

# Key Issues Faced by Women Fishers

*Asia Workshop:  
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Small-Scale Fisheries  
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# Topics

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# Introduction

- Webinar on Women Work in Fisheries, Too! and Cooperative Action Plan for Decent Work and Thriving Businesses for Women in Fisheries



**Asia-Pacific aquatic food production supports global demand for seafood**

**Primary Production Node:**

- 50 M workers
- Asia: 18% - women workers
- Statistics are for paid labor only



# Who are the women fishers?

- Pre-fishing/pre-harvest: mend nets, prepare food, fishing vessel provisioning clean fishing gears, obtain loans
- Fishing :
  - Women going out to sea to fish, on their own, with their husbands, or with a group of women or together with the men
  - Women foot fishing or gleaning in shallow waters near the shore; the collection of intertidal marine resources by hand or hand tool, usually done by women and young children
- For home consumption and for selling
- Majority are unpaid labor



Photo: Jariya Sornkhang



Photo: Worldfish

# Who are the women fishers?



Nain Island, Indonesia



Bitung, Indonesia



# Issues: Fishing and Capture

- Lack of awareness and formal recognition of their many productive roles, their labor in this node is a legitimate fishing activity
- Women need protection and support - have a voice in fisheries processes, exercising their work rights
- They face lack of respect, they have weak negotiating power, lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure, poor access to credit and finances for investments, and poor knowledge of and access to state sponsored schemes and programs.
- Women lack opportunities for upgrading their skills and this is one of the major reasons for their lack of negotiating power and poor access to leadership positions.
- Work related occupational safety and health aspects
- Due to lack of formal recognition:
  - No concerned agency or authority tasked to help improve women's labor status as fishers
  - Weak commitments to improve women's labor conditions
  - Their labor is not recorded and given appropriate registration, management and protection.

It is still a long journey for women fishers to be recognized from just being a fisher's wife to a fish worker.

# Issues: Reproductive, Care, Community Work



- Women's disproportionate workloads in housework, rearing children, caring for the elderly, community duties, and environmental stewardship.
- Little attention is paid to women's considerable labor, unrecorded, under-recognized
- Affect the amount of time women are available to participate in paid work, including the type of work and where they can work.
- Women's lack of power to make decisions – food provisioning in the household, use of their own income, and sharing in household income they helped earn
- Double and triple burdens: engage in productive fisheries work, community work, and reproductive and care work: lack of constructive male engagement in reproductive and care work
- Domestic violence and abuse against women in fisher families – might be accepted as normal and not discussed in social debate.

# Issues: Data and Statistics

- Lack of reliable and accessible data on women's work and their issues in this node
- Lack of gender disaggregated data for reproductive and care labor, including system of collection
- Women and their work in the pre-fishing and fishing nodes are ignored/unacknowledged
  - not counted / included in official statistics
  - they are not recognized formally as work
  - contributions from this node is not considered significant
  - stereotype that it is a man's job only
- Excluded in policies and initiatives



Photo: Jariya Sornklang



# Issues: Laws and Policies



- Receive little attention in fisheries policies and support programs despite importance of women fishers' work.
- International and national labor laws on fisheries
  - work at sea mainly carried out by men
  - do not address women's work in the onshore nodes of fisheries value chains
- Not covered by labor laws and regulations, as they are considered informal, or not considered as work
- No access to social security and other safety nets
- Could not register as fishers – no access to government programs and incentives for fishers

