

## SECOND WOMEN AND RIVERS CONGRESS ZOOM WORKSHOP HELD 14<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020

### SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>AGENDA:</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| •              | <b>WELCOME AND OUTLINE OF SESSION</b>                                                                                                                                                                           |
| •              | <b>KEYNOTE SPEAKER:</b> Ms. Nguy Thi Khanh: Executive Director, Green Innovation and Development Centre (GreenID) Q&A                                                                                           |
| •              | <b>REMINDER OF FINDINGS OF THE WOMEN AND RIVERS IN THE MEKONG REGION (INCLUDING SALWEEN) <a href="#">State of Knowledge: Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region</a></b> Dr Pichamon Yeophantong, Ms Karen Delfau |
| •              | <b>GROUPWORK</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| •              | <b>BREAK</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| •              | <b>GROUP FEEDBACK AND PLENARY</b>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| •              | <b>CLOSING AND NEXT WORKSHOP</b>                                                                                                                                                                                |

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| 15.20-15.35 | Dr Pichamon Yeophantong, Ms Karen Delfau<br>Reminder of findings of the Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region (including Salween)<br><a href="#">State of Knowledge: Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region</a> |
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#### Keynote Speech:

Ms Khanh spoke as a woman leader of her organization that has 70% women in the team. Noted importance of her working style and spirit as an influence on the team and the need to create space for women to empower them.

Noted that the organization focuses on the power sector which is seen to be a technical area and designed for men so she is often asked why this focus? Her answer lies in the 'way they work.'

Recognises that men and women think differently and their contribution is different but if women's contribution is ignored then missing half of the world. When she first began talking about the impact of the coal and power sector there was great caution as women said they had no technical expertise but Ms Khanh wanted to show that everyone benefits from the development activities and issue shouldn't be sectoralised as it is an issue for all.

Noted it is a challenge for women to engage in this sector especially if they do not have technical expertise but women are sisters, daughters and mothers and can influence. It is possible for male experts and women to work together and important that the urgency of change is recognized and that everyone counts.

Acknowledges that it is not easy (creating space for women) but nothing is and it is important to have a strategy to navigate when men are so powerful in the sector. It takes skill to survive so you need to build the team capacity and enhance young women's leadership. Really important to decentralize and expand the network of men and women working on the issue.

Ms Khanh finished by noting that women need to be proud of the work they are doing and the support they are giving to vulnerable groups to ensure there is social justice.

Q from floor: You mentioned that there was a perception that you were looked down on because of the lack of technical skills. What did people value when they did engage with you?

A: New inputs and shared interests.

**Presentation by Researchers** can be found separately.

### **GROUPWORK:**

Groups were identified according to the conceptual framework identified in the State of Knowledge framework and the detailed discussions can be found below.

Group 1 & 1A: Formal: Women's access to resources and opportunities

Group 2: Male only group: Formal: How can men support women access to resources and opportunities and support more inclusive laws and policies

Group 3: Formal: Laws and policies

Group 4: Informal: Consciousness of both women and men

Group 6: Informal: Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

### **DETAILED NOTES FROM EACH GROUP CAN BE FOUND BELOW**

### **SUMMARY OF PLENARY DISCUSSION:**

#### **Discussions (chatbox and verbal) focused around the following topics:**

##### Data Governance and Sovereignty of data

Very important to promote indigenous data governance –collectively manage and to know how knowledge is generated to avoid discounting of traditional knowledge. One participant spoke of the ODI-IDS network and how to adapt to the Asian context. Technical support through specific apps is being developed. Hoping to develop for Lao partners and keen to hear from any potential translators.

Another participant gave example from Australia where traditional practices for sustainability and managing bush fires were being reassessed. Challenge of men's indigenous knowledge versus women's knowledge in the community-same gender issue whether it is indigenous or general knowledge.

Noted that Protected area First Nations or indigenous ranger programs such as those supported in Australia present a good model to support and value both women and men's knowledge and role in caring for the country. And in holding, retaining, sharing, passing on knowledge and law.

