

# GAF Section Newsletter

GENDER IN AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES SECTION  
OF THE ASIAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

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ISSUE 3**

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# Message from the editor



**Surendran Rajaratnam**  
Newsletter Editor  
Gender in Aquaculture and  
Fisheries Section  
Asian Fisheries Society

Dear readers,

Welcome to the third newsletter of the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section (GAFS) of the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS). I would like to first thank all the contributors and sponsors of this newsletter.

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt our lives and livelihoods, we have learned to endure and continue to live with the disease and the uncertainties it brings. Although the pandemic has exposed political, health, economic and social vulnerabilities of many countries, the show of resilience and global cooperation to weather the virus is applaudable.

In the same spirit, GAFS members have adapted to the new way of working and have been engaged in and implemented a range of research activities and programs to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

In this edition of the GAFS e-newsletter, we feature some of our engagement in online events, which includes our support toward the Shanghai Declaration and our contribution to a social policy by [FisheryProgress](#). We have also worked with our partners to design an online course on integrating gender into fisheries economics and have provided awards for early career gender researchers. A brief update is also provided on the webinar organized as a run-up to the 8th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF8) and the Cultivating Equality conference held in October 2021. Additionally, there are other informative and interesting content lineups prepared for you.

As we enter 2022 with new expectations and goals, I hope you will continue to work with us to advance gender equality and advocate for the advancement of women in fisheries and aquaculture. On behalf of the executive committee, I wish you a healthy and safer 2022.



# Message from the section chair

## TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED

The past 2 years have taught us to take nothing in life for granted. The COVID-19 pandemic that started in early 2020 has disrupted the lives of all our members and their families, those for whom we work, and upended GAFS plans, events and projects. You will read about much of this in this the third e-newsletter.

Our much awaited GAF8 was scheduled to take place in April 2021, but preparation for it was halted in 2020. We switched to planning a series of webinars in 2021, but even these were delayed as the pandemic delivered more surprises in 2021, and we and our webinar partners were further stretched to the limit. Finally, we conducted the first webinar, on gender and labor, on November 29, 2021: **"Women Work in Fisheries, Too!"**

The pandemic also greatly disrupted plans in our SwedBio project, Dialogues in Gender and Coastal Aquaculture: Gender and the Seaweed Farming Value Chains. This project projected extensive field contact and very tight deadlines, but the methods all had to be reoriented to cope with new travel restrictions, social distancing and other precautions. Nevertheless, it was a great success and a huge credit to the project teams.

The pandemic also normalized online meetings as a way of doing business, bringing each of us more frequently into each other's homes and working spaces. This convenience also added to the stresses of using homes for multiple purposes. Despite travel being restricted, apparently saving a great deal of time, cost and energy, somehow our operations became more difficult, taking longer than normal to complete some tasks that typically flowed more naturally in face-to-face encounters at work. For those with fewer immediate responsibilities, however, the virtual space opened up great opportunities to tune in to webinars by the world's top experts or participate virtually in important world events that, in pre-pandemic times, were difficult to gain entrance to.

The pandemic also put a focus on the plight of women around the world, including in fisheries and aquaculture value chains. Typically already burdened by more than an equal share of work in the home, women often also lost their freedom to move around for their work in the economy. They fretted as they saw their children lose precious education gains, and they often dealt with psychological stresses from other stressed family members. Some witnessed, or even cared for, family and friends who caught COVID-19, while others experienced the anguish of loved ones who succumbed to the disease. The pandemic demonstrated that the less powerful members of society were the first to be curtailed and had the least means to secure their personal needs.

What will the future hold, despite the hope of some respite from vaccinations for those fortunate enough to receive them? The pandemic has set back global development by years and exacerbated inequalities. New energy from GAFS is now more important than ever in addressing gender inequalities in fisheries and aquaculture.



**Meryl Williams**  
Section Chair  
Gender in Aquaculture and  
Fisheries Section  
Asian Fisheries Society





# Stories from Major Events for 2020 & 2021

Online Events: Gender in fisheries and aquaculture-specific conferences as well as sessions at other conferences

## The Shanghai Declaration

### GAFS Supports Shanghai Declaration

Aquaculture for Food and Sustainable Development, a participants' Declaration of the Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium + 20 (GCA+20), was accepted by acclamation on September 24, 2021, at the culmination of the conference. The GCAs are decadal events, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific, plus the national host agency, in this case the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Organizations were invited to pledges and statements of support. The Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section (GAFS) of the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS) provided a statement of support, which we reproduce below. The Shanghai Declaration can be [downloaded](#), and all the pledges and statements can be found on the [Declaration website](#). The GAFS statement recognizes the alignment of the Declaration to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the way that it includes articles on women's needs for full access to equal opportunities and a gender-transformative approach in the sector. We also recognize that generally the Declaration is the most inclusive such aquaculture statement, including that four of the 10 strategic priorities are about people, especially the one on women.





## FisheryProgress social policy

In mid-2020, and in collaboration with [Comunidad y Biodiversidad](#), GAFS presented its views and suggestions for improving the draft social policy proposed by [FisheryProgress](#), an organization working to help fisheries improvement projects. The draft focused solely on at-sea social issues. Our views were not adopted because the final version did not extend to other nodes of the value chain.

## Delivering an online course on integrating gender into fisheries economics

The International Institute for Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET) has endeavored to increase the focus on gender in fisheries economics research by holding gender sessions and discussions and awarding prizes at its biennial conferences. Despite these steps, research into fisheries and aquaculture economics can be improved further through building the capacity of fisheries economists to undertake and participate in gendered economics research.

To encourage and improve gender research in fisheries and aquaculture economics, the IIFET executive committee has approved a training course for building the capacity of fisheries and aquaculture economists to undertake and participate in gendered economics research. The course, called Gender Integration in Fisheries Economics, is directed at fisheries economists but will be relevant to those providing policy advice on economics, fisheries management and project planning. It will be delivered online to enable wide attendance, despite travel disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to make it accessible in the long term.

A team designed the course with funding from a planning grant from CGIAR's GENDER Platform and the CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-Food Systems (FISH) through WorldFish. The IIFET is delivering the course in collaboration with the University of California Irvine, GAFS of the AFS, and the UNAM Merida Escuela Nacional Estudios Superiores (Mexico), as well as both the GENDER Platform and FISH.

