

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN COMMUNITY FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

### WHAT IS GENDER?

Gender refers to socially constructed roles for men and women, while sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. Gender's relevance to fisheries is related not only to the role of women, but also to the relationship between men and women and their shared roles, rights and responsibilities in fisheries management.



In Cambodia, women have traditionally been regarded as poor in terms of physical ability and knowledge. The voices of women have often been unheard in terms of social influence and decision-making. Therefore, the Fisheries Administration (FiA) and Community-Based Natural Resource Management Learning Institute (CBNRM-LI) initiated a study focusing on the roles, needs and aspirations of women in fishing and community fisheries management in coastal regions of Cambodia. This study supported by the Wetlands Alliance aims to explore strategies for gender mainstreaming, as a contribution to the fisheries sector's Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy.

### GENDER ROLES IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Since the establishment of Community Fisheries (CF) in coastal regions of Cambodia, the involvement of women in the active management of fisheries resources has increased. In the Community Fisheries of *Angkaol* and *Koh Krusna*, for instance, women have benefitted from enhanced opportunities to participate in community meetings and group discussions where they can voice their opinions and aspirations.

While the overall participation of women in group meetings is still relatively low compared to men, due in part to traditional social roles, women in coastal fisheries communities have proved to be highly active in the dissemination of information through informal discussions with community members and neighboring villagers.



The number of female participants involved in dissemination meetings is always higher than male participants, as men are often engaged in fishing away from the village.



These meetings spread information regarding the advantages of fisheries resource management, mangrove replanting, and community regulations and by-laws. Women perform a vital function in sharing this information with their husbands, families, and other community members.



Women also bear responsibility for financial management in traditional Cambodian households, allowing them to take a leading role in setting up and managing community savings groups.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Women's participation in the management of Community Fisheries is still constrained by a number of key challenges. Foremost among these challenges is the low rate of literacy among rural women. Many women lack the confidence to express their opinions in community meetings due to feelings of inadequacy stemming from illiteracy. Other challenges include the heavy burden of women's primary responsibility for housework, caring for children, preparing meals, and daily livelihood activities.

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES

Based on research findings, the FiA and CBNRM-LI, with financial and technical support from the Wetlands Alliance, have devised a number of strategies to advance the status of women in fisheries management in coastal communities, including improved livelihood opportunities through women's groups, promoting gender awareness, and providing training courses in leadership and gender equity for women.

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