Member States (AMSs) to implement the Resolution and Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region Towards 2030 (RES&POA-2030) (SEAFDEC, 2020b), which serves as a policy framework and includes priority actions to support the sustainable development of fisheries and enhancing the contribution of fisheries to food security and better livelihood of people in the region. The RES&POA-2030 recognizes the importance of and addresses the cross-cutting issues in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, including small-scale fisheries, labor in fisheries, safety at sea, and gender equality. Focusing on gender, women’s roles are not well recognized particularly in the small-scale fisheries sector of the Southeast Asian region. In this regard, SEAFDEC strived in the development and implementation of programs, projects, and activities that engage both women and men in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

## Gender concepts

Gender equality and women empowerment have been promoted since the feminist movement for women’s rights in 1945 and were emphasized in the fisheries and aquaculture sector through the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in 2014 (**Box 1**). The SSF Guidelines recognize the vital role of women in small-scale fisheries, equal rights, and opportunities and that achieving gender equality requires gender mainstreaming as an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies.

The difference between sex and gender and other gender concepts (SEAFDEC, 2020a) are described in **Box 2**. Sex does not change and being male/female refers to biological attributes that are fixed at birth. The most significant sex differences in humans are related to menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding in females, and the production of sperm in males. Gender changes over time and refers to the

### Box 1. International frameworks on gender

- **1945:** United Nations Charter reaffirms the fundamental human rights in the equal rights of men and women
- **1948:** Declaration on Human Rights opposes discrimination against women
- **1952:** International Convention on the Political Rights of Women was the first global endorsement of equal political rights under the law
- **1979:** Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) where gender equality was promoted
- **1995:** Beijing Declaration: Obligation for Gender Equality internationally adopted Gender mainstreaming was a critical strategy towards making gender equality during the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, Beijing, China
- **2000-2015:** United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with Goal No. 3 “Promotion of Gender Equality and Empower Women”
- **2014:** FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) is the main instrument that promotes gender equality and equity as fundamental to any development
- **2015-2030:** United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Goal No. 5 “Achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls”

### Box 2. Gender concepts

**Sex:** The biological characteristics that distinguish human beings as female or male.

**Gender:** A concept that refers to the social differences between women and men that have been learned, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures

**Gender equality:** Gender equality is the concept that all human beings are free to develop their abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued, and favored equally

**Gender equity:** Fairness in women’s and men’s access to socioeconomic resources (e.g. access to education depends on whether the child is a boy or girl) and it is a condition in which women and men participate as equals and have equal access to socioeconomic resource

**Gender mainstreaming:** A strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs/projects in all political, economic, and social spheres. Therefore, women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality

sociocultural attributes of men and women varying from one society to another. Gender also refers to the relations between men and women and the socially constructed roles acceptable for each sex. Femininity and masculinity are from social construction which reveals that men have more respect than women in society, then women are lower hierarchy than men in economic social, and political women face this society called patriarchy. Therefore, gender mainstreaming is needed in order to promote and achieve gender equality through equity. Gender mainstreaming can be done in the

### Box 3. Gender mainstreaming tools

**Gender analysis:** A critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect women, men, girls, and boys in certain situation or contexts. It includes the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated information and the study of the different roles of women and men, and the relation between and among them. It is thus a tool that assists planners in developing, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation of programs/projects to become effective, efficient, and equitable

**Sex-disaggregated data:** The collection and separation of data and statistical information by sex to enable comparative analysis, sometime referred to as gender-disaggregated statistics

**Gender-responsive budgeting:** Government planning, programming, and budgeting that contribute to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of women’s and men’s rights. It is not about creating separate budgets for women/men, or solely increasing spending on women’s/men’s programs/projects. Rather, it seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources are carried out in ways that contribute to advancing gender equality and women’s/men’s empowerment

organization, project/program, and activities by using different tools (SEAFDEC, 2020a) as shown in **Box 3**.

## SEAFDEC: a gender-responsive organization

Small-scale fisheries are the dominant feature of fisheries throughout Southeast Asia, providing livelihood and income opportunities for rural and coastal communities. Meanwhile, there is increasing attention to addressing the involvement of women and men and recognizing gender equitable, socially inclusive, and well-being-based approaches to the implementation of local-level activities in fisheries and habitat management, and livelihoods diversification to raise the profiles of women and other vulnerable groups by integrating gender perspectives in the fisheries sector. Gender equity and equality are one of the principles of FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (FAO, 2015).