Noted in Canada too: <https://www.gida-global.org/care>.

Indigenous data principles very important.

Issues of sovereignty of indigenous knowledge –challenge because difficulties lie in systemic gender problems. In field of conservation there is a challenge to define knowledge and which elements of traditional knowledge should be conserved. Value of all different types of knowledge.

Feminist Participatory Action Methodologies mentioned provides a good starting point to capture some of this, as the methodology respects all stakeholders as equal contributors

This led to discuss what gender equality looks like in practice? Talked about household level and why some communities appear to be more supportive of women's leadership. Recognised that young people may be more receptive but there were concerns that gender equality should not be seen as context specific and that it is a Human Right.

The need to work more on gender with men was noted, from youth to political leaders to build their own understanding so they can gradually expand opportunities to women. From observation, when working on gender/women leadership - usually participants are women (mainly). Another participant noted that there are very few women leaders in SE Asia because women leaders are cut down or harassed by men and quickly become disillusioned. Very difficult to challenge the patriarchy norms.

This led to some discussion about how to support emerging women leaders and whether network support could ignite the sisterhood /partnership. Experience was shared of older women being unsupportive to younger women almost believing that they should have to go through all the same hoops and challenges. There were some thoughts about older women creating space and men playing a role as collaborators in the network.

Document recommended:

[https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/Public-Perceptions-of-Women-as-Political-Leaders\\_A-Multi-Country-Study-1-1.pdf](https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/Public-Perceptions-of-Women-as-Political-Leaders_A-Multi-Country-Study-1-1.pdf)

Noted that it is important to create more opportunities to support women leaders so that women's leadership becomes ordinary (the norm).

## GROUPWORK FEEDBACK

### Group 1: Formal: Women's access to resources and opportunities

#### Question and suggestion for follow up:

- Interest in national level follow up. Will further aspects be explored/ research be conducted? And will follow up workshops based on local experience, and national public policy be possible? Interest in this for Lao PDR for example.
- Shaded points key significance

#### Key points:

- Importance of care and focus on support to local women - not to extract or create burdens on already busy people (such as by teachers, students, government agencies, developers coming into communities)– especially in example of women who are resettles from a dam project, or women who are losing lands (say river bank gardens) or livelihoods (such as river weed collection and selling).
- There is a pragmatism to consider in terms of opportunities and access to resources: between access to resources and livelihood options that can be adapted, responsive to new opportunities versus being overly focused on ensuring women have a voice, or are involved in political or decision making processes (that in the end, don't necessarily help peoples livelihoods in the near term, or that are cited by women as an immediate realised reality).

#### DISCUSSION:

##### Experience from Lao PDR

- Example from Nam Ou, in Lao. Context intensive damming (7 dams developed in 2 phases). Community experience has been over last few years, changes ongoing right now. Real impacts on household well-being. Some people right now feeling impacts on homes and lands due to flooding as reservoirs fill. View of Government through the LWU – help convene women, help have conversations with women. Losing river bank gardens, loss of traditional food source/ economic opportunities from collecting river weed. Options now – require moving to find work on other's lands, loss of busyness of women. Government facilitates talks.
- Having access to other livelihood opportunities seems more important, than having a say in bigger decisions. Quite pragmatic, on food. On livelihood replacement. Women under a lot of pressure, lots of burdens, exacerbated by change from dams.
- Role of researcher. Need to be careful of adding to burden of busyness. Women are faced with more challenges to just deliver food for families. This is a real issue from Cambodia.
- Needing more space for stepping up,
- Need to be careful of adding to context of victimisation of women, need to be careful to not undermine resilience, and entrepreneurship of women and families to adapt to change. That some people have agency. But this can be different in sense of political power.

- Power and interests can differ between government and community. How communities experience development (immediate and large scale at micro / local level), but where development of a river is measured at basin scale the potential for undervaluing local impacts can be very real.
- Scale and disconnect- Basin/National down to local.
- Disconnect can be between sectors as well. Power of the hydro sector, compared to local people interests, local food security and economic value of a river. Such as with the Kai economy of river weed collection and marketing. Gendered aspects here – men, kids, women all have a role in some contexts. But other areas may be more women dominated, but children and elderly.