The objective of the course is to enhance capacity for integrating theoretically informed gender analysis into economics and trade research within fisheries and aquaculture. The online course will have two parts: (1) three instructional sessions, with

blended synchronous and asynchronous elements, and (2) a workshop based on the specific projects and publications of the participants. The course will be delivered in 2022.

## GAFS-CGIAR award for gender researchers

### Announcing the 4 winners

Awards to Support Publishing Journal Articles on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries

As part of the 8th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF8)



In preparation for the 8th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF8), GAFS joined with FISH in a [call for proposals](#) for awards to support the preparation and publication of quality, open-access research articles by early career gender researchers.

We selected four proposals from individuals and teams who were well advanced in their preparation of high-quality manuscripts suitable for submission to reputable research journals. The total of each award, including journal fees, will not be more than USD 5000. Online mentoring assistance for preparing the manuscript was also offered to the awardees. The selected articles are as follows:

- "Illuminating the hidden informal cross-border trade and women participation for small-scale fisheries in West Africa" by Richard A. Nyiawung (University of Guelph, Canada) and Raymond K. Ayilu (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia)
- "Comparative gender analysis of roles and responsibilities along the aquaculture value chain in households owning their own fish ponds and in fish ponds owned collectively by belonging in clubs (Malawi)" by Esther Ngwira (Lilongwe University of Natural Resources [LUANAR], Malawi)
- "Multidimensional perspectives of taboos on gender roles of fisher folk in sub-Saharan Africa" by Ayodele Oloko (University of Bremen, Germany)
- "Shift in gender equity – A model study from reservoirs, wetlands and rivers in India" by Piyashi Debroy, B K Das and Chayna Jana (ICAR–Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Barrackpore, Kolkata, India).

These awards have been given out under the GENDER Platform, which is grateful for the support of CGIAR Trust Fund Contributors (<https://www.cgiar.org/funders/>). We are also grateful for the work done by all applicants and the selection committee from GAFS, and WorldFish for conducting the selection process.

### Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative's Social and Gender Standard

In partnership with the Oxfam Gender Transformative and Responsible Agribusiness Investments in Southeast Asia (GRAISEA) program, the Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative (ASIC) developed its Social and Gender Standard to address the complex social and gender challenges pervasive in the seafood sector. It was initially developed as a component of its shrimp and fish standards, but ASIC has been developing a separate, inclusive and improvement-oriented tool to address social sustainability more directly. The Standard takes a socially inclusive approach that builds on eight fundamental principles: (1) no child labor, (2) no forced labor, human trafficking, slavery or practices similar to slavery, (3) freedom of association, (4) equality and nondiscrimination, (5) gender equality and women's economic empowerment, (6) fair recruitment and decent working conditions, (7) safe working environment, and (8) respect for local communities.

The Social and Gender Standard applies to seafood operations of different sizes and structures, and it addresses the specific needs of small-scale and large-scale fisheries and aquaculture operations. This tool will allow stakeholders to apply best practices, obtain new knowledge and skills, expand their market penetration both locally and worldwide, boost their earnings and improve the well-being of their families and communities. On August 13, 2021, ASIC reached a milestone in its development with the formulation of its Social and Gender Standard for aquaculture producers. The Standard currently remains in development. Based on relevant UN conventions, legal instruments and FAO's Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries Voluntary Guidelines, the Standard focuses on responsible, ethical and inclusive measures that improve seafood operations on social aspects.

**ASIC:** <http://www.asicollaborative.org/>

**GRAISEA:** <https://asia.oxfam.org/what-we-do/gender-transformative-responsible-business-investment-south-east-asia-graisea>

**Press release on finalization of the Social and Gender Standard:** <https://www.asicollaborative.org/press-release-asic-socialandgenderstandard>



## GAF8 situation report with an update on webinars and other activities planned

On November 29, 2021, GAFS held a three-hour webinar on gender and labor in fisheries called “Women Work in Fisheries, Too!” The webinar was the result of a collaboration among several partners: GAFS, the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Sustainable Fish Asia (SUFIA) Local Capacity Development (LCD) Activity, the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF), Society of Fisheries Technologists (India) (SOFTI) and the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology India (CIFT/ICAR).

The purpose of the webinar was to increase awareness and recommend cooperative actions that are necessary for a gender and socially inclusive approach to address labor issues in the fisheries sector. Participants came from the government sector, GAFS/AFS, the private sector, civil society, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academia and other interested groups. It was the first in a series of webinars in the runup to GAF8 to be held in 2022. GAF8 will be organized by GAFS/AFS and hosted by both the Society of Fisheries Technologists India and the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology India (CIFT/ICAR) in Kochi, India. The major output of this webinar is a draft cooperative action plan for the fisheries sector that will provide guidelines and recommendations to address gender equality and social inclusion in the fisheries workplace.

