

## **Women's Involvement in Policy Implementation: Experiences from Gender Mainstreaming Policy on Community Fisheries Management in Cambodia**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Everywhere in the world, in former times, women were ignored not only in decision making, but also in having their views heard. This paper is a case study on an aspect of gender issues in community fisheries in Cambodia, one of the least developed countries in Asia. In Cambodia, in particular, over its long history, women were expected to be at home in order to take care of their family members and to do the housework. Women were not sent to school nor allowed to work outside their house except in the paddy rice field. That is why there is an old Khmer expression that still exists saying that '*srey bangvil chankran min chum*', meaning - in direct translation - women are not able to move the stove, because they are seen as being too weak for heavy physical labour. This expression is used to imply that women could only work on 'unimportant' things, in the kitchen and other housework, but not important things. This viewpoint is taken even more seriously in the rural areas of Cambodia; it is a saying that gives less attention to women.

In political discourse, nowadays, it is believed that women have a significant contribution to make towards better development practice. There has been a long debate among many scholars, leading to putting gender as a centre of concern for improving the involvement of women in decision making, so called gender mainstreaming in politics. Following this understanding of the role of woman in many development sectors, lead, in 1997, to gender being included in the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals. National policies and legislation, including the Rectangular Strategy and the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010, now strongly support gender equity and mainstreaming. With one of Cambodia's own Millennium Development Goals aiming 'to eliminate gender disparities in social, political and economic spheres of life' there is a strong driving force politically and there is also donor support for promoting these principles into practice.

Although women's access to education and health services remains deficient (Khim et al., 2002; IFM, 2007), they are taking more responsibility for engaging in their community. According to a report published by National Institute of Statistic (2004), approximately 30 per cent of the heads of households are women. They are now not only housewives, but are also income supporters for the family as well. In rural areas, women are not only undertaking more tasks in labour force, but also in the economy by contributing to the family's income through such as involvements as agricultural farm hands, fish traders and processors, gatherers of forest and aquatic products.

Specifically in fisheries sector, on one hand, women contribute significantly to the total inland fish production through small-scale fishing. They are also involved in income-generating activities such as gathering of aquatic plants and animals, fish culture, fish processing, fish marketing, fish trading, and making of fishing gear. On the other hand,

women have been neglected in the policies and programs for inland fisheries in Cambodia. They are generally stereotyped as physically weak and not suitable to engage in fishing. Fisheries researchers and policy makers also tend to view the household as a single unit, an approach that has muted gender issues in the household (ADB, 2007).

By understanding this issue, plus realising that gender is an issue that requires more attention, lead to gender issues being put into Millennium Development Goals. In 2006, as a result of these concerns, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) established the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy in Agriculture, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Following MAFF's lead, the Fisheries Administration (FiA) also formulated its own Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy in Fisheries Sector for 2008-2012 (FiA, 2007). One of its main objectives is an 'increase in the ability of rural women to access, manage and benefit from fisheries resources and services.'

In practice, however, given the fact that to implement such a policy – it has just been established for less than a decade – is far beyond the government's ability to implement this policy while the norms and thinking that have been embedded in the cultures and practices in Cambodian society are radically different from the policy proposals. A similar argument is made by Ledgerwood (1992), drawn out from Ojendal and Sedara (2006), who argues that within the existing of norms and practices, women are more influential in social life than in the political sphere. Hence, as a consequence of this situation, to encourage gender mainstreaming in this kind of society where women are considered as unimportant, is a very big challenge. The difficulty with gender mainstreaming in the development sector is how local practitioners might translate this principle into practice, for example, in the numerous fishing-dependent communities around the country.

In response to this challenge, therefore, CBNRM LI<sup>1</sup> initiated a research study called '*An understanding on women's roles, needs, and aspirations in community fisheries management (CFM) in Cambodia*'. This study was conducted in close cooperation with the FiA in order to move its gender mainstreaming policy forward in a real practical and workable manner by trying to understand: the roles of women and men in fisheries and Community Fisheries (CF) at the household and community levels; the needs and aspirations of women associated with CF; the practical strategies and opportunities that will need to be provided to the Gender Mainstreaming Group of Fisheries Administration for increasing women's participation in CF planning; and implementation within the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy in the Fisheries Sector.