#### **Experience from teaching:**

- New students allow opportunity to talk about opportunity for women. Women leadership across gender/ sex. Allow discussion with men.
- Use of videos, use of movies to raise issues, and use popular media to raise issues and model women's agency
- The example of Frozen 2; can start discussions, and see children watching- a different way to start discussions.
- Agency – using agency in one sector to help women gain access to power and access to resources.

#### **Cambodia context/ experience.**

- Observation from Mondolokiri. Biodiversity monitoring project – considering women have less knowledge, less energy, less valued for patrol role in forest conservation. Perception of men being more suited. In the project -deliberate effort to involve women in capacity building for laws, confidence, women in committee members in village level committee for monitoring and reporting on environmental pressures. 30% of women are involved.
- Knowledge plays an important role so that women can utilise with soft skills. NGOs can play an important role to bridge local authorities about the role of women in forest conservation. Women can share knowledge about issues – such as climate change, as well as reporting on local criminal activities. Knowledge and agency can play a real role at local level in support of marginalised or disenfranchised women. NGOs working with local women (with allied researchers) can see power increased for local women.
- Intervention of outsiders (from developers to researchers, education and teaching) need to be careful not to add to burdens.
- Role of researcher. Need to be careful of adding to burden of busyness. Women are faced with more challenges to just deliver food for families. This is a real issue from Cambodia.
- Needing more space for stepping up,
- Need to be careful of adding to context of victimisation of women, need to be careful to not undermine resilience, and entrepreneurship of women and families to adapt to change. That some people have agency. But this can be different in sense of political power.

## Group 1 A: Formal: Women's access to resources and opportunities

### Key Points:



### Women's Access to Resource and Opportunities: Group 1A

#### Key Findings

- Access to knowledge is important, (e.g. case in land rights, build knowledge confidence in technical lead)
- Identity ( women feel valued ) and Network (more market access) are recommended
- The prejudice of gender roles work as barrier

### Discussion:

The main theme of the discussion was regarding the key ingredients that are needed to enable women to have more access to resource and opportunities in order to promote women's leadership. Based on this, they shared what worked well and what worked against women leaders and they also recommended about few key ingredients necessary for facilitating women's leadership.

Our participants shared that; women's participation is very limited in technical position specially in rural context. That is why they think that, access to knowledge opportunities and tool will help them to be aware about their rights on resources. The participants shared if women given access to knowledge training, they feel more engaged and motivated to take up leadership position specially in technical position (e.g. in case of land rights, financial management).

With regards to that, one of our participants shared that, in her project areas which deal with natural resource conservation, women led groups are working great in financial management of natural resources and they should be given more access to training on financial literacy and other finance related courses to improve their efficiency.

Access to networking is also recommended by the participants where they mentioned that, if women can be linked to markets and be part of wider group of networks, they feel more valued in their fellow community and feel more confident to take up leadership role.

Our participants shared that, women led groups work better and they should be accessed to more capacity building initiatives to instil motivation among them.

Some of the participants also mentioned about having an identity for women can instil self confidence among them to come forward and take up leadership positions.

That being discussed most of the participants shared some of the barriers which work against women's leadership. According to them, it is often perceived that women are supposed to take certain gender roles and that perception hinders participation of women in key technical roles. But one of the case stories shared by one of the participants is that, in her project area, women led irrigation group is leading the work and if they are properly capacitated, they can take up any leadership role. And not just in irrigation role, if women have more access to the mentioned ingredients specially network support, knowledge, identity they will break this norm.

## **Group 2: Formal: How can men support women to access resources and opportunities and support more inclusive laws and policies?**

There is a need to engage men more when discussing women's leadership and gender equality so that they increase their understanding and that there is two-way communication.