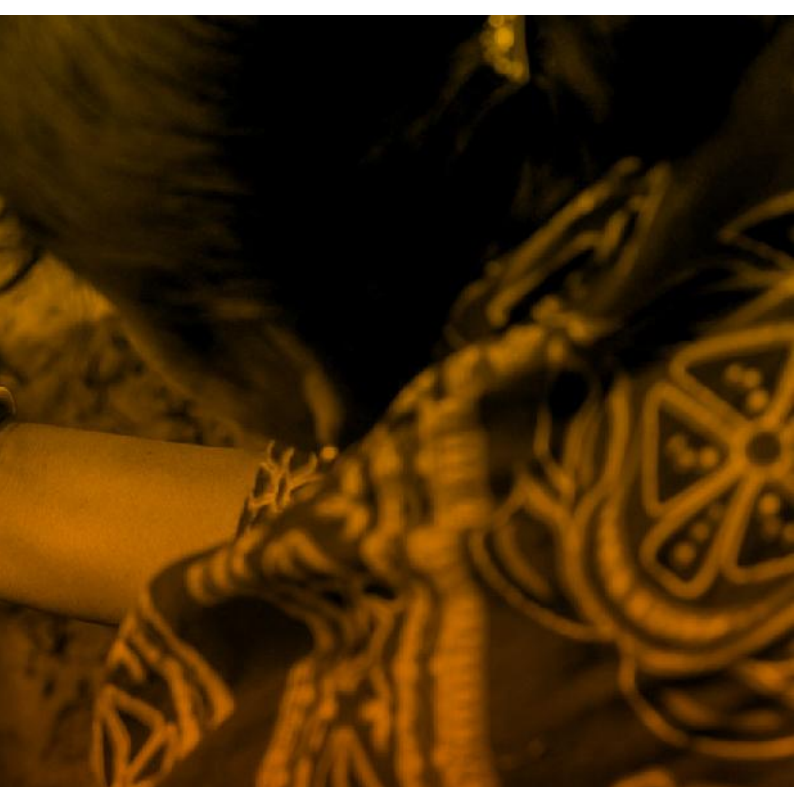
## Cultivating Equality 2021

**Cultivating Equality 2021** was held in October 12–15. The virtual conference brought together researchers and students from various organizations across the globe to advance gender research in agriculture and food systems. The focus was on research that helps to understand and advance positive synergies among sustainable and resilient agricultural, rural and food systems, and equality in societies globally.

The conference served as a platform for participants to engage in in-depth and critical discussions on ways to advance gender research. Topics discussed ranged from but were not limited to (i) various approaches to conduct gender research, including from the perspectives of climate, social justice and food systems, (ii) measuring women’s empowerment, (iii) understanding local and traditional knowledge to inform policies and programs, and (iv) a framework and evidence to inform the UN Food Systems Summit. Building on the discussions from the sessions, speakers set out directions for future gender research during the closing plenary.

There were several presentations on women and gender in fisheries and aquaculture. This includes sessions on COVID-19 experiences of women fish processors and traders in Africa and on women shell-fishers in West Africa. There were also presentations on small-scale fisheries in the Pacific, on aquaculture in Bangladesh, and a systematic literature review on women’s groups in India. The closing plenary also celebrated Devis Mwakanyamale et al.’s poster exploring barriers and opportunities to women’s participation in the commercialized cassava seed system in Tanzania. Honorable mentions were given to Farhana Ibrahim et al.’s poster on the most significant changes for women and men through a nutrition-sensitive agriculture intervention in Bangladesh as well as Annelie Gutte’s poster on constructing or empowering the female coffee farmer.

If you are interested in learning more about the sessions, you can watch the recordings and read other resources, which will be available until mid-January 2022. You can also check out the **GENDER Platform** to find more information about the conference and keep yourself updated with conversations on it.







# New research and projects

## Gendered perspectives from India's seaweed hotspot: Lessons from the field and in the aftermath of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

By Swathi Lekshmi

The midday sun shines brightly, and the surf-beaten shore echoes the sound of the dithering waves as I approach the thatched shelter of loosely woven palmyrah leaves, where I am accosted by Smt. Jayalakshmi, a prominent woman leader among the seaweed growers of Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu, India. The heat of the relentless summer casts drops of perspiration on her weather-beaten face, as she sits among a group of women who stoop over the ropes seeded with fragments of seaweed, in silent contemplation of their work. Their dull, monotonous yet brisk and deft fingers are engaged in rapid motion, stringing the seeds, their nimble and agile limbs set in motion, determined to finish the task that has defined their livelihoods for 25 years.

There is an aspect of prosaic silence as I sit down on the sandy floor before them, my eyes surveying the scene. Logs of casuarina poles have been stacked on the open beach, casting a telltale story of how the cyclones had devastated the seaweed rafts only a month ago. The women continue to work, in spite of my intrusion, in poignant resignation, as though they cared little for any encroachment by men or beast.

**Seaweed farming has ushered in a tale of mixed fortunes in this little hamlet, and the current vicissitudes were tales of hunger, poverty, despair caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the pecuniary impacts on the livelihoods of these women, who have shaped and molded the destiny of seaweed mariculture over the years.**

**Seaweed mariculture has been one of the mainstays of fisherwomen in this district, ever since the mid-1990s. Men and women play specific and complementary roles in the farm.**

Seaweed women farmers are actively engaged in preparing rafts, seeding ropes, drying seaweed and assisting the men in launching rafts at sea, in after-cultivation regimens and in packing operations as well. Smt. Jayalakshmi is a woman representative as well as a leader among seaweed farmers. Our interlocution starts with our observations of the ambient climate around us as I get the ball rolling. Jayalakshmi, forthwith, breaks off into a garrulous articulation. Seaweed farming, according to her, has been successful in providing them with assured incomes and perpetual livelihoods, with which many families have been able to build houses, educate children, provide clothing and quality higher education for adolescent boys and girls, and afford nutritious meals three times a day.

Apart from addressing the concerns of the basic privations of life, women members of the family have been able to repay their loans and save money for many a rainy day. Their entire lives revolved around farming "Kappa Paasi" (in Tamil), which translates to "Kappaphycus" seaweed in English. The prospects from farming had been bright, instilling in women the much needed confidence for shouldering the key responsibilities of the family. But in 2013, a sudden affliction of the crop was observed, and



crop yield registered a drastic decline owing to an increase in temperature and an outbreak of a physiological condition in the crop called “ice-ice” disease. Jayalakshmi is interrupted at this point by Parvati, another member in the group, who takes the thread of the conversation. Seaweed farming, which had been the lifeline of the farmers, has thrown the farmers into dire straits, she says. The rafts (3 m<sup>2</sup>), which once yielded as much as 350 to 400 kg and which would be bulky and too heavy to be lifted, at present yield only 100 to 120 kg, and only 50 kg during the worse of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Higher temperatures during summer months lead to crop decay and lower temperatures during the cool season lead to indiscriminate grazing by fishes, she laments. In both cases, the loss is heavy, she says. Jayalakshmi’s voice is confident, laden with pride as she extols the hard labor and perseverance of women in this enterprise. She is determined to succeed in the ventures, which so far had paid dividends for her hard labor.

Jayalakshmi is not the lone enthusiast in seaweed aquaculture. Like her, the group of women around her have pinned their hopes high on a new venture—extraction of liquid sap from raw seaweed, which fetches a remunerative price (INR 85/L) when compared to the price of dry seaweed (INR 50/kg).