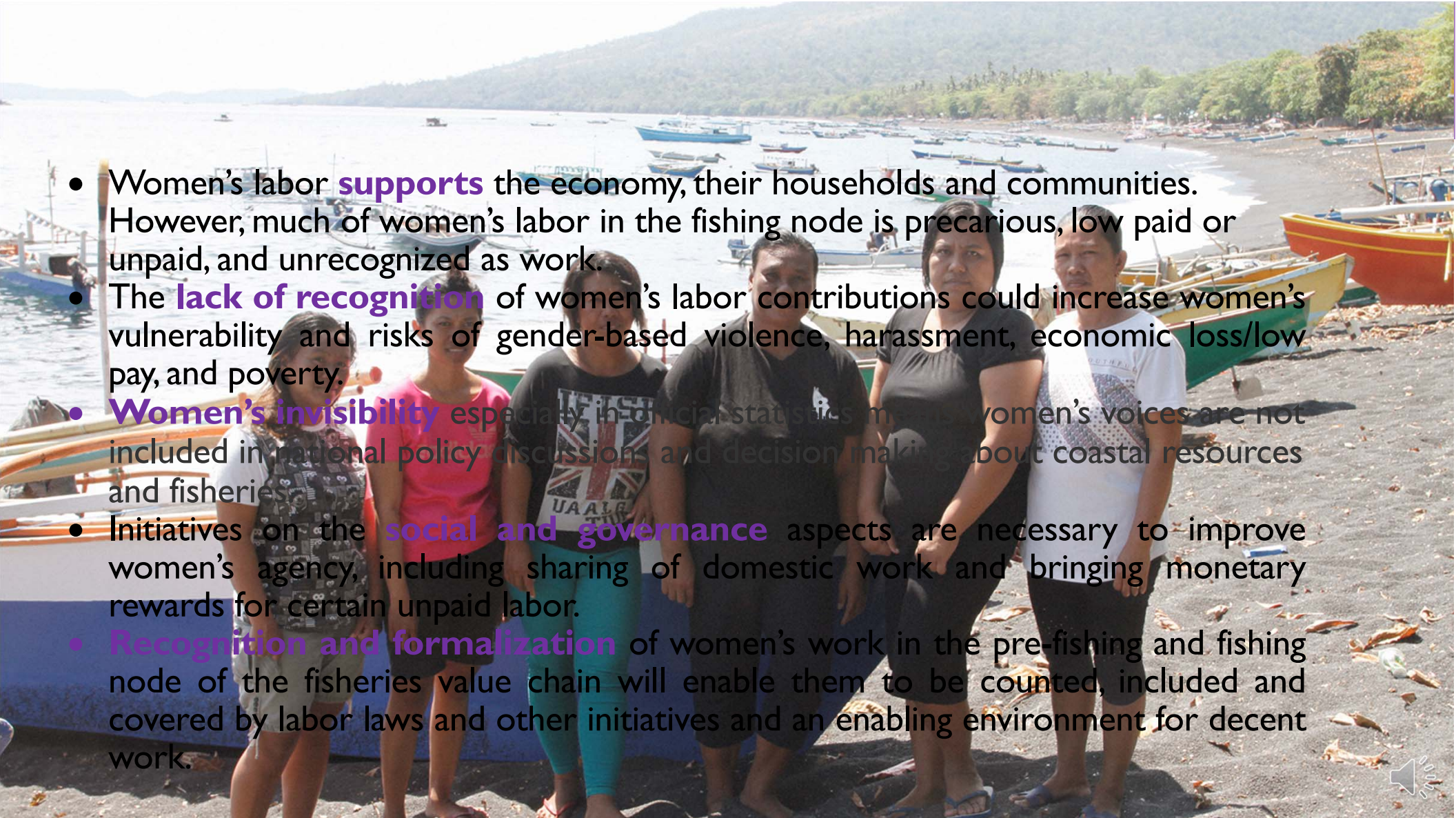


# Issues: Collective Action

Women fishers in informal work –

- Excluded in formal collective actions, fisherfolk organizations, project initiatives
- Do not have any representation and nobody is working towards addressing their issues
- Lack of voice in consultations and other governance processes
- No access to social protection schemes for fisherfolk organizations and women's collectives .





- Women's labor **supports** the economy, their households and communities. However, much of women's labor in the fishing node is precarious, low paid or unpaid, and unrecognized as work.
- The **lack of recognition** of women's labor contributions could increase women's vulnerability and risks of gender-based violence, harassment, economic loss/low pay, and poverty.
- **Women's invisibility** especially in official statistics means women's voices are not included in national policy discussions and decision making about coastal resources and fisheries.
- Initiatives on the **social and governance** aspects are necessary to improve women's agency, including sharing of domestic work and bringing monetary rewards for certain unpaid labor.
- **Recognition and formalization** of women's work in the pre-fishing and fishing node of the fisheries value chain will enable them to be counted, included and covered by labor laws and other initiatives and an enabling environment for decent work.



# Decent Work and Thriving Businesses for Women in Fisheries: A Cooperative Action Plan

- A guide for addressing gender and labor issues in Asia-Pacific fisheries and aquaculture
- Women's labor and business opportunities
- Women are not a homogenous category
- Needs vary according to their working situations, life stages, ethnicity, education, social and economic positions, immigrant status
- Key issues / themes for action and provides articles giving guidance for addressing these
- List of agencies recommended to take up the action, possible partnerships and collaborations

Link to the Call to Action:

<https://forms.office.com/r/nQZSkQb4vc>



Thank  
you!



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