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## **SUPPORT FOR THE INTEGRATION OF GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN FISHERIES WITHIN SEAFDEC AND ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES**

### **1. Background and Rationale**

The principles of gender equity and equality are upheld as fundamental guiding principle in the FAO voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-Scale fisheries (SSF) together with recommendation to view the sustainability of small scale fisheries in the perspective of a human rights-based approach. Moreover, building upon gender equality also provide an opportunity for governments to meet important goals related gender equality, environmental sustainability, and local food security, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14, 5, 10 and others.

For the Southeast Asian region, the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), guided by 1988 Declaration on the Advancement of Women in ASEAN, also carries out the coordination and monitoring of the ASEAN's key regional priorities and cooperation on women's issues and concerns asserting women's empowerment. In addition, specifically, for the fisheries sector, the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Resolution 2011<sup>1</sup>, asserts towards strengthening capacity of relevant stakeholders and harmonizing the initiatives that support fisheries communities and governments, with a special focus on the women and youth. Along this line, the 2017 Resolution on the Future of SEAFDEC<sup>2</sup> has also recognized the importance of small-scale fisheries, welfare of labor in fisheries, safety at sea, and gender equality in the fisheries and aquaculture. Member countries' respective governments therefore hold the responsibility to ensure the implementation of commitments made as signatories at different levels, as expressed in agreed aforementioned global and regional frameworks.

For SEAFDEC, in order to fulfil its commitment to support the Member Countries toward realization of gender equality, it is envisaged that "SEAFDEC Gender Strategy" would be required to serve as an organization overarching framework to facilitate SEAFDEC's efforts in integrating gender in its future programs and projects. And this would eventually support the integrating gender perspectives in fisheries in the respective countries.

### **2. Current Status**

Gender policies and supporting legal provisions are available in ASEAN-SEAFDEC countries, both at a general level, as well as for some countries as part of sector based policies including specific policies for fisheries and fisheries agencies. For example, in Cambodia, strategic planning framework for fisheries: 2010-2019 has a section on FiA Policy for gender mainstreaming, which provides a strong basis for FiA<sup>3</sup> to work towards enhancement of gender equality in the fisheries sector. Gender mainstreaming as a process in achieving gender equality is a mandate from Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

For SEAFDEC, strategies and objectives to support the Member Countries and SEAFDEC Departments to facilitate and work towards gender equitable, social and environmentally sustainable fisheries have been outlined in the objective of some recent SEAFDEC projects, such as the

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<sup>1</sup> ASEAN SEAFDEC Resolution on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region Towards 2020 was adopted during the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Conference in 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution on the Future of SEAFDEC: Vision, Mission, And Strategies Towards 2030, adopted during the Special Meeting of SEAFDEC Council on 15 November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> FiA is as one of the main vehicles for the implementation of the stipulated strategic planning framework for fisheries 2010-2019.

SEAFDEC-Sweden Collaborative Program, the SEAFDEC-USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership and the SEAFDEC/UNEP/GEF South China Sea *Refugia* Project.

To facilitate the process of gender integration, SEAFDEC has appointed a Gender Focal Point, and nominated a Gender Working Team (GWT) to coordinate gender related activities. This team comprises members from SEAFDEC Secretariat and Training Department, and is in charge of the implementation of the gender related activities at SEAFDEC. The GWT is also leading a collaborative regional study with IUCN Mangrove for the Future (MFF) and Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). This study has provided an opportunity to engage diverse stakeholders in SEAFDEC countries and SEAFDEC National Coordinators, national policy makers and local implementing partners.

### **3. The Way Forward**

Gender mainstreaming as a strategic approach to promote gender equality in fishery sector and further promotion of gender balance approaches not only helps to provide support from Member Countries (MCs) for an effective collaboration and achievement of meeting ASEAN and SEAFDEC strategic goals but would also help member countries to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and regional commitments. Support from the member countries on matters related to gender equality and social well-being is extremely important in order for ASEAN, SEAFDEC and other partners to secure management of fisheries in the region for sustainability and food security.

Acknowledging the importance of these commitments, SEAFDEC is proposing to develop a “SEAFDEC Gender Strategy” that could provide an overarching framework to facilitate SEAFDEC’s efforts toward integrating gender in its future programs and projects, which would eventually support the integrating gender perspectives in fisheries in the respective countries.

To initiate the drafting process, an outline of the SEAFDEC Gender Strategy has been developed and proposed for consideration of the SEAFDEC Council. It is proposed that the Strategy could comprise sections on: 1) Background and rationale; 2) Scope; 3) Goals and objectives; 4) Guiding principles; 5) Approaches and methods; and 6) Outreach and Communication.

The proposed steps for the development of the SEAFDEC Gender Strategy are as follows:

- Establishment of the SEAFDEC in-house taskforce for the development of the SEAFDEC gender strategy
- Consultation with SEAFDEC Departments for insights and inputs concerning the development of the SEAFDEC gender strategy
- First draft of Strategy is expected to be submitted during the 41<sup>st</sup> Program Committee Meeting for comment.
- Final draft of the Strategy is expected to be submitted to the 51<sup>st</sup> Council Meeting for consideration.

### **4. Required Consideration by the Council**

SEAFDEC calls upon all Member Countries and partners to recognize and support the importance of continued gender mainstreaming as an integral approach in achieving ASEAN and SEAFDEC RES - 2017 as well as to support countries of the region in their efforts to reach Sustainable Development Goals related to gender, social well-being and fisheries.

Therefore, the SEAFDEC Council is requested to:

- 1) Consider and support the development of SEAFDEC Gender Strategy; and
- 2) Provide directives/guidance on the components and elements that should be included in the SEAFDEC Gender Strategy.