For several years, SEAFDEC has been striving to mainstream and integrate gender within the organization as well as in its programs and projects. Several fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders from the SEAFDEC Member Countries benefited from the activities conducted by SEAFDEC in collaboration with partners that support the implementation of relevant instruments and frameworks on gender, particularly the SSF Guidelines RES&POA-2030, SEAFDEC Strategies, and SEAFDEC Gender Strategy (SEAFDEC, 2019). Since the early 2000s, SEAFDEC implemented numerous gender-responsive projects in different sites throughout the Southeast



Asian region with activities including training courses, studies, awareness-raising, and capacity-building, among others.

### Integrated Coastal Resources Management

The project “Integrated Coastal Resources Management” was implemented by SEAFDEC with support from the Japanese Trust Fund during 2001–2010 in three sites, namely: Chumphon in Thailand, Langkawi in Malaysia, and Sihanoukville in Cambodia. The objective of the Project was to enhance fisheries resources and alleviate poverty in the Project sites where women and men were involved in livelihood to reduce over-dependence on coastal resources by encouraging and enhancing local businesses outside



Crab bank in Cambodia

Crab bank in Thailand

capture fisheries. The Project established the crab bank for blue swimming crabs in Thailand in 2005 and replicated it in the Project sites in Malaysia in 2007 and Cambodia in 2007.

The crab bank was intended to enhance crab stocks and ensure the sustainable use of crab resources by allowing gravid female crabs to spawn before or instead of being sold for

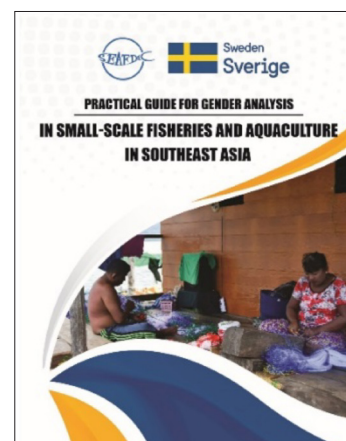
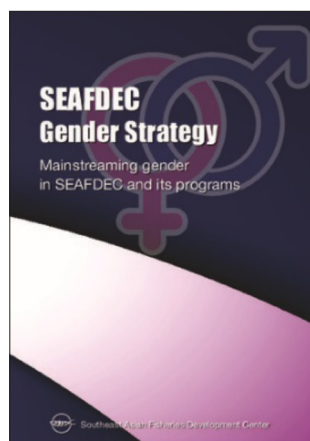


the rehabilitating of the coastal fishery resources and local livelihood security. The crab bank was an effective activity that inspired the local people to ensure that the crab resources were protected and conserved in a sustainable manner and enhanced the awareness of the women and men of the need to manage crab resources to improve their livelihoods. Women and men participate in crab bank activities depending on their expertise; for example, women cook for visitors and men provide technical information on crab bank.

### Enhanced Fisheries Sector Capability for Sustainable and Socially Equitable Resources Management

The Sweden Embassy in Thailand supported SEAFDEC in implementing the project “Enhanced Fisheries Sector Capability for Sustainable and Socially Equitable Resources Management” which was also known as the SEAFDEC-Sweden Project from 2008 to 2019. The SEAFDEC-Sweden Project geographical focus areas included the Andaman Sea, Gulf of Thailand, Mekong River Basin, and Sulu Sulawesi Seas. The Project supported the ASEAN Member States (AMSs) in the implementation of activities at regional, sub-regional, and local levels to achieve sustainable use of aquatic resources and reduce vulnerability to climate change of coastal/rural (fishing) communities in the region. The focus of the Project was the strengthening of the capacity of AMSs to manage fisheries and habitats, manage fishing capacity, and combat IUU and destructive fishing. From 2015 to 2018, one of the activities under the Project was capacity building on gender for all staff from the SEAFDEC Secretariat and Departments including raising awareness of gender and how to conduct gender analysis.