“ *Once I underwent training imparted by State Fisheries for the extraction of liquid sap from raw seaweeds, and I made 240 L of sap from 720 kg of wet seaweeds* ”  
Jayalakshmi

However, they have yet to receive any organized training on extracting and preparing this liquid seaweed fertilizer. Besides, there is no steady market to buy the produce on a consistent basis.

“I had sold the produce to a Hyderabad-based firm,” she continued, though she couldn’t remember the name of the firm. “But they procured from me only once, and ever since I have not heard from them.” She, like other women, want the government to buy the sap from them, directly, at a fair price. The women were unanimous and vocal in the need for sap extraction machines to be bought and made available to them. They were acquiescent to continue seaweed farming along with sap extraction as well.

Namburani, another woman, says, “I have been able to educate my daughter and secure her admission for nursing, and able to repay my loans as well.” She attributes her success to the income obtained from seaweed farming over the years.





Murugavalli, another seaweed grower, reminisces about past years compared to the hardships she faces today: "I used to get very good yield from seaweed crop. Unfortunately for the past 5 years, yield has been on the decline and even worse during the previous year. Further, the incidence of COVID-19 has affected the mobility of men and women framers alike. Restrictions on the movement imposed by the consecutive lockdowns have led to crop decay and crop loss. Loss of income has led to hunger and added burden of providing for all family members, including children and the elderly, who have been confined to their homes. We have been forced to sell the little gold that we had with us to make both ends meet."

Once again, Jayalakshmi engages us in our conversation. "We are badly in need of fresh planting material," she says. "The ones we are using have been in vogue since the mid-1990s. The genetic vigor of these plants has phased out, and they no longer can provide us with good yield. The government should take immediate steps to provide us with quality planting material."

Jayalakshmi points to the loosely woven thatched frame under which the women are roping the planting material. "Women do not have proper shelter where they can work and rest," she says.

“ *There is no provision for drinking water, nor do any toilets near the farm sites. Some villages like Mangadu have no roads leading to the farm site. Women often have to tread difficult and lonely paths amid dense overgrowth to reach their farm sites.*

Jayalakshmi ”





# Gender equality and social inclusion in the Sustainable Fish Asia Local Capacity Development Activity

By Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit, Project Manager, USAID SUFIA LCD Activity, RTI International, Bangkok, Thailand

**The Asia-Pacific region's fisheries and marine resources provide many opportunities to people from all walks of life and genders. The region has the highest marine biodiversity and is the world's largest producer of seafood. With the growing global demand for seafood, increasing pressures for fishing productivity and profitability often lead to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) and unethical fishing practices.** IUU fishing causes negative impacts on the environment and national economy, as well as on social and human dynamics. Beneath the layer of human welfare considerations are the gender inequalities and marginalization of vulnerable groups, particularly women, who are not included in fisheries and seafood policies, initiatives and actions.

To address fishing related threats such as IUU fishing, the USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) launched the Sustainable Fish Asia (SUFIA) project in 2020. Efforts to combat IUU fishing are hindered by deficiencies in regional and national agreements to mitigate IUU fishing, as well as low capacities in fisheries management and monitoring, among others.

As a first step in the SUFIA project, USAID/RDMA is implementing the Local Capacity Development (LCD) Activity from 2020 to 2022 ([Local Capacity Development \(LCD\) Activity from 2020 to 2022](#)) through RTI International. The Activity aims to provide technical support to two regional fisheries organizations to strengthen their institutional capacity to become leaders for driving the anti-IUU fishing agenda: the CTI-CFF and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC). To support efforts in reducing IUU fishing requires strengthening these organizations, understanding and effectively engaging the private sector, and building networks of government, private sector and civil society entities that are working on sustainable fisheries management and marine biodiversity in the region.

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis and a Gender and Inclusive Development Action Plan (GIDAP) are required for all USAID



Photo credit: USAID Oceans



projects. This guarantees that gender equality and social inclusion considerations are integrated into project interventions. SUFIA LCD conducted a GESI analysis of the fisheries sector in Asia and the Pacific, focusing on SEAFDEC and the CTI-CFF and their member countries and stakeholders. A GIDAP was also developed to fully integrate GESI principles into project activities. With the fisheries sector employing millions of women and men with diverse backgrounds, it is important that any project dealing with IUU fishing considers the adverse ecological and economic effects, as well as the impacts on the different groups of people involved in the sector.

The GESI analysis found that despite the existence of international, regional and national policies advocating for gender equality and social inclusion, there is still a scarcity in gender-disaggregated fisheries statistics, well-documented best practices (government, private sector, civil society) and fisheries-focused policies and their practical implementation. Gender inequalities still exist, and vulnerable groups, particularly women, are still marginalized in various areas, such as in wages, decision-making and social protection. One major factor is the lack of understanding and capacity on transformative gender equality and social inclusion in fisheries and marine biodiversity.

The analysis suggested several recommendations, including (i) promoting and disseminating gender

equality and social inclusion in fisheries, (ii) more dialogues and greater visibility of initiatives, (iii) strengthening education and capacity building efforts to all vested stakeholders, and (iv) producing knowledge products for learning and outreach to replicate best practices across the fisheries value chain.

SUFIA LCD Activity has outlined the following four activities as part of the GIDAP, to be implemented with SEAFDEC and the CTI-CFF, including their member countries:

1. socialization of gender equality/GESI policies to member countries
2. capacity building and mentorship on GESI in fisheries for partners and various audiences (leaders/executives, researchers, private sector, community members, youths)
3. development of communication and knowledge products in various formats for advocacy and learning
4. outreach to fishing communities and the private sector to demonstrate GESI implementation and address needs relevant to SUFIA (dependent on the COVID-19 situation).

The GESI analysis paper can be downloaded at [HERE](#).

USAID SUFIA LCD Activity and GAFS collaborated in organizing the webinar on gender and labor in fisheries in the run-up to GAF8.