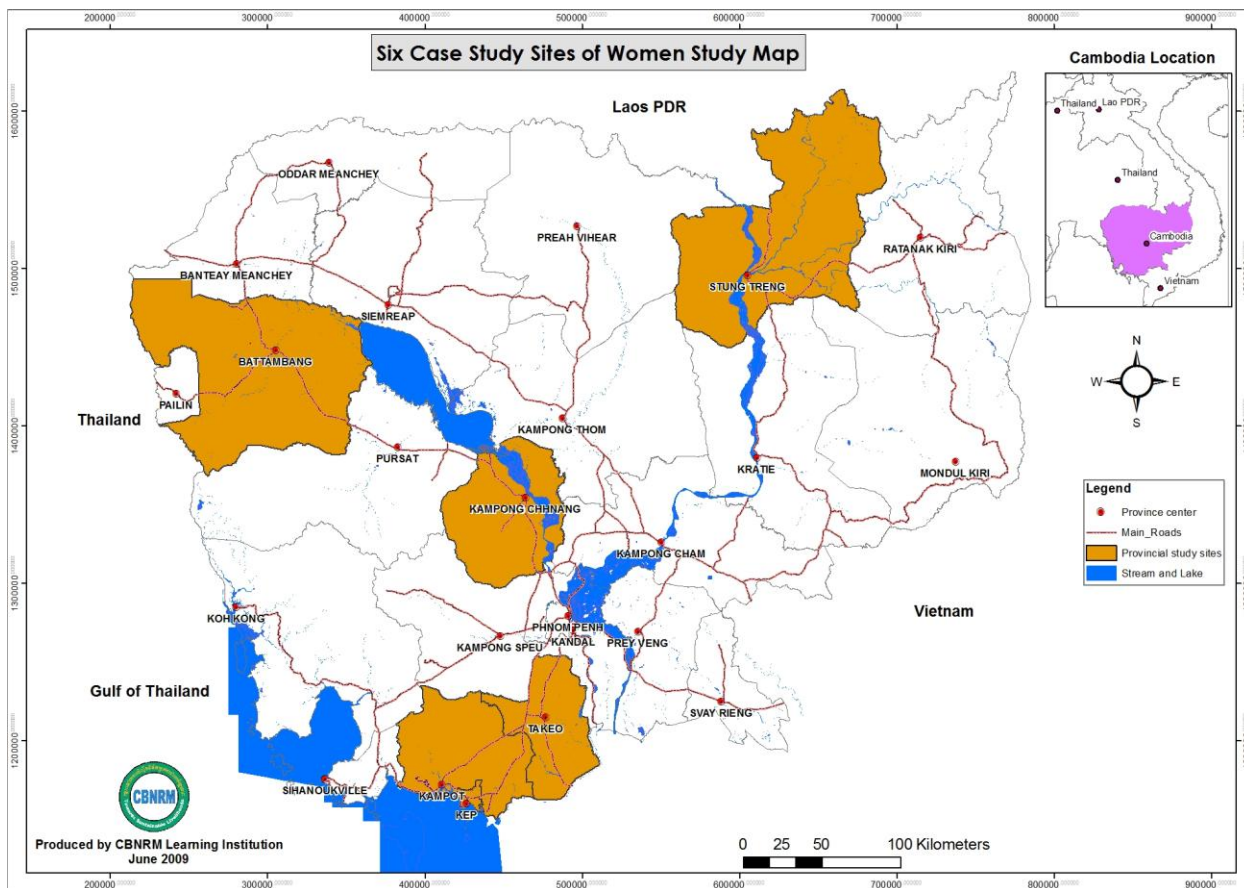
In Cambodia, CF was introduced since late of 1990s and recognized by the Royal Government since October 2000 and cover 56 per cent of fisheries domains of the Cambodia fisheries. CF was proposed and established by the local people to manage the fish resource in their own areas in sustainable way in order to improve the livelihoods and poverty reduction.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Based Natural Resources Management Learning Institute is a local NGO in Cambodia that was established in 2004 within four strategic objectives including *Human Resource Development, Knowledge Building and Sharing, Networking and Partnership Building, and Institutional Arrangement & Policy Support*.