Furthermore, the SEAFDEC-Sweden Project supported the development of the SEAFDEC Gender Strategy as well as the Practical Guide for Gender Analysis in Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture in Southeast Asia (SEAFDEC, 2020a). The SEAFDEC Gender Strategy strives to mainstream and integrate gender perspectives into the SEAFDEC organization and in its programs, projects, and activities (SEAFDEC, 2019). The Strategies include 1) Mainstreaming genders at all levels of the organization, 2) integrating gender in SEAFDEC programs and projects, 3) incorporating gender perspectives in all events organized by SEAFDEC, 4) boosting the visibility of SEAFDEC as a gender-responsive and gender-sensitive organization, and 5) strengthening further the cooperation and collaboration with Member Countries and other organizations on gender aspects. Furthermore, the Practical Guide was developed through a series of regional consultations with the AMSs from 2017 to 2019 to support the AMSs



in integrating gender in their respective programs and projects to obtain sustainable fishery resources and eradicate poverty in small-scale fishing communities. Based on the framework of the SSF Guidelines, the Practical Guide includes the tools and procedures for gender analysis, guide questionnaires, gender-sensitive indicators, and data analysis.

### Community-based Resources Management/Co-management in Lao PDR

The project “Community-based Resources Management/Co-management in Lao PDR” with support from the Japanese Trust Fund was implemented by SEAFDEC in 2017–2019 in Nam Xouang Reservoir and Khammoune Province. In each Project site, the Fisheries Management Committee (FMC) was established to define the conservation zones, and fish processing groups were organized. The Project engaged women and men in activities where women were the main actors in local business while men were the leading actors in fishery resources enhancement.

Focusing on the fish processing groups in the Nam Xouang Reservoir, the group in Phonhong Village was composed of 10 women, and the group in Naxaithong Village had 12 women.



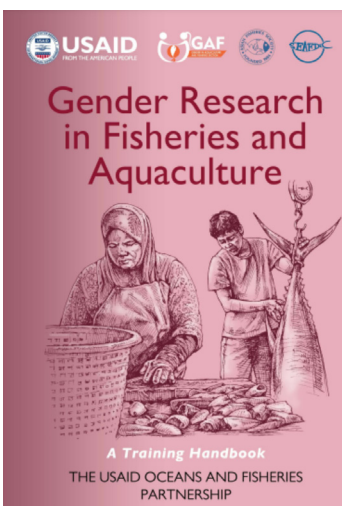
Members of the fish processing group in the Nam Xouang Reservoir, Lao PDR with the processed fish products they produced

The members of the fish processing groups underwent training in fish processing, marketing, and financial management to generate additional income. After obtaining knowledge and skills in fish processing, the women produced four products, *i.e.* wrapped sour fish (som hor), sour fish (som ton), sour fish eggs (som khai pa), and fermented fish (pa dek).

### The Oceans and Fisheries Partnership (USAID Oceans)

SEAFDEC has been working with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on the implementation of the project “The Oceans and Fisheries Partnership (USAID Oceans)” from 2015 to 2020. The aim of the USAID Oceans was to contribute to strengthening the Asia-Pacific region’s capacity to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud, promote sustainable fisheries and conserve marine biodiversity in the region through a multi-pronged strategy that includes catch documentation and traceability, ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM), human welfare and gender equality (HWGE), public-private partnerships, and communications and outreach.