Photo credit: Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit



# Wives of fishers trained on value-added fish items to sell and earn income

Text and photo by Mohammad Nuruzzaman

**Wives and other female members of fisher communities seldom engage in direct fishing in Bangladesh. Although they contribute in postharvest handling, fish drying, netmaking and similar work for which they do not count wage to be paid, earnings from fishing go into their husband's or son's hand and is treated as family income.**

Most of the small-scale fishers from *haor* areas cannot fish year-round, because *haor* water recedes from the end of monsoon and almost 80 percent of water areas become rice fields during the dry season. *Haor* floodplain known as potential source of natural fish and represent home of about 20 million small-scale fishers covering 49 upozilas under seven districts from north-eastern Bangladesh.

Fishers, usually resource poor and landless, depend on laboring on land-based agricultural activities which is an uncomfortable occupation for the fishing community during the dry season for wages and income. Research initiatives are underway to escalate fishers' income by reducing post-harvest fish losses and preparing value-added fish items and selling them as street food and in restaurants using household labor, mainly female.

Lead by the Bangladesh Agricultural University, along with a local NGO named ORA (Organization for Rural Advancement), 11 fisher couples and family groups were formed comprising around 250 fishers, their spouses and children in the vicinity of major fish landing centers in Kishoregonj, one of the main districts in *haor* inundated area. The female members of the groups were trained on preparing value-added fish items to be sold as street food to generate extra income for the family. Couples and Family entrepreneurs has been the main focus by the NGO to adopt and continue the business expecting a sustainable means of earnings on top of fishing. The Krishi Gobeshona Foundation (KGF), a government-supported grant-making organization is funding the research. The aim is to generate replicable knowledge and training packages on Post-harvest Fish Loss reduction to be disseminated across the other fishing communities engaged in small-scale fishing to improve their livelihoods with economic resilience.



Participants attending training program on Preparation and marketing value added 'ready to eat' fish items for income generation.



Practical training and demonstration of different value added ready to eat fish items for the women entrepreneurs from the fisher's community.



Women and children from the fisher's community are seen happy after observing and testing the value-added fish items.



Display of different value added ready to eat fish items for public assessment of product quality, test and price.



# Gender roles and constraints to women's participation in aquaculture: A case study of Chitwan District in Nepal

By Sujata Timelsina

**Nepal is one of the least developed countries in the world, in which most of the population lives below the poverty line. As a result, Nepalese men, women and children must work long hours to meet their family needs. Traditionally, family structures have been based on the belief that men are superior to women. Nepalese women and girls are disadvantaged in traditional customs such as the dowry system, preference for sons, the stigma of being a widow, early marriage, domestic violence and the exclusion of girls during menstruation (Chhaupadi Pratha) (CARE 2015). Even though women account for 50.4 percent of the total population (30,004,609), only 45.2 percent are economically active compared to 68.2 percent for males (CBS 2018). Prevailing gender discrimination and cultural restrictions prevent rural women from participating in education and the labor market.**

Women play a significant role in production and different value addition activities in aquaculture, and their best role is observed in fish processing and marketing sectors (Lentisco and Lee 2015). Globally, about 19 percent of women are engaged in the aquaculture sector (FAO 2020). In Nepal, women's participation (33 percent) in aquaculture is actually higher than the global average.

Aquaculture and fisheries provide employment and better livelihood opportunities for both men and women, but the benefits of aquaculture and fisheries are not equally distributed between them. Women are considered housekeepers, even though they are engaged in all production activities in the aquaculture sector, whereas men are considered more productive in their work. Although women play critical roles, from pre-stocking to post-harvest activities, their exact contribution and roles are often unvalued and ignored. The study was carried out with the aim of identifying women's roles and the constraints that they face in aquaculture production in Chitwan District.

This research focused on three types of aquaculture systems: (1) small-scale homestead aquaculture, (2) medium-scale commercial aquaculture and (3) large-scale commercial aquaculture. The study was randomly carried out in five municipalities of Chitwan District. A total of 100 respondents, including both men and women, were selected through stratified random sampling. Data was collected from mid-November 2020 to January 2021. A chi-square test was used to analyze the data.

In the whole aquaculture production cycle, men and women have complementary roles. Women



Fish harvesting done by men and women in medium scale aquaculture. Photo by Sujata Timelsina



participate in pre-stocking, post-stocking and harvesting as well as during marketing, either individually or along with their husbands. The scale of production has a great impact on women's participation in different aquaculture activities. In the majority of households, men are more involved in pond construction, dike maintenance and buying aquaculture inputs, such as fertilizer and seed. Women are more involved in clearing ponds and weeding activities. Women's involvement in building ponds and preparing dikes was limited by physical factors, such as strength and age, but also social factors. Men's involvement was also significantly higher in some post-stocking activities, such as stocking fish and buying fish feed, in all scales of production. However, women had significantly higher participation in daily aquaculture activities, such as feed preparation, feeding and farm monitoring, because husbands are not in the home during the daytime. In the majority of households, men do fish marketing activities, while women spend more time in aquaculture livestock and agricultural activities and household responsibilities than do male members of the family (Agbebi et al. 2016). The findings clearly show that women from the study area contribute more time in daily aquaculture activities on top of their household duties.

In large-scale fish producer households, women rarely make aquaculture-related decisions. They are far behind men in terms of access to and control over aquaculture resources and services. Although women participate in all aquaculture activities, either individually or with counterparts, their participation in income use is less than men. Only 8 percent of women had control over aquaculture income.

The study found that social and cultural norms are the main reasons behind the lower involvement of women in aquaculture production activities, adaptation of technologies, access to resources and decision-making power within the household and community levels. The major problems women fish farmers face are the high cost of feed, low market prices of fish, lack of good quality aquaculture inputs such as seed and feed, and a lack of technical knowledge, lab facilities and credit sources. Other problems include work burdens, social norms, difficulties in pond preparation, harvesting, water scarcity, flooding, poaching, predation and disease.



In-depth interview with women fish farmer in Khaireni municipality of Chitwan. Photo by Sujata Timelsina

This study analyzed the roles of men and women and their contributions in different scales of aquaculture production activities in Chitwan District of Nepal. The findings revealed that women are less involved than men in pre-stocking, post-stocking and harvesting, except in removing weeds, fertilization, feed preparation, and monitoring feeding and labor. Although women contribute more time in aquaculture activities in addition to their household responsibilities, they have less power in decision-making and less control over aquaculture resources. The reasons behind women's limited participation in various aquaculture activities are social beliefs that men have more knowledge and skills, as well as physical factors, such as strength, and less access to markets.



