

## Social development in seafood production



Panel at the Seafood Industry and Social Development Conference, September 2015, Maryland, USA. Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit is second from left.

### **Brief report on the Proceedings of the Seafood Industry and Social Development Conference**

21-22 September 2015, Annapolis, Maryland, USA

**By Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit**

In early 2015, NACA (Network for Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific) was invited by Oxfam/SFP/UNDP to participate in the Seafood Industry and Social Development Conference to present the work we are doing on gender in aquaculture, and the results of the USAID/MARKET Gender project. The conference was aimed to promote and encourage further work towards social development in seafood production. The Conference was held on 21-22 September 2015 at The Loews Hotel, Annapolis, Maryland, USA. It was attended by various actors along the seafood value chain, mainly from the US and Europe.

The conference was convened by the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), Oxfam and the UNDP, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation (RF). The representative of the RF emphasized during the opening remarks, that the industry has to ensure the social and economic well-being of those who depend on the industry for their lives. There is an intersection between human livelihoods and natural ecosystems to meet food security and economic growth. The need for sustainable approaches to meet the demand for fish in the future as emphasized, considering that only 150 M tons could be produced but 230-250 M tons are needed to meet the demand for fish. The challenge is how to meet this difference. Small-scale fisheries was mentioned several times, in terms of livelihoods, diversified livelihoods and social safety nets. Efforts should focus on them, and it was suggested to promote financial innovations, with efforts having meaningful economic impacts and strengthened safety net. The Rockefeller Foundation recognizes the human development challenge, and they are willing to work with everyone to meet these challenges and achieve solutions.

Keynote speakers emphasized the role of the seafood industry in advancing social development. Gender equality and women empowerment were mentioned as key aspects to achieve social development. Dr Christophe Bene (CIAT/CGIAR) suggested that we should focus on the contribution of fish to food security and nutrition. The importance of women needs to be considered, as they are half of the labor force, especially in processing, factories, fish trading, and informal sectors. However, their contribution and involvement are oftentimes unrecorded, undervalued, and invisible in national statistics. There is gender bias both in and outside the

fisheries and aquaculture sectors. It is time to create a positive narrative food security and nutrition. One of his recommendations was to consider women as a key entry point, and collecting gender disaggregated data is necessary to provide policy makers relevant information on the importance of women in the seafood industry. In addition to this, he also recommended the promotion and defense of labor rights, looking beyond the fish farmers. The fisheries and aquaculture sector needs to change our narrative, moving away from 'crisis' narrative to emphasizing the positive contribution of fish to nutrition. This will result in a new image of fish based on food security and nutrition and impact on health.

Other keynote speakers also made suggestion on how the industry can contribute to social development. One suggestion was to find ways to ensure that benefits are widely shared across the industry, especially among small scale producers and suppliers, women and marginalized groups. The UN Guiding Principles were also cited, wherein human rights in seafood industry concerns include forced labor, and impacts on women and children, consumer health, transportation, etc. In addition, a rights based approach is necessary to achieve a socially responsible seafood industry to end poverty and injustice. For Oxfam, their vision for change is to have synergies with other stakeholders, and to develop a more sustainable and socially responsible seafood sector. Producers need to have a role and a voice. Social concerns can be matched with environmental and economic concerns.

Gender focus, and women as half of the workforce was mentioned in some of the presentations, especially those from international organizations such as World Bank, and also by the various NGOs working among the small scale fisheries in developing countries. The Voluntary Guidelines for Small-Scale Fisheries was also presented, and the section of Gender Equality was pointed out, considered a first in a fisheries instrument.



Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit presenting on NACA's gender work at the Seafood Industry and Social Development Conference.

NACA's presentation was on its gender programme, the newly launched Women, Youth and Aquaculture Development, and the results and recommendations from the recently concluded project on Thematic Studies on Gender in Aquaculture in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and

Vietnam. This was a project implemented by NACA under the USAID supported Maximizing Agricultural Revenue through Knowledge, Enterprise Development and Trade (MARKET) project. Participants were encouraged to work in partnership with NACA to reach the various groups of small scale producers and stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific Region.

The remaining other sessions consisted of speakers from various organizations and companies involved in seafood production, trade, marketing, certification, and social development, presenting their activities and how they are involved or plan to involve in promoting social development. There is a high intention to be involved in social development and an interest in promoting gender equality throughout the value chain. However it is clear that much still needs to be done in equipping those interested with tools and mechanisms for them to apply a more gender sensitive and responsive approach in their activities.

Practical examples given by FAO included providing direct support of women to women's organizations for example in the processing sector and in developing their capacities and skills. The Global Environmental Facility promotes equality across genders, promotes livelihoods and opportunities for women, and strengthening business skills to empower women's organizations. World Bank tries to disaggregate gender data, looking for opportunities along the value chains to improve efficiency and make more money for those in the value chains, especially deficiencies in post-harvest where mainly the workers are women.

In conclusion, on the gender aspect part, it was recommended to not use the term "fisherman" as there are also women fishers, so it was suggested to use fisher folks instead. Governance is recognized as needed to have an enabling environment and the private sector is also a key actor in advancing social development in the seafood industry. The gender dimension was not really mentioned much in this conference so it was suggested to put women at the center of social development. Working in partnerships with others is also essential, including investing in the empowerment of small scale fisheries and labor industry, and promoting gender inclusiveness as it benefits business.

The majority of the presentations for the 2 day conference can be found here:

<http://sustainablefish.org/global-programs/seafood-and-social-development/conference-presentations>.