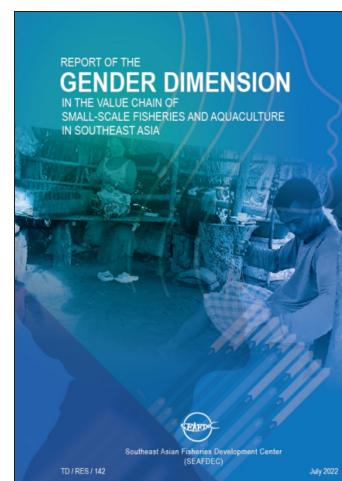
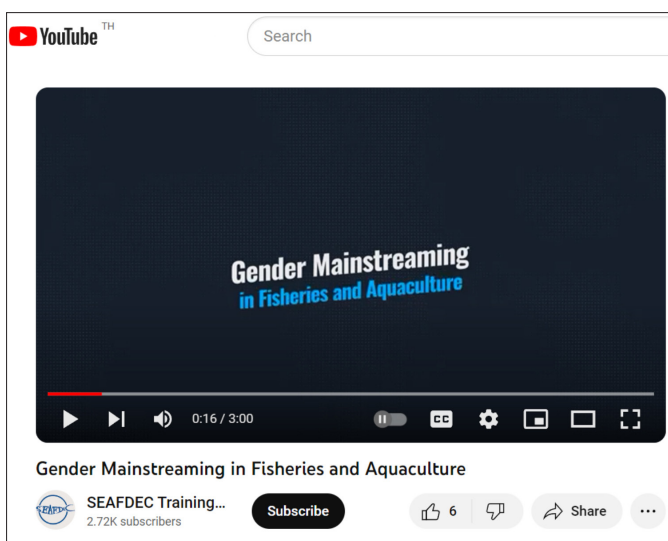
For HWGE, the activities include gender analysis in the learning site in Bitung, Indonesia in 2019 and General Santos, Philippines from 2016 to 2017 as well as training and workshops in the AMSs from 2015 to 2019. The Project produced several publications and videos including 1) Gender Research in Fisheries and Aquaculture: A Training Handbook, 2) Assessing Fisheries in a New Era: Extended Guidance for Rapid Appraisal of Fisheries Management Systems, 3) The Hidden Half: Women’s Role in Southeast Asia’s Fisheries (Part 1 and Part 2) (video), and 4) Regional Workshop on Gender Strategies Implementation (USAID, 2020). In Bitung, Indonesia, the ID cards of women fishers do not indicate their occupation as fishers; thus, the Project assisted the women in increasing their awareness of the importance of indicating their occupation in their ID cars so that they can avail of the incentives from the government (Satapornvanit & Parengkuan, 2020). In General Santos, Philippines, there were different gender roles between women and men; men were fishing at sea, hauling, loading, and unloading fish, while women



worked on shore preparing for fishing trips, processing fish, and selling fish products. However, women’s participation was limited in fisheries management even if they were involved in the fisheries value chain. Therefore, the Project conducted activities to build awareness of gender aspects of fisheries officers and the local community to promote gender equality (USAID Oceans, 2018).

### Gender Dimension in the Value Chain of Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture in Southeast Asia

With support from the FAO, SEAFDEC implemented the project “Gender Dimension in the Value Chain of Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture in Southeast Asia” in 2020–2022. The Project aimed at improving and strengthening the gender dimension in selected sites in Southeast Asia, namely: Bolikhamxay Province, Lao PDR for inland capture fisheries; Kyauktan, Yangon Province, Myanmar for freshwater aquaculture; Infanta, Quezon, Philippines for marine capture fisheries, and Surat Thani Province, Thailand for mariculture. Under the Project, fisheries officers from the four Project sites were trained in gender analysis including data collection and analysis, while the local community learned gender concepts





during the validation workshops. The outputs of the Project include a brochure on the daily life of women and men in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture and a video on gender mainstreaming in fisheries. Furthermore, the project also developed the Training Module on Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector which is composed of gender concepts and mainstreaming tools and was utilized in several capacity-building activities on gender organized by SEAFDEC.



Series of training workshops on gender for fisheries officers from the AMSs (from top to bottom: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Viet Nam, and Cambodia)

### Small-scale Fisheries Management for Better Livelihood and Fisheries Resources

The project with the duration from 2020 to 2024 entitled “Small-scale Fisheries Management for Better Livelihood and Fisheries Resources” supported by the Japanese Trust Fund is being implemented by SEAFDEC for the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries to improve the livelihood and well-being of fishers in Southeast Asia. One of the components of the Project is gender integration and women empowerment in sustainable fisheries management in the AMSs where a series of regional and national training workshops on gender integration in small-scale fisheries were conducted for fisheries officers to enhance their knowledge of gender and apply it in their workplace in the respective AMSs. The Training Module on Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector was utilized during the training courses conducted in Indonesia in September 2022, Malaysia in October 2022, Cambodia in March 2023, and Viet Nam in April 2023.

### Regional Capacity Building Network (RECAB)

The regional capacity development program of SEAFDEC entitled “Regional Capacity Building Network (RECAB)” approved by the SEAFDEC Council in 2021 offers an intensive training course on a specific subject in fisheries and aquaculture to enhance the capacity of relevant fisheries officers from the AMSs. The first training course of the RECAB was the Regional Training Course on Gender Mainstreaming in Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture for Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia in 2022 in Thailand. The Training Module on Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector was utilized during the Training which included lectures, discussions, individual and group assignments, quizzes, and field trips. The trainees include relevant fisheries officers from the AMSs, namely: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam as well as staff from the SEAFDEC



Regional Training Course on Gender Mainstreaming in Small-scale Fisheries and Aquaculture for Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia in 2022 in Thailand



Secretariat and Departments. The trainees developed an action plan for gender integration in their workplace and in developing gender-responsive fisheries programs and projects in their respective countries.