Fish processing done by women in small scale aquaculture. Photo by Sujata Timelsina



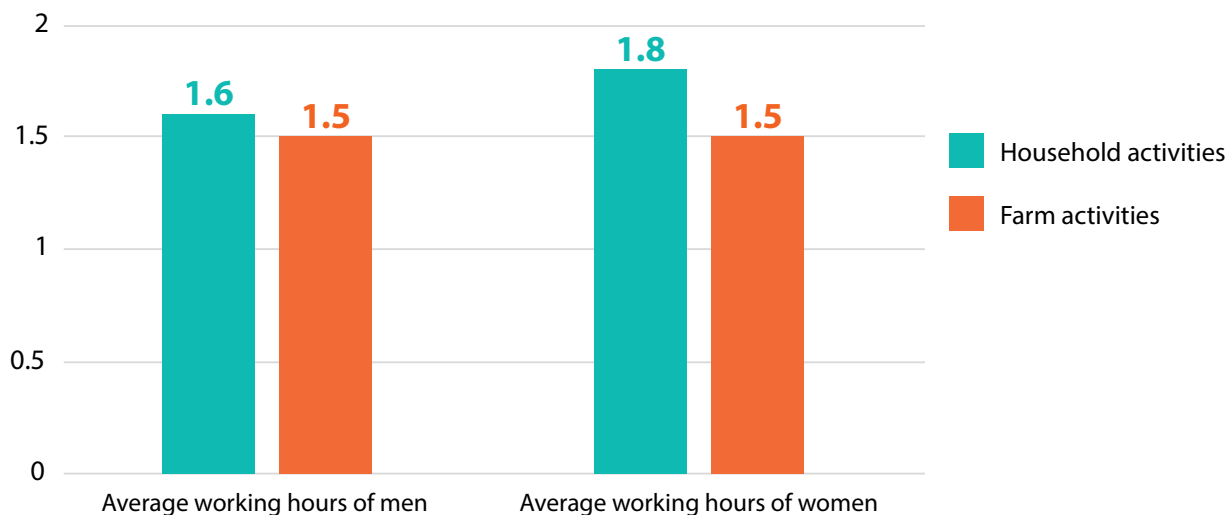


Figure 1. Time spent by gender in household and farm activities.

Engaging women in the aquaculture sector would improve family income and the status of women within the family as well as their community, while providing more credit facilities, training and technical knowledge would help encourage greater participation among women in aquaculture production activities. Gender awareness and leadership development programs are recommended to improve the status of women in decision-making within the household and farm levels.

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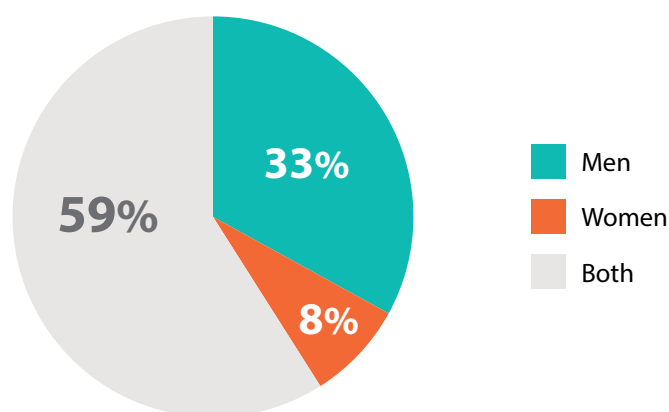


Figure 2. Gender control over aquaculture income.



Stories on Gendraquafish.org	Posted date
Social relations are important in small-scale fisheries value chains. Chikondi Manyungwa <b>addresses</b> the question of how social relations affect the engagement and outcomes of women who participate in fish value chains.	February 24, 2020
Emily Gibson <b>highlights</b> the need for a more nuanced exploration of food and nutrition security in fishing communities in eastern Indonesia.	May 4, 2020
Sarah Harper and colleagues <b>uncover</b> global contributions by women to small-scale fisheries production.	May 13, 2020
The new special issue of <i>Gender, Technology &amp; Development</i> <b>examines and reveals</b> that fisheries and aquaculture are not monolithic and encompass a wide diversity with respect to regions and even within countries.	May 26, 2020
Marysia Szymkowiak and Mellisa Rhodes-Reese <b>used</b> a mixed-methods approach to explore how women's fisheries participation has been examined in developed countries	June 4, 2020
In many places across the world, data on women's roles and contributions to small-scale fisheries are not readily available in mainstream fisheries data systems. Kate Bevitt <b>shares</b> the story behind collecting data on women in a global study on small-scale fisheries.	June 29, 2020
Natalie Makoul <b>shares</b> the activities and approaches taken under the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership in integrating gender perspectives into coastal fisheries and also the key findings and recommendations from recent research on gender and fisheries.	July 19, 2020
The recently completed <b>USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership project (2015–2020)</b> has human welfare and gender in fisheries as one of its workstreams. Others include technology development for an electronic catch documentation and traceability system, an ecosystems approach to fisheries management, public-private partnerships, and regional collaboration. The project was implemented in Bitung, Indonesia, and General Santos City, Philippines.	August 24, 2020
Confused about what it means to talk about equality or gender equality? Victoria Jollands <b>explores</b> the evolution of interpretation of the rights to equality.	October 3, 2020
In an attempt to bring to light women's participation in the seaweed industry, Jee Grace B. Suyo and colleagues <b>conducted</b> a social network analysis on seaweed farming in the Philippines to understand the social relationships within the seaweed industry and another study to explore gender differences in risk perceptions and management strategies of key stakeholder groups in the industry.	February 27, 2021
Rachel Sundar Raj <b>conducted</b> a gender analysis to understand the role of women in the tuna value chains in Vietnam. It underscores the important and indispensable role women play in the purchasing stage of the value chains in the southern central provinces of the country.	March 14, 2021
In an <b>interview</b> with Kiley Price, Conservation International scientist Elena Finkbeiner shared a study done to understand the hardships that women endure in the fishing industry and the steps needed to address them.	May 25, 2021
Meryl J Williams <b>wrote</b> a post on the recently published <i>Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics</i> , which conveys the current status and findings from a growing body of feminist economics research, and one which could provide inspiration for new economic research approaches in fisheries.	June 8, 2021
Being the only professional section of an international fisheries and aquaculture society focusing on gender, GAFS <b>welcomes and supports</b> the Shanghai Declaration, which starts to align the aquaculture sector with the SDGs and signals a more inclusive phase of development.	October 4, 2021
Sreeja Lakshimi <b>highlights</b> the importance of understanding the barriers women in science face and shares her personal journey as a recipient of a postdoctoral fellowship award from the International Veterinary Vaccinology Network.	October 20, 2021
Madu Galappaththi <b>describes</b> a new integrated framework to study gender relations within dried fish value chains that links the concepts of social well-being and intersectionality with gendered value chain analysis.	October 26, 2021
The <b>Women Work in Fisheries, Too!</b> GAF8 webinar focused on gender and labor in fisheries to increase awareness and recommend cooperative actions that are necessary to address labor issues in the fisheries sector.	November 5, 2021
Local <b>Sama-Bajau</b> do not passively accept the conservation regulations imposed on their communities. Instead, they continue to access marine and coastal resources for their culture and livelihoods in ways that they consider morally fair.	November 6, 2021



