

## Session 2 – Sharing experiences

### Where have you seen the greatest value applying gender-sensitive tools and approaches for understanding and assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change?

Your name:

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Where, specifically, in the world did you see the greatest value from applying gender-sensitive tools and approaches?

*Small-scale fisher-folk communities in coastal provinces in Thailand.*

Which region?

*Asia*

When? In what year(s)?

*Over the last 10 years, since the Indian Ocean Tsunami occurred. There has been a gradual shift of emphasis from the impact of natural disasters like tsunamis, towards longer term vulnerabilities like the impacts of climate change.*

Who were the affected communities?

*Coastal communities in Thailand, especially small-scale fisher-folk communities. These communities are particularly vulnerable to a range of both natural and man-made stressors. Their livelihoods require them to be located very close to the sea, leaving them directly exposed to hazards like strong winds, storm surges, flooding and coastal erosion, and they often have no legal title to the land on which they live. Within these communities there are particular groups of individuals who are especially vulnerable, notably women, youths and migrant laborers in the fishery sector.*

What was the natural hazard and impact on communities?

*Coastal areas are affected by a very wide range of natural hazards, both intensive hazards like tsunamis, storm surges and coastal inundation, as well as extensive hazards which gradually take their toll over the longer term, such as continual seasonal flooding, salination, coastal erosion and environmental changes like the shallowing of coastal waterways. These communities are directly and heavily dependent on marine and coastal resources. For them, these resources mean everything, they are the source of their food, their livelihoods and their income. In the context of climate change, it is extensive risks which gradually erode these vital natural resources that are of greatest concern – coastal erosion, repeated seasonal flooding, changes in level of salinity, changes in seasonal wind patterns and ocean currents. These extensive risks threaten the land on which coastal communities live and moor their boats, and undermine their ability to carry out their traditional livelihoods. Eventually their food, livelihood and income security are all threatened. But we cannot think about only these*

*natural hazards, especially if we are going to make effective adaptation strategies and appropriately address gender issues, we also have to consider a range of man-made stressors which also impact on coastal communities, either increase the severity of the impacts they receive from existing natural hazards, or else reducing their ability to prevent, mitigate or adapt to these impacts. These man-made factors include things like changes in the use of coastal land, with land being used for things like large scale aquaculture, industrial estates and tourism developments. Governance is an issue in this respect, with ineffective environmental impact assessments unable to control the negative impacts of such changes.*

Who were the adaptation practitioners?

*This is one of the most important aspects. The belief is that the practitioners must be the members of the affected communities themselves. And this must include all members of the community, including women, youth, migrant laborers and other marginalized groups. The ultimate goal of effective adaptation is for all members of the community to be collectively aware of the impacts of climate change and how these can best be addressed. Apart from the communities themselves, we also have to be interested in the different agencies and organizations that work together with the communities. In this respect, local administration organizations have a particularly key role to play, because they are located close to the communities and have an ongoing role and mandate in working with the communities on a day-to-day basis. Expanding to a wider range of government agencies and NGOs, these organizations and agencies tend to have different and distinct mandates and work in a very sectoral manner, when it reality to properly address climate change adaptation requires different organizations and agencies to work together to develop integrated strategies.*

How were gender-sensitive tools and approaches applied?

*Thailand is a patriarchal society, where lead roles and responsibilities are taken by men, and the voices of women often go unheard. Women themselves are often so used to these social norms that they never think to challenge them, and just accept the exiting status quo. Gender-sensitive approaches were applied in several ways. Firstly, it was necessary to work together with women to gradually build their interest and awareness regarding the possibility of changing and increasing their role and level of participation in local issues. Secondly, it was necessary to review the working mechanisms and processes used in engaging stakeholders at the local level, to ensure these mechanisms and processes were providing equal access and opportunities to women in terms of access to information, ability to participate and influence in decision-making processes. Finally, it was important to work with women to strengthen their capacity to participate, because even if women are aware of the importance and need to participate, and supporting mechanisms and processes are in place, but still they themselves might not have sufficient capacity to be able to effectively raise their concerns and collaborate on an equitable basis together with their male counterparts. The remaining issue is one of institutionalization, how to ensure various organizations and agencies are able to change their internal cultures and working processes to be able to work more effectively to strengthen the role of women. To ensure these organizations and agencies place the necessary emphasis on gender issues, it is necessary to put in place measures, tools, processes and procedures at all levels, from the central level right down to the field implementation level.*

Were the gender-sensitive tools and approaches used for?

*Understanding and assessing impacts and vulnerability?, Informing adaptation planning and practices?*

Why was the gender-sensitive tool / approach so valuable?

*Climate change adaptation is an issue that has received much attention but in many cases has not led to much concrete action, and gender is similar – although there is a lot of awareness and a lot of talk, but in terms of practical action to address gender issues it is much less. This is maybe because the knowledge and capacity that would support practical action are missing, as are the methods that would allow practitioners to collaborate on area-based approaches. Therefore, being able to provide practitioners with knowledge, tools and processes to be able to work concretely on these issues is very important and highly valuable. These factors will act as a guarantee that gender issues are tangibly addressed and that real change will be brought about. Working in this way will not only address the issues currently being faced by women directly, it will also help to challenge existing structures and traditions that prevent women from participating and influencing equitably with men.*

Why did you choose this story?

*This is work that we have carried out by ourselves, it is the product of our own direct experience. We know that these approaches really work and genuinely bring about tangible and lasting change. We feel that if there is more communication about these methods and approaches, and the use of these approaches can be up-scaled, it will be possible to influence and bring about change more broadly. The other reason we chose this story is because fishers generally, in particular small-scale fisher-folk and especially women small-scale fishers, are a sector that has been very much overlooked by society. Even though this sector is an important source of food production, helps to protect important and valuable marine and coastal resources, and it is a sector of society which is exposed to a particularly high level of risk.*