# WAS - APA 2016: High impact conference experience

A Report Presented to
Asian Pacific Chapter of the World Aquaculture Society (APC - WAS)
and Aquaculture without Frontiers

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#### Introduction

Attendance to the conferences of the prestigious organization such as the World Aquaculture Society (WAS) is a dream to everyone especially for a woman like me who comes from a developing country. I had attended and presented in the WAS conference at Louisiana, USA in February 2015. My second attendance and presentation was in Jeju, Korea in May 2015 where I also received a very meaningful recognition being the Aquaculture without Frontiers' "Woman of the Month of May 2015".

These WAS conferences led me to appreciate more how beautiful Aquaculture is and how much efforts are put in by many researchers and scientists across the globe to develop Aquaculture further without putting so much pressure on the environment. My horizon has widened as I listened to various presentations and met people of different nationalities, backgrounds and expertise. I have also obtained greater understanding that women issues in Aquaculture is not an isolated problem in our country but it is felt everywhere.

When I received the information that I got the travel grant from WAS-APC, I was literally jumping for joy. I knew without the grant, I would not be able to attend the APA 2016 because I had no financial resources to support the travel and our university could not fund it either.

The responsibilities given to me by WAS-APC as a travel grantee made me more excited to attend. I have always wanted to know more about WAS and through the task given to me, this gave me the chance to know this organization deeper as I needed to get myself familiar with the history of the organization, its activities and its people. I had

also the opportunity of talking and working with Mr John Cooksey and the rest of his team and Ms Natchavee "Nate" Angsuwattananon of WAS-APC which for me was really a pleasant experience. I felt pride staying in the WAS booth and introducing what this organization is all about and what it can contribute to its members. I have talked to so many people of different nationalities and was able to convince some to get membership while others promised to be a member soon.

The attendance to scientific presentations was mind-stimulating and knowledgeenriching. Two of my most favourite sessions were the Student forum and Development, Welfare and Poverty Alleviation.

My attendance to the conference as a travel grantee has tremendously increased my confidence to deal with people of various cultures and background. In such a short time of working with my co-travel grantees, I have established friendship with them which could lead to future productive activities to strengthen current involvement of women in aquaculture and encourage participation of more women into this field.

Also, this conference has given me the opportunity to expand my network and connection by meeting in person scientists and suppliers whose works and products were of particular interest. My experience in the recent APA 2016 conference has surpassed my expectations. Indeed, this was the best WAS conference I have so far attended.

#### **Activities Undertaken**

### Task Orientation and Meeting the rest of the Grantees

The first person I have met when I arrived a day before the conference was Nate. She patiently discussed my responsibilities and she gave clear instructions on how to manage the WAS booth. She was very understanding and receptive to my suggestions on how I and the other grantees could maximize attendance to the conference without necessarily leaving the booth unattended. I studied overnight the materials Nate gave me to give a thorough explanation to potential visitors of the booth pertinent information people should know about WAS.

The first day of the conference was very exciting as this was the first time I got to meet



the other grantees.

We worked together with Nate to decorate the WAS booth. When we were already done beautifying the booth, we also toured together to get ourselves

familiar with the venue of the conference. During the first day of the conference, we were already getting along so well as if we were friends for a long time.

## **WAS Booth Participation**

The activities we did at the WAS booth would include: giving orientation about WAS, distribution of the WAS magazine, collection of contact details of the visitors, promotion of APA 2017, assisting the registrants to the conference, attending queries of the participants and selling of the book.



maximum distribution of the WAS magazine and brochure for APA 2017 and additional membership to WAS.

We talked to a lot of people and we did not wait that they talk to us first. We took every opportunity that we could speak to them and



All the grantees were active in all these activities and we performed our task enthusiastically and with a happy heart. Because of the aura shown, we had many visitors in the booth resulting to all books sold, huge collection of contact details of participants/visitors,



introduce WAS while making them feel comfortable to ask questions.

### **Session Attendance and Paper Presentation**

It was a very good thing that despite our responsibility at the WAS booth, we were still







able to maximize attendance to the sessions that we wished to attend and we were able to successfully presented our paper. In my case, I have attended the opening ceremony where I got to hear straight from the experts what is going on in the field of Aquaculture. It was so enriching as status, issues and trends of world aquaculture were discussed while practical and workable solutions were presented.

All the sessions that I purposely attended were all excellent and generally have met my expectations. Not only the content of the paper presented by the various researchers benefited me. I have also learned a lot of presentation methods which I could use for me to become effective in

delivering an oral presentation. In every aspect of the conference, if one is only



observant enough, so many things can be a source of learning.