# Information on members and membership

## Brief info on the GAFS executive committee

GAFS is governed by an elected executive committee of nine members, plus the past chair and the newsletter editor. The officers of the committee consist of the chair, past chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, election committee coordinator, constitution committee coordinator, membership committee coordinator, newsletter editor and two other elected members.

Following the election in September 2017, the first executive committee took over from GAFS' inaugural officers.

Position	Name	Affiliation
Chair	Meryl Williams	GAF Section
Vice-chair	Nikita Gopal	Principal scientist, ICAR—Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kerala, India
Secretary	Kafayat Adetoun Fakoya	Senior lecturer, Department of Fisheries, Faculty of Science, Lagos State University, Nigeria
Inaugural treasurer	Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit	Project Manager, SUFIA LCD Activity, RTI International, Thailand
Election committee coordinator	Mohammad Nuruzzaman	Program specialist (fisheries), Krishi Gobeshona Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Constitution committee coordinator	Alice Joan Ferrer	Professor of economics, University of the Philippines Visayas, Philippines
Membership committee coordinator	Danika Kleiber	Social Research Project Manager, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce
Newsletter editor	Surendran Rajaratnam	Postdoctoral fellow, WorldFish, Malaysia
Elected member	Kyoko Kusakabe	Professor, Gender and Development Studies Head, Department of Development and Sustainability, School of Environment, Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand
Elected member	Indah Susilowati	Professor, Faculty of Economics and Business, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia
Secretariat	Sijitha Mary CX	GAF Section





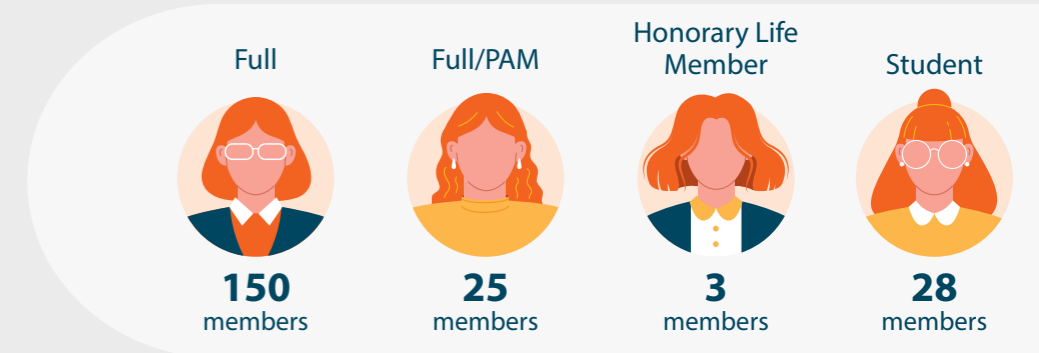


# Updates on GAFS members (numbers, countries/region, sector)

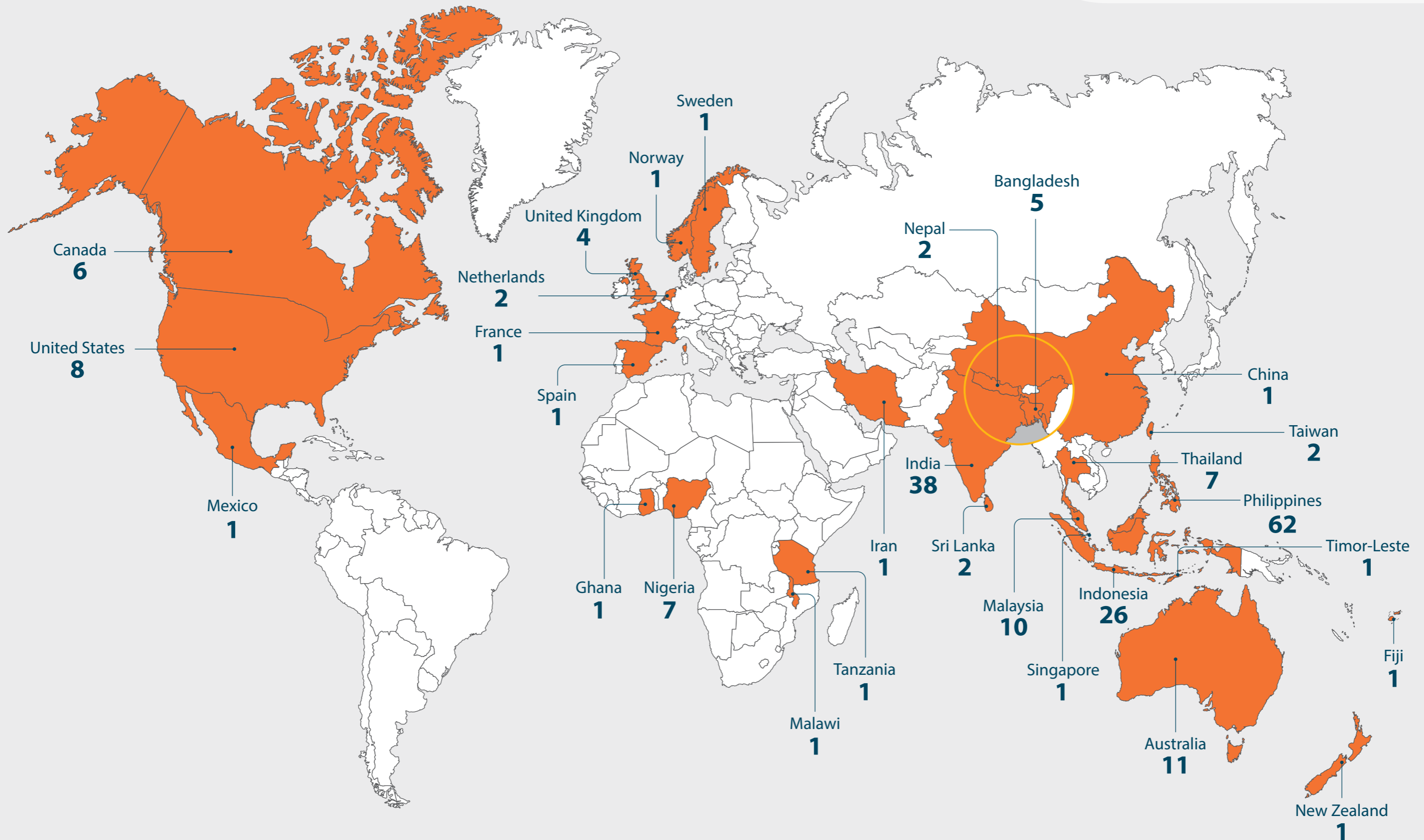
GAFS members are members of the AFS who have also elected to become members of GAFS, at no extra cost. As of the end of 2020, GAFS had 206 members, 13 of whom were permanent active members (PAMs) (see "membership options") and 53 were yet to pay their latest AFS dues.