- Experience from working at grassroots level. If we focus on how men can support women, it's men supporting men first, so that women can access resources and opportunities. Men need to realise that if men and women have equal opportunities within the households, society, there are benefits at multiples levels e.g. household income, improve education, economic development
- Countries that are lagging behind on gender equality are also lagging behind on development
- Start at house-hold level – need to provide opportunities.
- Men can influence other men. If we can engage a group of men, who can bring about changes in their own households, this can influence other men to bring about change/enabling environment to improve access to resources/opportunities for women
- Re more inclusive laws and policies: when developing laws and policies, policy-makers are not inclusive; often gender-blind; male policy-makers need to understand that the success of policy implementation depends on including women, men, and others;
- Men need to ensure/support participation. Participation requires knowledge, so there is also a need to support knowledge building.
- Last two weeks, conducted a field visit to village in Southern Laos. I was surprised to see more female participants than male participants registered; it's the first time I've seen this. Of 47 participants, 27 women participants. Hope to get more female participants joining future meetings
- We want to engage more female participants in meetings. Experience to date, there's been less women participants in activities. Those that do join are often shy to share their views/voices. But in the last trip, women were actively participating. We were asking about their interest re implementing activities: women – vegetables; men – handicraft and mushrooms; we proposed to have both women and men in the committees

- Re Use of **rapid care analysis** between men and women is a tool we've used to demonstrate what unpaid care responsibilities women and men have. Men openly say that women don't do anything. Results of rapid care analysis show women are working more than men. Making this more visible, contributes to increasing understanding amongst men. Then they can offer support.
- Sometimes with gender programs: we don't engage men enough or in the right way. We should focus more on that, which can be more sustainable. It's a long-term process.
- Working with young men and women together can provide better results. They can help contribute to changing the dynamics within the households. Engaging young men is producing the results. They have also grown up in a different context e.g. seeing more women around them in public settings; different views.
- Lao context: efforts to work with men; in Laos we have LWU, whose mandate is to advance women's leadership in all sectors. There should be a parallel process. Having a women's ministry can help create a career path. Agree that there's a need to work more with the youth, in advancing agenda.
- Over last five years, we have been monitoring and financing programs e.g. Oxfam program which is promoting women's leadership; building capacity in water governance. Have seen/observed some changes in capacity, confidence; participation in raising their voices, including on sensitive issues e.g. hydropower development
- Re having more women participate in the recent workshop in Laos. First experience to see more female participants than male. Working with Indigenous communities. Want to see more women, young people, and other vulnerable groups to participate more in workshops. Not sure, if next trip will observe the same or not.
- In project proposal/design we try to emphasise women's participation e.g. noting that at least 30 to 35% will be women participants in project activities.
- During the last visit, where there were more women and men participants, there were two project teams visiting the village at same time. The other team was a healthcare team, which may have contributed to increased women's participation.
- Re Lao Women's Union (LWU): Yes, LWU have a platform to play a role in policy-making. Have offices at multiple levels. They have a seat. However, the challenge that I observe is the level of confidence, level of technical knowledge can prevent/limit meaningful participation in these processes.
- Oxfam Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) tool, which has been working with LWU and other relevant ministries, to increase understanding of gender impacts.

## GROUP 3: Formal: Laws and Policies

### Key Points:

- **Issue of exclusion of women's perspectives / gender issues in laws and policies** - example of ESIA in hydropower sector not looking at impacts on women.
- **How leadership in organizations (like hydropower companies) exclude women:**
  - technical knowledge
  - non-flexible work arrangements for work/life balance
  - safety / security of women (not hired for certain roles)
  - harassment

- **Relationship between laws and policies and social/ cultural norms** - Importance of including men

## Discussion:

### Risks

- gender laws and policies might be just box-ticking exercise
- Quantity vs. Quality leadership for women
- Ensure women's perspectives are reflected in decision making

