



Women's Empowerment in Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture: Towards a More Effective Gender-Inclusive Program Design in Southeast Asia

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Research Question

How can the designs of current gender-inclusive programs in SSFA directly influence local women's empowerment, and what are the implications of those influences?

Guided by the following sub-questions, taking inspiration from Bacchi (2009):

1. What are the problems represented to be in these program designs?
2. What gendered assumptions underlie the problem representations?

Case Studies

Cambodia	Myanmar	Indonesia
International NGO	International NGO	National NGO
The Tonle Sap region, including including the Pursat Province	The Ayeyarwady Delta and Central Dry Zone regions	The North Sulawesi Province
<p>Multitrack program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establishing women's fish processing groups with new processing methods.1. Supporting alternative businesses through women's savings groups.	<p>Multitrack program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increasing nutrient-rich small fish production, processing, and marketing.1. Adopting improved tilapia strains by small-scale fish farmers.	<p>Singletrack program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Integrating financial tools into traceability systems for women fish wholesalers (solving lack of access to financial services with fintech solutions).

Research Methodology

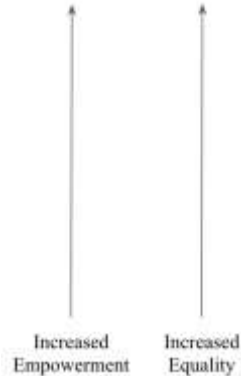
A three-part analysis:

1. Consolidate and analyze existing literature to understand local gender relations in each regional case study community.
1. Examine what levels of empowerment the program designs seek to address, followed by what changes in norms and structures the program designs seek to engaged in.
 - a. Completed through the combined gender analysis framework called the **Empowerment and Equality Analytical Framework**.
1. Assess how these program designs influence local women's empowerment and examine the implications of these insights.

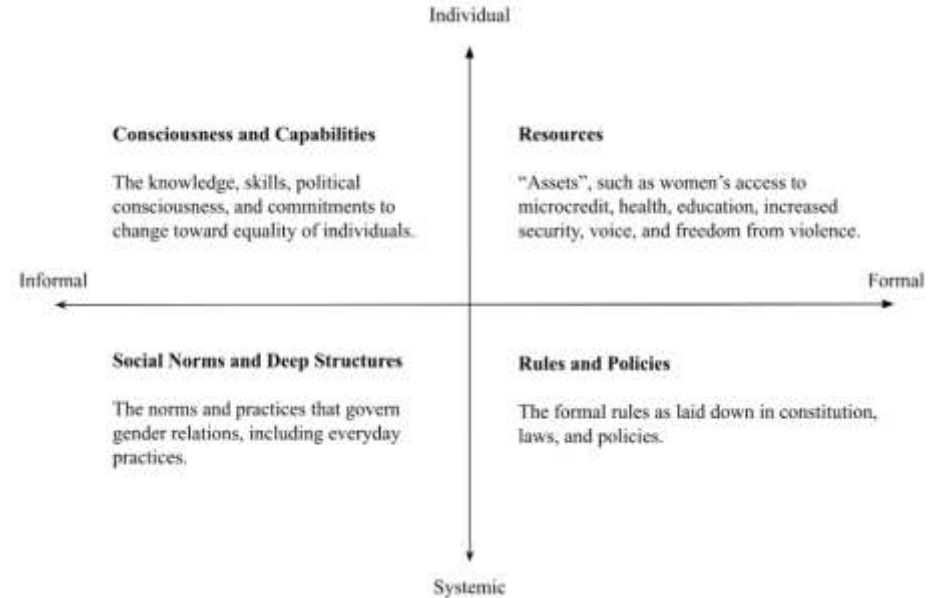
The Empowerment and Equality Analytical Framework

The Women and Empowerment Framework by Longwe (1994)

Levels of Empowerment	Description
Control	The balance of power between men and women is equal. Women are able to make decisions over their lives and play an active role in the development process without domination or subordination.
Participation	Women by which their community will be affected have equal participation in the decision-making process of all programs and policies.
Conscientization	The understanding that traditional gender roles and values are cultural and systematic and thus can be changed. Gender equality is possible.
Access	Women have increased access to resources, such as land, labor, services, and benefits, relative to men. This is the first level of empowerment.
Welfare	Women's socioeconomic needs, such as housing, clothing, food, and medical care, are met. Empowerment does not exist at this level.



The Gender at Work Framework by Rao and Kelleher (2015)



Insights and Implications



A Missed Opportunity

- Out of the five projects that fall under the three program designs, four of them do not involve men.
- By representing the problem to be solely about women, gender is largely conflated with women. Consequently, gender equality becomes a women's issue.
- Women must be looked at in relation to men and men in relation to women.
- The lack of men's involvement in the program designs can be connected back to the program designs' overall focus on practical gender needs.
 - These gender needs are immediate, short term, and support the reinforcement of women's productive roles.

Economic Empowerment

- Work to strengthen and increase the already existing productive responsibilities women dominate in.
- Emphasize market solutions to gender marginalization and transfer and privatize social services to the local level and the private sector.
 - Disempowering in that they naturalize a neoliberal economic model of state support promoting entrepreneurialism and self-responsibility.
- Economic empowerment can nevertheless be found: Engage with both the access and awareness aspects of individual economic empowerment.
- However, program designs ignore systemic change.
- Does not automatically equate to purchasing power, economic freedom, nor livelihood decision-making power.

Women's Invisible Roles Primarily Stay Invisible

- The overall social understanding in all four regional communities is that SSFA is a man's field.
- Two out of the three programs do not seek to directly challenge this notion.
- Supporting the efficiency, effectiveness, and expansion of women processing and selling fish does not automatically correlate to the men, and the larger communities, understanding that SSFA includes these roles.
- One program took the first step and works to expand the social definition of SSFA to include women in fish processing and selling.
- However, none of the program designs address the constraining gender norms of who is a leader nor who is a fisher.

The Most Vulnerable

- Great disservice by ignoring the responsibilities women may not dominate but are nevertheless active in.
- While women may become increasingly valued and acknowledged in their fish processing and selling roles, local fisherwomen will still remain invisible.
- Because the program designs only focus on strengthening the pre-existing productive roles women already dominate in, women who are engaged in the less traditional SSFA roles do not directly benefit from any of the development initiatives.
- The program designs are subsequently ignoring one of the most vulnerable subgroups of women.

Exacerbating the Triple Burden

- None of the program designs consider the implications of engaging women in productive activities on top of their existing household and community responsibilities.
- The heavier time burden women face in comparison to men also then affects women's ability and willingness to participate in opportunities outside traditional gender norms. This includes participating in the management of conservation areas and sitting on community fishery committees.
- Not addressing women's domestic responsibilities increasingly run the risk of women abandoning their efforts once the project has concluded.
- If the activities increase women's time burden without a change in household care workload, they may not be able to continue no matter how much profit they can make off their small-scale fish processing enterprises.

In Conclusion

Overall, these case studies overlook a gender transformative approach, whereby the root causes of gender inequality and unequal power relations are addressed and reshaped.

Critical shifts in current dominant gender equality narratives and assumptions

AND

An embrace of multi-level empowerment strategies

...can together provide opportunities for SSFA development initiatives in Southeast Asia to advance their meaningful progress toward gender equality.

Thank You!