### Visibility of SEAFDEC as a gender-responsive organization

In addition to collaborative partnerships with other organizations in implementing projects and conducting activities on gender in various events of other organizations (Box 4) by sharing expertise and experience from several gender-related projects and activities implemented in the past years.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

SEAFDEC will continue to strive to mainstream and integrate gender in the small-scale fisheries of the countries in the Southeast Asian region. Gender analysis is widely recognized as a significant tool for identifying gender issues and developing gender-responsive projects to achieve gender equality and equity in small-scale fisheries. Therefore, one of the crucial activities that should be sustained by SEAFDEC is the capacity-building of the fisheries officers to enable them to conduct gender analysis in their respective countries.

#### Box 4. Gender-related events participated by SEAFDEC

- “Women and Community-Based Coastal Resources Management in South East Asia” of KIARA (The People’s Coalition for Fisheries Justice) in Jakarta, Indonesia on 29-30 December 2015
- “6<sup>th</sup> Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF6) with 11<sup>th</sup> Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum” of Asian Fisheries Society on 3-7 August 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand on 3-7 August 2016
- “8<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Gender and Fisheries” of Women in Fisheries (WINFISH) in Iloilo City, Philippines on 28-30 September 2016
- “Expert workshop on Gender-equitable small-scale fisheries in the context of the implementation of SSF Guidelines of FAO” in Rome, Italy, on 28-30 November 2016
- “6<sup>th</sup> Marine Science Conference” of Burapha University in Chonburi, Thailand, on 18-20 June 2018
- “7<sup>th</sup> Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries” of GAF in Pathum Thani, Thailand on 18-21 October 2018
- “3<sup>rd</sup> World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress” of Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) in Chiang Mai, Thailand on 22-26 October 2018
- “12<sup>th</sup> Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum” of Asian Fisheries Society, Iloilo, Philippines on 10-11 April 2019
- “Unpacking the SSF Guidelines: Mainstreaming gender for SSF development strategies” of FAO, Virtual Meeting on 3 June 2021
- “Women Leaders Forum” of Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) Virtual Meeting on 8 October 2021
- “Webinar on Gender and Labor in Fisheries: Women Work in Fisheries, Too!” of USAID SUFIA and GAF, Virtual Meeting on 29 November 2021
- “Mainstreaming Agro-biodiversity for Sustainable food system in Southeast Asia: Indigenous Women of the ASEAN region as Custodians of Agrobiodiversity” of Mekong Institute, Virtual Meeting on 14-15 December 2021
- “4<sup>th</sup> World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress (4WSFC)” of Too Big To Ignore (TBTI) in Japan on 9-14 May 2022
- “Workshop on toward implementing small-scale fisheries guideline for gender equitable and climate resilient food systems and livelihoods” of FAO in Accra, Ghana on 6-9 June 2022
- “8<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries” of GAF in Kochi, India on 21-23 November 2022
- “Addressing Labor Exploitation in Fishing in ASEAN (ALFA) Project” in Indonesia on 28 November 2022
- “International Conference on Achieving Ocean Equity: Innovative, Fair, Inclusive and Sustainable Strategies and Blue Impact Investments” of ADBI in Australia from 27 February to 1 March 2023
- “Consultation workshop on participatory review and selection of adaptation options with inclusive, gender-responsive Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) to improve natural resource management” of UNDP in Phetchaburi Province on 15 May 2023
- “Consultation Workshop on Assessment and Prioritization of Climate Adaptation Measure in Coastal Communities” of UNDP in Songkhla, Thailand on 29 May 2023 and Surat Thani, Thailand on 31 May 2023



Moreover, SEAFDEC would continue to adhere to its Gender Strategy by mainstreaming gender at all levels of the organization, integrating gender in programs and projects, incorporating gender perspectives in all events, boosting the visibility of SEAFDEC as a gender-responsive and gender-sensitive organization, and strengthening further the cooperation and collaboration with Member Countries and other organizations.

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