## 2. METHODOLOGIES

The study applied a qualitative methodology in six CF in six provinces including Kampot and Kep, located along coastal Cambodia; Stung Treng and Takeo located along the Mekong River; and Battambang and Kampong Chhnang adjoining Tonle Sap Great Lake. The provinces were selected based on their representing all of the three regions of Cambodia fisheries floodplain. Moreover, among these six provinces, Stung Treng, Battambang and Kampong Chhnang are the provinces where there has been active participation from women in implementing the gender strategy in CF while in the other three there has been less participation and so there arise a lot of challenges.



**Figure 1: Map of Cambodia**

The study consisted of four stages:

1. Secondary data review and synthesis: Literature review was done in order to provide an overview of the general situation of women in Cambodia covering key social, economic, cultural and political factors. More specifically, the review compiled existing information on the situation, roles, needs and aspirations of women in community fisheries management. The information was compiled from both published and unpublished literature available from Internet, libraries of NGOs and Government, and magazines, including donor project reports. The result of the secondary data collection and synthesis was used to identify information gaps that guided the field study design and the primary data collection.

2. Primary data collection at six case study sites: Case studies were conducted at selected communities that are engaged in Community Fisheries (CF) in six provinces (Kampot, Kep, Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Takeo, and Stung Treng), using the following Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools: 1) Gender Specific Resource Mapping, 2) Seasonal Calendar, 3) Daily Activity by Clock, 4) Decision Making Matrix, 5) Semi-structured interviews with key informants. Participants chosen for the research study were 16 people in each CF including CF chief, CF committee and other CF members. Included in these 16 people, were eight women who were involved to the discussions. Since the research study aimed to provide comparative and accurate information regarding women's roles, needs, and aspirations in CF management, both men and women were included in the discussions.
3. Provincial feedback workshops: The result of the study in each province has been presented in provincial reflection workshops which were organized at three different regions including Mekong, Tonle Sap and Coastal. The workshops were intended to gather all comments and feedback on the information that was collected from the field. Each workshop involved twenty participants who included commune chiefs, village chiefs, community chiefs and CF female representatives from the two provinces in the same region. These two-day workshops used a participatory approach to share the preliminary finding with participants including group discussions and group experience exchanges.
4. Final feedback workshop: Final check of the study findings has been done through a final feedback workshop which was organized in Kampong Cham province with participation by all stakeholders from the six study sites. The workshop sought to finalise the comments and suggestions from the different stakeholders before publishing the study findings. The participants came from international research institutes, fisheries authority, commune chiefs, village chiefs and CF representatives of all six provinces, a total of 60 people. The workshop took one day since most of the information had been presented and then revised as part of the provincial reflection workshop process.

### 3. FINDINGS

This study explores two types of findings: the first explains the difference between men's and women's roles in household and the second relates to implementing the gender mainstreaming policy and strategy in community fisheries in Cambodia in those six provinces. The second also details the needs and aspirations of women and lists some challenges facing women who want to be involved in gender mainstreaming policy and strategy implementation at the community level. In this, the paper follows Cornwall's study covering Africa and Asia in 2003, where she argues that to promote women in participatory development does not only mean to distinguish between sexes, men and women. It is rather to address the power and powerlessness of how men and women are involved in participatory development approaches by identifying women's needs and issues rather than so called gender issues. This analytical understanding, therefore, would make a different use

of gender mainstreaming in development projects leading toward better community planning and policy implementation.

### **3.1 Understanding the main differences between the productive and non-income-earning roles of women and men in a fishing household**

In Cambodian society, even if women usually are not considered to work outside the home to earn an income, they play a very important role in the family. Women are supposed to do housework such as cooking, washing, carrying water, collecting firewood, taking care of family etc. However, because women are considered as physically weak, so for some work such as carrying water or collecting firewood they are helped by their husbands (Khim et al., 2002). This is what was found from the study in two community fisheries in Kampot and Stung Treng which showed that women, besides being good housewives, they are also good income generators. For example, if both the husband and wife are working to collect fishing yield together, women have more work to do than men. When they have finished the work, women have to cook for the whole family and men will spend this time chatting with neighbours, watching TV or drinking with friends. Hence, women not only have many roles in doing housework, but also spend more time with their husbands to help with generating income.