I really enjoyed the student forum where successful workers in Aquaculture shared their personal experiences that led them where they are now. Not only students benefited this



session, I was also greatly inspired by the stories told by the speakers. After the session, I had this realization to work harder as I have a great role in molding the youth especially the women to have the same passion and love for Aquaculture. I was thinking, that like how the speakers have inspired us all in the session hall, I would also like to be a source of inspiration for my students and other women in our country. After

the session, I was already excited to share to my students what I have heard straight from the speakers so that they too will be so inspired to take their studies seriously as none of the speakers ever said that the Aquaculture was a wrong choice for a career.

Another equally interesting session was the Development, Welfare and Poverty



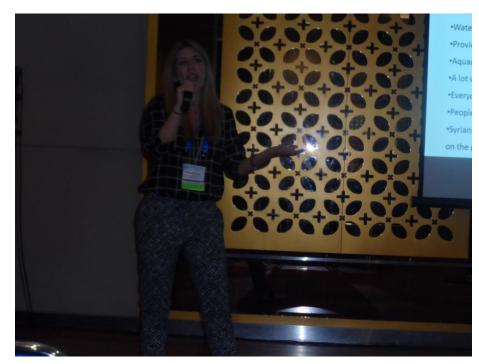
Alleviation which was sponsored by the Aquaculture without Frontiers and chaired by Mr. Roy Palmer. This session was scheduled whole day during the last day of the conference and at the beginning I thought that

there will be no
participants
anymore that would
listen to the
presentations
especially in the
afternoon session.
However, it turned
out to be a well-



attended session from the start until the last person had done presenting a paper. I and

the rest of the grantees
successfully delivered
our respective
presentations. Panel
discussion took place
which focus was on the
experiences of women
in the aquaculture
/fisheries area. It was a
very lively discussion as



most in the room had something to say. To end the session, Dr. Dinesh Kappily requested me to give the wrap-up of the whole day activity.











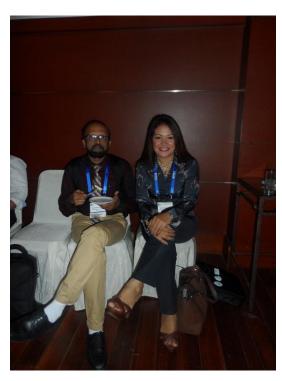
## **Acquaintance and Socialization**

Aside from the informal socialization before and after the sessions, the conference



management provided a formal venue where the participants could relax before sumptuous food and refreshments to renew acquiantances and establish new contacts. Like most of the participants, I have

personally benefited the events such as the student night, welcome and president's reception. As a result, my contacts have expanded which could definitely help in my current and future endeavors.





## **Trade Show**

Visiting the trade show was an opportunity to be exposed to wide array of products,



supplies and suppliers that are of importance to aquaculture. This also gave me the chance to establish potential collaborations with the private industry.





#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Considering the tremendous learning I have acquired on top of the other countless benefits I got, my participation to APA 2016 as a grantee of WAS-APC was indeed a very enriching experience. This made me more confident and moved me to work harder to be able to contribute more for the development of the aquaculture industry. In conclusion, I could say that I have maximized the benefits from my attendance to this conference.

For any woman to attend a similar event and in order to maximize benefits of participation, the following are highly recommended:

- Know more about the sponsoring organization and take every opportunity to be involved in any activities, volunteering if necessary;
- Prepare a calendar of the sessions/presentations that you wish to attend and prioritize those which are of most important to you especially if there is conflict of schedule;
- 3. Reach out. Do not wait for people to talk to you. The conference is an excellent venue to establish connections, collaborations and contacts;
- If you have presentation/s, prepare ahead your powerpoint so you do not have to miss/skip attending presentations to finish/finalize/practice your own presentation;
- 5. Pay attention to presentations and do not hesitate to ask questions if necessary.
  The opportunity is very rare to be able to have a one-on-one with the researcher herself/himself, so grab it;

- 6. Before the conference, have a list of the people you want to talk to, products and supplies that you need, places you want to visit;
- 7. If you are instructed to take with you a national dress, make sure you have one. An international conference like this is an excellent venue to introduce the country where you come from. Following instruction and cooperation would also contribute for the success of the activity and
- 8. As much as possible arrive a day before the conference not to miss the opening ceremonies.

# Acknowledgment

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