### Examples:

1. IR - HP sectors: EIA
  - Little attention to gender issues: consultation with women, impacts of HP projects on women.
  - Nam Ou dams in Lao: consultation with mostly men, so few women's perspectives considered.
  - Dam destroyed a kind of weed (kai) that women traditionally collect - affecting women's livelihoods
1. Position in HP sector only accessible to males, not female candidates (organizational policy - internal)
  - Causes: Women aren't allowed to travel, working outside in dangerous environments
  - Danger component: is a hilarious idea. What is the threat? MEN (sexual exploitation/harassment risks, physical violations)
  - The one making the decision about what's dangerous are often MEN. - Focusing on the agency of women vs. agency of men. Men have an important role in addressing gender issues (empowering agents)
  - Gender programming that exclude men is an issue
  - Laws and policies on anti-discrimination, preventing companies from excluding women from roles.
  - Agency includes being able to access justice - mechanisms for the laws to be practiced. Cost of legal support for women. Male judges.
1. Congress on HP -
  - 70% of congress are men. Law stipulating on the % of women in leadership role?
  - HP is considered a technical sector, overrepresented by men. HP firms often have internal policies that better enable men to rise to leadership positions rather than women (lack of consideration of women's responsibility, long hour requirements, men promoting other men, preferences)
  - In Lao, most village chiefs are men. 90%
1. Australian Human Rights example.
  - Gender discrimination - legal sector - \*technical field\*

- Lack of attention to flexible work arrangements to ensure women can attain senior positions and manage other responsibilities (also men can access the same flexible work arrangements and support caring / family responsibilities too).
- Enabling women to be partners ensures their productive input and is beneficial to the firm

1. Women in leadership policy

- Female leader made the policy have a more central role.
- Women with children focus but excludes some women. Women have different circumstances.
- Resonance to Khanh's point in her keynote
- Few female role models in leadership positions - huge challenge, harassment, safety...

1. Example from Myanmar: in a workshop presenting to a senior government official on a gender research study, a local young woman presented. The senior official was horrible to the woman, attacking the appropriateness of her being there presenting the research. She was stopped from continuing by a senior consultant (a white, foreign man). No one else present at the workshop pushed back. This kind of behavior is allowed and even endorsed. These kinds of major barriers further limit the prospects for becoming a future leader of young women.

#### GROUP 4: Informal Consciousness of both men and women

##### KEY POINTS:

- **Male advocates (network support)**

Male leaders promoting and supporting women leaders and promoting women leadership. Strengthening awareness of the inequality issues.

Cultural norms and exclusionary practices are "invisible" but very limiting

- **Peer support (network support)**

Women have the **right** to influence decisions.

Women in leadership positions supporting other women.

- **Role models (agency)**

Importance of women role models inspiring men and women to change their perception.

Different experiences changes perceptions of what is possible.

Women taking the lead and not waiting for men to make decisions about things that affect them has changed their lives.

Data about participation of men and women in different roles, access to information, access to resources. Use information-based knowledge to advocate for more women participation.

## Discussion

- How can the change in consciousness of men and women promote women leadership?
- First step: both women and men to recognize that there are issues in regards to women's participation. Men to realise women are systematically excluded from decision-making.
- Women's roles both at home and outside. Promote women's participation in public and political life.
- What prevents both men and women to promote women to leadership positions?
- Maybe men fear they might lose some power if women participate more.
- Both men and women to move away from gender restricting roles and this will liberate both men and women.
- Cultural norms and exclusionary practices are "invisible" but very limiting. In some occasions there are formal rules that incentivize women's participation, but if it's possible to encourage this in a more informal way, participation is more meaningful and communities (particularly indigenous women) change their perception of women's participation.
- Importance of women role models inspiring men and women to change their perception.
- Importance of peer support.
- Male leaders promoting and supporting women leaders and promoting women leadership. Strengthening awareness of the inequality issues.
- Knowledge and technical capacity discourage women to participate in discussions.
- Perception that leadership positions are more "natural" for men, because women haven't had the opportunity to participate historically is an obstacle that women face.
- Data about participation of men and women in different roles, access to information, access to resources. Use information-based knowledge to advocate for more women participation.
- Advocate for a specific number of management positions to be filled by women.
- Different experiences changes perceptions of what is possible.
- Women taking the lead and not waiting for men to make decisions about things that affect them has changed their lives.
- Long way from individual to systemic change.
- Women in leadership positions supporting other women.
- Strategies to support women in leadership positions?
- Women checking on each other from the understanding we have of each other's challenges as women.
- Women have the right to influence decisions. It is hard work to find our space. Nurturing the next generation of women leaders: self-care, promote and engage next generation to look after each other and pursue issues.
- Perception that women are less capable gives room to different types of violence against women. However, women have been able to fight a lot of that and it's important to nurture that.
- Community leaders and elderly are mostly men. Tradition that men are put in the higher position regardless of how capable women are.