All six case studies confirm this general observation that men have more recreational time - including time for sleep - than women. However, there are varying reasons at each site for the difference in recreational time for women and men. For example, the women in Stung Treng province study site have only an average of six and a half hours of recreational time per 24 hours while men have ten hours. The women in this study site spent long hours doing productive work such as farming and animal-raising in addition to their full responsibility for doing domestic work. In Kampot, men have over 13 hours of recreational time while women have about nine hours. According to the study, men in Kampot spend much of their productive time engaged in physically hard labour such as fishing offshore during the night, while women are sleeping at home. Men come home to sleep and recover during the day and spend very little time doing housework. Women in this study site prefer their husbands to take a full rest during the day so that they regain the strength to fish again in the evening rather than to help with the housework. In the Takeo study site, the women in fishing-dependent households spend slightly longer hours than men doing productive work because, besides joining the men in collecting aquatic resources, they also spent time processing and selling fish. The hours women spend on household tasks is reported to be one and a half hours only because household work is delegated to female and male children. This daily cycle of sharing productive and domestic work among husband, wife and children happens during September to December when fishing activities are most intensive.

Overall, the traditional gender division of labour at all the study sites is still the dominant situation. This means a woman's main role and responsibility is in the home doing housework and caring for children while men are in charge of generating an income for the family. However, the way women and men allocate their day-to-day hours is different from site to site, and the economic rationale seems to be the dominant factor influencing their behaviour. When practical concerns about bringing food to the table and making ends meet day to day come into play, the need for women to take on more responsibilities in productive work seem to override the traditional cultural expectations.

Consistent with the literature review (Khim et al. 2002; Gender Working Group, 2006), the women in the six study sites take primary responsibility for managing household finances and thus tend to have a say in household decisions. This does not mean that women have the right to spend the money freely on what they want; women can decide on the small daily expenses such as food and other household needs but bigger decisions are generally shared between husband and wife. In making decisions, however, it is usual for the wife to give priority to the husband as the ultimate decision maker.

### **3.2 Understanding the main roles of women in fisheries-related livelihood activities**

The results from most of the case studies are consistent with the general understanding from the literature review that women are engaged in a variety of fisheries-related livelihood activities including their own small-scale capture fisheries, gathering of aquatic plants and animals, and aquaculture and also play a supportive role in the fishing activities of their husbands. The main responsibility of women in fisheries-related livelihoods is in the post-harvest sector, including processing and trading of fish (Seng, 2001; Khim et al., 2002; IFM, 2007).

In the case of the coastal region and the Tonle Sap Lake region, women in fishing households generally do not go fishing with their husbands. This is primarily because the main fishing grounds are far away from home and the women cannot leave the house for a long period of time as the housework demands their attention throughout the day. This reflects the traditional norms regarding the roles of men and women in the household. However, the case study in Battambang shows that, although most women do not accompany their husband to remote fishing grounds on the Tonle Sap Lake, they do go fishing on their own throughout the year if they have easy access to fishing grounds in nearby streams. Similarly, women at the study sites in Kampot and Kep go to collect crabs and other coastal aquatic resources nearby. Thus, in the study sites in these two regions, women's role in fisheries-related livelihoods activities is as prominent as in post-harvest activities such as processing and trading.

However, in the Mekong river floodplain region, the study site in Takeo shows that women join their husbands in actual fishing and collection of aquatic resources although playing a more supportive role such as operating boats, taking fish out of the nets, sorting and cleaning fish. Fishing activities are concentrated in a short time period between September and December when the floodplain forms and fishing grounds become accessible to the community. So it is important for each household to maximize income from fishing. On the other hand, women in Stung Treng do not go fishing with their husbands since fishing is not the primary occupation of the villagers in this study site and, also, fishing activities take place during the night.

As supported by the literature (IFM, 2007; McKenney & Tola, 2002; Seng, 2001;), women in all study sites are viewed as more competent than men in marketing fish and take more responsibility in the post-harvest stage of the fisheries livelihoods. In some cases, men immediately sell the fish to collectors at landing sites. Women think of this as a disadvantage because men do not usually negotiate prices or look for the best buyer and thus may not get a good price for their catch.

*'When I caught fish from lake or canal, I want to sell it immediately because there is no time to bring them back home and discuss with wife whether where to sell and who should be sold for. There is a middleman who waiting to buy fish caught from us all the time.'* (Fisher in Tahean community, Takeo province)

### **3.3 Understanding the main roles of women in implementing the gender mainstreaming policy in Community Fisheries**

The objectives of gender mainstreaming policy and strategy of Fisheries Administration consists of five components, with the fourth component talking about the increasing the ability of rural women to access, manage and benefit from fisheries resources and services. This objective is being realised throughout the community fisheries implementation programme by ensuring that women are involved in its activities.

