

Understanding the Major Commonalities of Gender Issues in the Small-Scale Fisheries Sector: A Comparative Analysis of Bangladesh, India, and Thailand

A. Introduction:

The SSF sector plays a vital role in the economies of Bangladesh, India, and Thailand, providing livelihoods for millions of people. However, an analysis reveals that gender inequalities persist, impacting the well-being and opportunities of women living in these communities. The major objective of this concept note is to identify the major commonalities and an inclusive understanding of gender dynamics within this part in Bangladesh, India, and Thailand. By exploring the major challenges and opportunities faced by women, we aim to propose several forward-looking strategies and policy advocacy that promote gender equality, social inclusivity, and sustainable development.

B. Major Commonalities in Gender Issues:

1. Limited Access to Resources:

All three countries exhibit a common challenge of women in the SSF sector facing limited access to resources. Whether it be financial support, training opportunities, or technology, women are often marginalized, hindering their full participation in the fisheries value chain.

2. Unrecognized Roles of SSF Women:

In all three countries, women's roles in the SSF sector are often undervalued and underrecognized. This phenomenon occurs despite active participation in fish processing, marketing, and other post-harvest activities.

3. Limited Decision-Making Power:

Women in the SSF sector across the three countries face challenges in participating in decision-making processes actively related to fisheries management and supervisory bodies.

4. Disparities in Wages and Working Conditions:

Thailand faces disparities in wages between male and female workers, alongside issues of withholding identity documents and abusive working conditions.

5. Socio-economic and Cultural Factors:

Traditional gender norms and socio-economic factors contribute to the marginalized status of women in the SSF sector negatively. Additionally, cultural influences impact gender roles and continue disparities.

C. Way Forwards:

1. Conduct advocacy for visibility and protective measures in policies and legislations that specifically address the challenges faced by women in accessing resources. Establish targeted financial support mechanisms to enhance women's access to credit for entrepreneurial activities.
2. Conduct awareness campaigns to promote the recognition of women's contributions in diverse roles within the fishery value and supply chain. Integrate gender perspectives into fisheries management policies and programs to address the undervaluation of women's roles.
3. Promote networking and active involvement of women in decision-making processes. Strengthen women's role in decision-making through capacity-building initiatives and advocacy.
4. Implement measures to improve women's access to improved fish technologies and markets. Advocate for protective measures in policies and legislations that address wage disparities and working conditions.
5. Promote and increase women's political participation by including traditional SSF under sea tribes and delimitation of coastal constituencies and reservations in education and employment spheres.
6. Establish community-driven mechanisms to recognize and protect the customary rights of small-scale fisher families and promote sustainable fishing practices and use of resources.

7. Facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration among the three countries to share best practices, video documentaries and successful strategies for availing customary rights and ecological preservation in the SSF sector.

D. Conclusion:

This concept note highlights major commonalities in gender issues within the SSF sector of Bangladesh, India, and Thailand. The proposed recommendations aim to address these challenges and pave the way for more inclusive and sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive policies, awareness campaigns, and collaborative efforts among government agencies, NGOs, and local communities.

This regional dialogue seeks to contribute valuable insights, gender equality and social inclusivity in the small-scale fisheries sector across the three countries.