The fishing & seafood processing industry, gender and social development

ENGENDERING SECURITY IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

6th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries (GAF6)
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Thailand’s fishing & seafood processing industry – where are women & where are men?

- The sectors are highly **gender segregated**
- Gender acts as the basis for division of labour

Women – working in seafood processing sectors

- High number of children & young workers – particularly migrants – linked to lack of child care & labour shortages → parents bring children to work → children start working

- Difficult for Thai government authorities to regulate, due to high levels of irregularity & large number of players, including many micro & small enterprises; both formal & informal; both domestic- & export-oriented (50% of each)

Men – fishers on board fishing vessels

- Increased precariousness due to poor management, depletion of fishing resources & shortage of up to 50,000 workers → operators use human trafficking networks to crew their vessels - no. of vessels uncertain

- Difficult for Thai government authorities to regulate, due to unique nature of work – it takes place in isolated conditions; labour laws do not always apply
Thailand’s fishing & seafood processing jobs suffer from decent work deficits

- **Extremely poor working conditions** in terms of earnings; social protection; working hours; physical injuries; psychological & sexual abuses etc.
- Both sectors **dominated by migrant workers**, mainly from Myanmar, Lao PDR & Cambodia
- Serious **human & labour rights abuses** committed against **women, men & children**
- **Child labourers & migrant workers** most **vulnerable** to exploitation & hazards
- Discrimination based on gender – age – migration

- Therefore, an **intersectional analysis** is appropriate, accounting for factors such as gender, age, migratory status, nationality/ethnicity, literacy, etc.
What does a gender analysis look like? – Beyond occupational segregation

- Gendered dimensions to abuse against women & men workers
- Pay discrepancies between women & men
- Unequal power-structures within factories, unfavorable for women
  - lack of women in leadership, managerial & decision-making positions
- Absence of childcare solutions
  - children start working

- Interventions tend to focus on fishers on board boats – thus on men workers
  - Less focus on the exploitation & vulnerability of women & child workers

- Gender & intersectional analyses are therefore essential to design activities & interventions that create decent work in the fishing & seafood sectors
How does the ILO situate its work?
– The Decent Work Agenda & the Sustainable Development Goals

**International labour standards:**
- ILO convention (binding): C188 on Work in Fishing
- Accompanying ILO recommendation (guidance): R199

**The ILO's Decent Work Agenda:**
Looks at job creation, rights at work, social protection & social dialogue
- **Gender, equality & non-discrimination**
  - a cross-cutting policy driver
- **Gender & rights perspectives**
  - Human & labour rights – gender a central analytical category

**CEDAW** – The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Provides the legal framework for the protection of women’s human rights & the claiming of rights & entitlements of women under international law
- **GR 26** – General Recommendation 26 on Women Migrant Workers (CEDAW – Dec 2008)
ILO & the fishing & seafood industry - where do we work & what do we do?

International labour standards:
• ILO convention (binding): C188 on Work in Fishing
• Accompanying ILO recommendation (guidance): R199

ILO Interventions:
• The GLP Programme (Good Labour Practices)
  - Launched in September 2013 by the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare (DLPW), the Department of Fisheries (DOF) & industry members
  - Guided by multi-stakeholder task force
  - Developed with ILO support
  - Combines establishment of fisheries industry labour guidelines with a supportive good labour practices training programme
  - Special attention to addressing unacceptable forms of work, such as child labour & forced labour

• The IPEC Project (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) – Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Shrimp and Seafood Processing Areas in Thailand
  - Implementation period: 2010-2014
  - USDOL-funded (the United States Department of Labor)
  - Mission: A world free of child labour
What’s next?

The Combatting Unacceptable Forms of Work in the Thai Fishing and Seafood Industry Project
- 1 Feb 2016 - 31 July 2019
- EU-funded
- Four objectives:
  - strengthen the legal, policy & regulatory framework
  - enhance the capacity of Government officers
  - improve compliance with fundamental principles & rights at work
  - enhance access to support services to workers & victims of labour abuses
- Cross-cutting issues: gender equality, good governance, private sector engagement & environment

TRIANGLE II
- 1 Nov 2015 - 31 Oct 2025
- USDOL-funded
- Aims to ensure that the benefits of labour migration are equally realised by men & women migrant workers, employers & governments
- Shape labour migration opportunities to support inclusive and sustainable growth in the ASEAN Economic Community
Challenges: lack of recognition of the gendered problems

• Donors’ & international community’s attention drawn to working conditions & abuses on board fishing vessels
• Gender-issues often not prioritized by donors, governments & businesses
• The gendered nature of the problems in the fishing & seafood processing industries is largely unrecognized – because it is complex!
• Most actors don’t see the gender challenges – unable to do a gender or intersectional analysis

There is a great need for gender sensitive & responsive approaches to the fishing & seafood industries which include:
• Fill the knowledge gaps in terms of both research, policy and practice
• More evidence & data, disaggregated by sex, age and migratory status
• Gender value chain analysis
• Gender, intersectional & feminist analyses of “low-skilled work” in the different fishing & seafood sectors
• Relate to women’s economic empowerment – account for gender gaps in the world of work, including sectoral & occupational segregation, gender wage gap & gaps in the policy framework for work and family integration
Creating social justice, work & dignity for all requires a widened focus of interventions, accounting for:
- Particularly vulnerable groups of workers – migrants and child/young workers
- Conditions in factories and other seafood processing sectors – not only on boats
- Living conditions, not only working conditions – what happens after work?
- Life cycle analysis of gender roles – who takes care of the parents/kids?
- Develop policies that enhance sustainability of enforcement and compliance

This requires changing mind sets, raised awareness & targeted action by many stakeholders
- There is now a growing interest in the link between the seafood industry, social responsibility and development – where is the focus on gender
- How can we ensure that the SDGs are implemented - no one is left behind – no women left behind
- Gaining momentum – policy drivers for gender transformative change
Thank you

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