Most of the studies found that, in general, women play increasingly larger roles in community development work. They are increasingly visible in meetings, and they participate in projects on water, savings and micro credit, and home gardening. Women are also encouraged to attend training or even take up leadership roles. Oxfam-GB's gender impact assessment study (2006) points out that women's participation in projects and gender support work in the village resulted in some changes in gender roles in communities. In particular, sharing gender roles between husbands and wives increased the amount of respect they have for each other, creating a better atmosphere in the family and society.

However, the involvement of women in the village is still dependent on a number of factors outside their control, such as the location of an activity. For example, women cannot participate in activities that are far away from home (UNIFEM et al., 2004) but they act as representatives of their husbands i.e. women participate if their husbands are busy or away (Khim et al., 2002). Women also participate when an activity is labelled as 'gender' as the general perception is that gender work is for women only (Gender Working Group, 2006).

In Cambodia, while more women are presently participating in CF, they are less represented than men in the CF committees (Khim et al., 2002). There are observations that the opinions of men and women are valued equally, but most decisions are still made by men. In the study sites, only one or two women were members of the CF committees. In the study site in Takeo, the Provincial Fishery Office determined that minimum quota for women on the CF committee would be two seats, which seems to have encouraged more women to run for the CF committee election. However, some women committee members within the study sites as a whole felt that they were only token members and that they did not have a significant role in the CF committee. A typical role for women is that of an accountant or a disseminator of CF information. In Kep and Kampot, there is a perception among community members that women are not qualified to take leadership roles and that it is inappropriate for a woman to be a CF leader because men are more knowledgeable about the CF. When women run for the CF committee membership, they often do not get votes because most of them are handicapped by being illiterate. Even if women do take up a seat in the CF committee, some of them do not stay on because of the demands of household work, as shown in the Kep study.

The social norms and practices of women in Cambodian society do give them an advantage. Although they stay at home to do housework and take care of their family, but their embedded roles at home and society can produce significant results. By understanding more about their practice from the experiences of the study areas show that there are some existing activities that are get women involved in their communities which have been drawn out from their family practices such as participation in saving groups; this kind of activity is a result of the wife being in charge of financial management in their family. When, therefore, women are put in place to join with an activity related to a social practice, it encourages them to work more closely with other kinds of social bodies, like CF. It will, as well, as build more confidence in them for managing their local resources in a sustainable manner. There are various examples of some main activities that women are engaged in with more effective results than were obtained by men.

**Savings group:** Women are visible and prominent in establishing and managing savings groups because of the traditional norm that financial management is the responsibility of women in the household. It is also generally acknowledged that women are more competent at managing household financial matters than men. It has also been observed that women are better at collecting money for savings groups from CF members because they are more patient and can negotiate with people. In addition, a finding from P. Resurreccion (2008) conducted in one community fishery in Kampong Chhnang, observes that most of the projects that were related to financial management or gender issues, only women involved.

**Information dissemination:** Women's skills in dissemination and communication are well recognized in all six sites, and this is consistent with the literature review (IFM 2007; Pe A et al., 2006). Women play as an important role in disseminating CF information to other community members in a variety of ways – through formal meetings supported by NGOs, and more commonly through informal one-to-one conversations at community events, while working in rice fields, drinking, gambling, and such like.

**Patrolling:** Although women typically do not participate in community patrolling to prevent illegal fishing, on the rare occasions when they did participate, it was found that women are better at convincing the illegal fishers to give up their fishing gear, and sign the agreement to stop illegal operations. The CFs in the study sites have not been able to take advantage of these skills of women members, because the patrolling generally takes place at night, and thus it is often considered socially inappropriate for women to participate in this activity. A similar finding of P. Resurreccion (2008) in a community fishery, found that only a few women were involved in patrolling because it has to be at night which is inappropriate for them. A coherent argument discussed in Ojendal and Sedara (2006), stresses that some surveys that were conducted in Cambodia show that because the natural ability in most women for making peace they did this far better than men. They are described as being better in various ways, 'communicating, creative and conflict resolution' (ibid: 523).