Congratulations to all who are now classified as PAMs. We urge more of you to take this route to make remaining an active AFS and GAFS member much easier.

## Members by type of membership



## Members by country







## News on GAFS members

### New projects

- **GCA Millenium +20:** Cecile Brugere led Thematic Review 8 (TR8) “Humanizing aquaculture development: Putting social and human concerns at the centre of future aquaculture development” at the Global Conference on Aquaculture (<https://aquaculture2020.org/>). Meryl Williams was also an author. Both were also on the drafting team for the Shanghai Declaration. Cecile presented TR8 at the conference, and Meryl helped launch the adoption of the Declaration.
- **Plenary address at the World Fisheries Congress:** Meryl Williams, with co-author Victoria Syddall, presented a plenary address at the World Fisheries Congress on September 23, 2021: “What happened to women when fisheries boomed?” (<https://wfc2021.com.au/>).

### New positions

- In January 2021, Dr. Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit became the project manager of the SUFIA LCD Activity: (<https://www.rti.org/impact/usaidsustainable-fishing-program>).

### New publications

1. Understanding vulnerability of urban waterfront communities to rapid development: the case of Lagos Lagoon, Nigeria by Kafayat Fakoya, Ayodele Oloko, and Sarah Harper. [Link](#)
2. Chapter three - Postharvest practices in small-scale fisheries by Shehu Latunji Akintola, Kafayat Adetoun Fakoya, Isa Olalekan Elegbede, Esther Odunsi, and Toheeb Jolaosho. [Link](#)
3. Implications of production, post-harvest and consumption of fish on food and nutrition security: Nigeria as a focal country by Kafayat Adetoun Fakoya, Ayojesutomi O. Abiodun-Solanke and Elizabeth Olumuyiwa Mangai. [Link](#)
4. Evaluating the development trend of flood mitigation and adaptation strategies for fisheries and aquaculture in Nigeria by Foluke Areola and Kafayat Fakoya. [Link](#)



# Updates on membership

## Membership options

Discounts are available to members who make consolidated payments for a minimum of three years. Members also have the option to become a permanent active member of AFS, and hence GAFS. The AFS 12th Council approved new terms and conditions for AFS membership that took effect on April 20, 2018. There is a new provision to become a permanent active member by paying membership fees continuously for 15 years:

- For members from Category 1 countries, in order to become a permanent active member the fee for new member is USD 250 (yearly membership fee USD 15 x 15 years + USD 25 as a joining fee).
- For members from Category 2 countries, in order to become a permanent active member the fee for new member is USD 410 (yearly membership fee USD 25 x 15 years + USD 35 as a joining fee).

## Renewal

- Current members must have been active members with continuous full payment of membership dues for the past 15 years.
- Those with unpaid years must pay the total cumulative unpaid membership fees plus any other balance in order to complete the required 15 years of continuous membership. The membership ID with a photo will be provided only to permanent active member.

Members who are from countries outside of Asia will need to pay for the cost to remit their annual membership fee to the AFS office in Malaysia. GAFS is exploring options to enable members around the world to make payments without incurring any or much additional cost.

## List of communication channels for GAFS

GAFS continues its strong internet and social media presence through its [website](#) and Facebook and Twitter feeds. Key stories are compiled and relayed to GAFS members in the monthly news digest by email, called “[Keeping up with GAF](#),” by the secretariat, Ms. Sijitha Mary.

GAFS has a number of communication channels where you can stay up to date with our latest activities, get in touch and interact with us.

- GAFS website: [www.genderaquafish.org](http://www.genderaquafish.org)
- GAFS conference website: [www.gafconference.org](http://www.gafconference.org)
- GAFS milestones: [www.genderaquafish.org/gaf-section/milestones](http://www.genderaquafish.org/gaf-section/milestones)
- GAFS on Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/AFS-Gender-in-Aquaculture-and-Fisheries-181176555231544/>
- GAFS on Twitter: [@Genderaquafish](https://twitter.com/Genderaquafish)
- GAFS mailing list: [genderaquafish@gmail.com](mailto:genderaquafish@gmail.com)





We gratefully acknowledge the CGIAR Fish program for their generous support in producing this Newsletter on our behalf.



RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
Fish  
Led by WorldFish