

## Role of Women in Poverty Reduction

### *Background*

Working on Coastal Area Management, CORIN-Asia found out that women in Coastal Cambodia especially those from depressed fisheries households, participate actively in many fisheries activities but whose contributions are rarely acknowledged. The lower status accorded to women means that their contribution to fisheries is undervalued and unrecognized. The basic goal of women in fisheries development is to make women equal partners and promote women's productive and self-reliant participation in the process of improving their own and their family's well being.

Women in Coastal Cambodia play a valuable role in the many activities in the community and they provide much useful information on issues such as time use, access to resources, food distribution, decision-making and control of income.



A woman member of the Crab Bank Committee expressing her views during a meeting

With the establishment of the Crab Bank in Coastal Cambodia, women's participation is ensured, valued and utilized in fisheries management. They were given the opportunity to acquire appropriate technologies that enable them to make the greatest possible contribution to sustainable development and growth. As experience has shown, the benefits of programs and projects aimed at men have rarely equally benefited women and, at times, have made their situation worse. For these reasons, it was seen essential to increase women's participation in planning and decision-making in fisheries development interventions thus, their inclusion to the whole process from planning, implementation and monitoring.

### *Gender mainstreaming in Poverty Reduction*

Mainstreaming gender, particularly to improve the status of women, is often a pressing issue in Cambodia.

CORIN-Asia, as a regional partner of the Wetlands Alliance (WA), has worked with local partners in Coastal Cambodia (CCLA) in mainstreaming gender into their activities such as crab banking and integrated farming. Through the development of their workplans, local partners and community fisheries groups have taken into consideration the role and contribution of women in these activities. A notable improvement contributed by the Wetlands Alliance was the intentional inclusion of 2 women out of 5 members in the CFI committee, which was formerly dominated by men. They have been greatly involved in planning and decision-making activities and served as a voice for raising other concerns of women in their community.



A woman member of the Crab Bank Committee expressing presenting output during a workshop

The types of activity in which women are involved fall into at least five main categories in fisheries management. They range from what are clearly senior management tasks to basic administration which include:

- *Overall management*: essentially allowing the fishermen to concentrate on fishing per se, relieving them of all the financial, compliance/fiscal, supplies sourcing, crew/staff management and marketing responsibilities and duties
- *Communication*: providing an essential communication link whilst the spouse is at sea, formerly a critical requirement but now one made less so by communication technology - sea-going fishermen can communicate directly with better radios, mobile phones, among others
- *Bookkeeping*: keeping track of expenditure and revenues, dealing with the bank and fiscal or other requirements
- *Conflict resolution and negotiation*: women act as mediators in meetings and discussions, especially in resolving conflicts
- *Marketing*: from maintaining a marketing network, keeping track of current prices to actively selling fish, finding the best deals and proactive market development
- *Practical backup*: at the lower end of the scale, women provide essential routine logistical functions, picking up equipment and crew, etc.



Women in action in the local initiative fund management doing crucial administrative work

## Challenges

Women in Coastal Cambodia still face constraints in contributing to the development of the fisheries sector. Most of them lack education and are often burdened to do most of the housework and other domestic responsibilities. This has led to hesitance for some women to participate in community activities believing that they do not have enough knowledge or skill to contribute.

Despite these challenges, CORIN-Asia and the Wetlands Alliance have targeted to improve their situation through trainings and other capacity building programs that would empower them to contribute towards improving their household income. These activities are done in collaboration with Coastal Cambodia local partners to wit: Provincial Training Center (PTC), Fisheries Administration Cantonment (FiA Cantonment), Department of Tourism (DoT), and Department of Environment from Kampot and Koh Kong, among others.

To date, they have been accorded due recognition as their story was aired in a national TV where they expressed the capacity built in them through WAP support and CORIN-Asia facilitation on the ground.

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