The case studies confirm that there are some clear benefits to encouraging women to participate in CF activities in order to improve the CF operations in general. Besides the activities highlighted above, there are numerous other CF activities, including decision-



making, which women participate in and contribute to, with varying degrees of effectiveness depending on the context of each CF. In addition, as documented by a study conducted by Oxfam-GB (Dara, 2007), through participation in CF activities some women have become more active in joining training and workshops, more confident in public speaking, and have improved their access to income generating activities.

### **3.4 Analysis of the needs and aspirations of women related to fisheries livelihoods and CF**

Existing literature about women in fisheries does not say very much about women's short-term needs and long-term aspirations or what motivates them to participate in CF activities. These case studies try to identify the needs and future aspirations of women, with as much detail as possible; however, it was often difficult for women to articulate those in more specific ways because they are usually thinking only about daily needs and concerns; long-term planning or thinking is often left undone.

Needs for ongoing CF activities:

Across all case studies, women CF members share similar concerns. Their responses in almost all cases indicated that they need their capacity improved with regard to existing CF activities. For example, they want to learn more about the Fisheries Law, agricultural production techniques, and gender concepts. Women in Kep and Kampot voiced the need for some very basic capacity building - literacy program, training or workshops - to boost their confidence. Meanwhile, in Kampong Chhnang and Takeo provinces, women need their husbands to encourage and support their CF involvement; for example, they want their husbands to share some of the household work with them while they participate in CF activities.

Needs for new CF activities:

Some women made suggestions for additional activities or support through CF to improve living conditions in general, people in Kampong Chhnang province voiced the need for a healthcare centre and toilets for the community. Needless to say, many also suggested additional livelihood support activities. Women in the Stung Treng province site, for example, emphasized the need for alternative livelihoods to fishing because fisheries resources are no longer sufficient. Women, to support the community as a whole.

Aspirations:

Women in all the case study sites aspire to have better livelihoods based on improved fisheries resources through the CF and other external assistance for capacity building and alternative job creation. Better education in terms of both literacy and knowledge was also aspired to in all regions; it can help women to avoid domestic violence and access different information were views voiced in Takeo and Kep, respectively. On the other hand, women's aspiration in the three regions also emphasized gender balance. This means that women do not want to be looked down on or be criticized in society. Women also want their husbands to be more understanding and to share housework. Many women said they need encouragement to be leaders like men.

*'I am happy to have leadership roles in CF but I need supports from men in community especially my husband. Otherwise, I am not brave enough to lead a community.'* (Woman in Stung Treng)

### 3.5 Understanding the motivating factors and obstacles for women's participation in CF

The six case studies indicate that there are three main reasons why women participate in CF activities despite many constraints:

- Some CF activities bring economic benefits, through providing support for livelihoods improvement.
- Some CF activities empower women, through improving their skills, knowledge, and confidence.
- Women believe that CF activities can improve fisheries resources and that the future generation will benefit from them.

What is clear from these results is that many women view CF as a mechanism to deliver services that would address the needs and aspirations that are described above. All the CFs in the study provide a variety of programmes that support livelihood diversification and women's empowerment through training, workshops, and savings groups. Access to this support creates significant incentives for women to join the CF and also to participate in activities that deal with fisheries management issues more directly.

Social norms are the main constraint preventing women from fully participating in CF activities in implementing the gender mainstreaming policy, especially for the issue of patrolling at night time. However, in the case of the study site in Stung Treng some women join CF patrolling activities at night time because the encouragement of the CF committee and NGO support has led to a high level of awareness on the importance of CF among community members. On the other hand, the Kep case study shows that even though women are involved in CF meetings, they are afraid that men will interrupt them when they attempt to speak up.

A low level of literacy among women poses a major constraint on them in many aspects of their lives, whether it is in gaining access to credit, running a business, or participating in CF activities (Khim et al. 2002; UNIFEM et al. 2004; Gender Working Group, 2006). Women generally feel less confident in participating in community activities and become more dependent on men if they are illiterate (Gender Working Group, 2006).

Across all the case study sites, lack of confidence, shyness, and reluctance to express their opinion limited women's participation in the CF during meetings and other events. Lack of husband support for women's involvement in CF activities sometimes leads to domestic violence as mentioned in the Takeo and Kep case studies. Thus, even if women have a strong interest in being part of CF activities, they often decline to participate so that they do not displease their husband.