## Group 6: Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

### Key Points:

Women as collaborators and supporters of men, not attackers

- working together to create a safe space for women to speak and better-understood language of gender equality
- Promoting young generations to participate and playing a role in changing mindset and tackle some of the exclusionary practices and challenging the norms
- What gender equality looks like in theory and in practice?

#### Discussion:

- The issue of man speaking first at the meeting and has been given priority. This is one of the situations that pushing women's voices away
- Most of the important position is men.
- Women should be in a very soft side of art while man should be in a more technical sector such as engineering.
- Not only the society that put the priority such as girls should work in the soft sector. The girl themselves look for a like-minded person to share the experiences.
- When we found the group of women who want to support each other, it happens without ensuring adequate support to the group. You want to go forward, but you were not really sure what you want to contribute to the team.
- In country like Laos with the multi-ethnic context, the cultural norms could have really have the impact. One village you have woman who is really outspoken when asked about impacts from development project, compared with other villages when women shy away from speaking.
- Their abilities to participate fully depends on the environment that they brought up in, capabilities. If we are the society that dominate by patriarchal thinking, just participating is very hard.
- When working with communities in central highland VN, there are 47 minority group. **Some are local ethnic group where women play dominant role compared to man i.e. making decision, keeping money for agriculture activities. When joining training and workshop, their voices are marginalized.** Men would join and lead the training.
- Women taking time to take care their children and do household work, they have less opportunity to participate and work in the social work.
- Women have less opportunity to raise their voices in the workshop or important meetings.
- It is a kind of work load that women have, when they are given opportunity to lead, women don't seem to lead effectively.
- Even in the patriarchal society, in certain aspect women are holding power. Women are expected to do more work. Two aspects:

#### Ways we can change:

- Women need to be feeling culturally appropriate to speak. Some space are women only, some space are women/men
- There is a need to develop a common language reflecting cultural values. How could we work together to come up with the common language that everyone understood?

#### **Shift the thinking of men about gender issue.**

-Like in the Congress like this, there is an opportunity for men and women to speak.

**Create safe space for women to share experiences. FEEL SAFE to speak and share experiences**

- In the context of Nepal, when women mix with the men group, women seem to be quiet compared to women in their own groups.
- Given the opportunity to lead
- Cultural norms: Workload/hierarchy in the meeting/technical field

**Women as collaborators and supporter to men, not attacker or enemy** Taking example of Madam Khan's talk when she asked about values to her leadership. Never see man as attacker.

- Try to educate our children to see, men and women have equal decision making. Not labeling this space for girls or boys only. Promoting equality mindset. We have full rights to make a decision in any level we have.
- **Educating gender equality. Engage young generation to participate in women leadership. Young generation can play big role in changing mindset.**
- **Gender equity should be educated at home as well.** Sharing the chores at household level is one of the examples to show that not labelling the space for men/or women only.
- Integrate gender equality in the project
- Encourage women to be a leader of the project, empower women leadership
- **Mostly interested in education about gender equity, what looks like in reality at the house. What gender equality looks like in practices?**
- Making women feel empower to take leadership role.
- Role of women in campaign movement, men answered that without women we cant function properly.
- What is the line between "empowering women& capacity" and the strength they have in a campaign and empowering women to steer leadership? Women partake leadership and keeping the household together.
- What gender equality looks like in theory and practices? Women roles matters and their responsibility matters.
- Assume leadership role beyond the community level- came across as burden, what are solution to it. How to strike a balance? Value the role that women play in the household, as well as the role they play beyond the household.