Time constraint is another major impediment for women in participating in CF. Women usually have to manage multiple responsibilities in both productive and household work. The case study results in Battambang, in particular, emphasized that time constraint is the main factor keeping women from joining different CF activities; time spent on CF participation is sometimes considered as a loss of productive time.

While limited education (especially illiteracy), traditional or social norms, and time constraints are broadly mentioned as major obstacles both at household level and community level, other more specific problems were also identified as factors limiting women's participation. People in Takeo, for example, showed that the limited collaboration between the provincial fisheries office and NGOs, and the lack of funding support were obstacles because almost all CF activities need external financial and technical support, for establishing savings groups, organizing patrols, and conducting formal meetings. Likewise, people in Stung Treng also indicated that limited guidelines and lack of support for capacity building were the main constraints with respect to women's participation.

Other more practical constraints were also identified. When women are able to attend CF meetings, they sometimes have to bring their babies or small children with them. It was also pointed out in the literature (IFM 2007; UNIFEM et al. 2004) that women benefit less from extension services because training events typically take place in district centres to which women cannot always travel easily. These constraints can be removed with relatively little effort, such as through organizing child care during the meetings or holding training events at venues more accessible to women.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, understanding the roles of men and women in CF is fundamentally important for sustainable management. For instance, it is clear that women have a lot of roles in CF implementation, especially in respect of gender strategy. However, women's roles, including their daily activities, were different from one study site to another because of the differing constraints applying in different geographic areas.

There are two key constraints that limit women's involvement in gender mainstreaming in CF. First, women's time, is usually engaged in a multiplicity of -roles – from household work to community work. Traditionally, the priority in the use of their time is their family. Hence, it is important, before applying a gender mainstreaming policy to fisheries management, to understand how women allocate their time. Second, basic needs of women are certainly centred on supporting and taking care of family. Then, if women are to be encouraged to work with CF, to a greater or lesser extent, the CF should employ a flexible approach to family needs and related activities. If it does so, it is likely, therefore, to open up more opportunities for women get access to CF programmes more effectively.

This suggests reasons why women need a lot of support from other stakeholders to accelerate their involvement in CF. To emphasize women's needs and their power in working among male colleagues is very important. Sometimes their social significance is invisible; which needs all stakeholders to participate with the aim of bringing their voice to public where they can make a contribution to achieving a better policies management.

It, therefore, is necessary to implement policies that are adapted to the fundamental issues in different areas in a flexible way rather than following a one-size-fits-all policy. The absence of understanding of gender issues and needs in different areas of fisheries community could possibly turn into a failure of gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector in Cambodia.

#### 4 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FISHERIES ACTIVITIES

Both the literature review and the case studies confirm that women play increasingly important roles in both fisheries-related livelihood activities at household level and in implementing the gender mainstreaming policy and strategy in CF that are directly concerned with fisheries management at the community level. Some of the case studies demonstrate that women can bring direct benefits with their involvement in gender mainstreaming policy implementation in the CF such as effective information dissemination and better management of the savings group. Women can also potentially expand their participation in other activities such as in apprehending and educating illegal fishers.

At the same time, the case studies illustrate that CFs face significant challenges in encouraging more women to contribute to their activities in policy implementation. Some constraints are created by underlying cultural and traditional norms which are difficult to remove. Other constraints are caused by poverty, also a difficult problem to solve. However, the case study in Stung Treng indicates that the long-term presence of NGO support in the community to build awareness on gender issues and the importance of the CF for sustaining fisheries resources can slowly but steadily change the community's perception of women's roles in the household and in the community. This can contribute to creating a social environment that enables women to take advantage of their skills and qualities for improving CFs in Cambodia.

As shown in some of the case studies, empowering women by supporting income generating activities through CF - savings groups, gender groups, agriculture extension groups, that are not directly about fisheries management - is an effective way to create incentives for women to join CF. These initiatives help build the confidence of women to express their opinions and make decisions, and gain recognition within the household and the community.

#### 5 FUTURE WORKS

The FiA director general acknowledged and recommended to all FiA cantonments to disseminate the finding of this study to all stakeholders within their management and suggested the CBNRM LI and FiA works together on some of above recommendation in which the FiA accepted and modified into the gender mainstreaming policy and strategy. The changed strategy regarding gender mainstreaming has been being implemented in partnership between FiA and CBNRM LI under financial supports from Heinrich Boll Foundation (HBF) and Wetlands Alliance Programme (WAP).

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