

Gender Issues in the Fishery Communities of the Central Coastal Provinces of Vietnam

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Abstract

Under the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (RFLP), a baseline survey of 601 fishery households was conducted in the Central Coastal Vietnam provinces of Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam. The survey used a participatory approach to explore gender issues in fishery communities in 16 communes. This region presents economic challenges, especially for women who depend on rapidly depleting fisheries resources. On average, women in these provinces bear more children than the national average and work 12 to 14 hour days, three to four hours longer than the men. Education levels, especially of women, are low. Women have almost no voice in natural resource management because they have subordinate status due to traditional beliefs and prejudicial stereotypes. Women have fewer opportunities than men except in raising livestock, fish processing and trading fish. Although they have access to credit, women know little about financial management. Although women and men participate in the Women's Union and Farmers Association chapters, these bodies offer little more than sympathetic support and the opportunity to share experiences. The communities need better access to education, health care, social services, and professional training. Gender equality should be taken into account in rural development and local authorities need to raise their awareness of gender issues.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, Vietnam has achieved impressive socio-economic development. From 2000 to 2010 and despite the unfavourable world economy, Vietnam's annual economic growth has been sustained at approximately 7%. Such an economic performance should create the opportunity to improve people's standards of living and reduce gender inequality. To ensure women's rights and gender equality, the Vietnamese government introduced several policies through its Constitution, the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (2006–2010), and the 2006 Law for Gender Equality. These efforts have significantly improved Vietnam's gender equality indicators. In comparison with other developing countries in the Asia and Pacific region, Vietnamese women have better access to education and health care services (World Bank, 2006; ADB, 2007a, b). Vietnam has the highest regional participation rates in economic activities: 74.2% for women and 80.6% for men (UNDP, 2010). As a result, Vietnam's Human Development Index has increased from 0.599 in 1990 to 0.725 in 2007. In 2010, Vietnam ranked 113 out of 169 countries with comparable data. At the same time, there was also a rapid reduction in gender

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inequality. In 2008, Vietnam's Gender Inequality Index¹ was 0.53 which gave the country a rank of 58 out of 169 countries, higher than other countries in the region such as Thailand and the Philippines. The Gender Inequality Index takes into account losses in potential national achievement because of gender inequality in reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation.

In spite of its achievements, Vietnam's economy is still mainly based on the rural sectors and gender gaps exist in these sectors. Apart from the Confucian tradition, there are many gender issues associated with the economy becoming more market oriented. The shift to a market economy has created a new social hierarchy with new intra-household relations, mobility and social differentiation, and new forms of political participation and knowledge.

Focusing on the Central Coastal region of Vietnam, the present study was undertaken to assess existing gender relations related to household economic status. It looked at such factors as the division of labour between men and women, income, access to resources and benefits. It identified the factors that influence or determine women's access to resources and benefits, their participation in social networks and rural organizations. It also identified possible policies to improve gender equality in the study area.

In the Central Coastal region of Vietnam, many disadvantages are still specific to women, particularly to poor women. Intangible barriers to gender equality have been created by cultural beliefs, traditional stereotypes and rural institutions that disadvantage women and subordinate them to men in both the private and public domains. For example, women often work longer hours than men, but their salaries are lower even for similar work. In addition, access to education and job training, health care, social services and credit is still more limited for women than for men. Women's voices are poorly represented in the process of decision-making, especially at the local level.

Methodology

Study sites

The Central Coastal region (North Central Coast and South Central Coast regions) comprise 14 of Vietnam's 61 provinces, and extend from Thanh Hoa province in the north to Binh Thuan in the south. The total population is 19.8 million. This region is prone to weather hazards, has a relatively poor resource endowment, low land area per capita and relatively low soil fertility. The Central Coastal provinces often suffer high levels of risk of natural disasters, such as floods and typhoons. The most vulnerable groups live in the remote, less productive and most ecologically fragile areas. They face constraints such as lack of credit, inputs, information and market access as well as extremely limited opportunities for alternative livelihoods.

¹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii/>

From November 2010 to February 2011, the FAO-Spain Regional Fishery Livelihood Program (RFLP) for South and Southeast Asia conducted a survey in 16 communes, namely Vinh Thai, Trieu Van, Trieu Lang, Hai An and Hai Khe commune in Quang Tri, Phong Hai, Phu Thuan, Vinh Thanh, Loc Tri and Phu Loc town in Thua Thien Hue and Duy Hai, Duy Nghia, Binh Minh, Binh Hai, Binh Nam and Tam Tien in Quang Nam province (Figure 1). For each commune, two to three villages were selected. Geographically, these villages were equally distributed and they were representative of socio-economic conditions of the Central Coastal region in the target provinces.

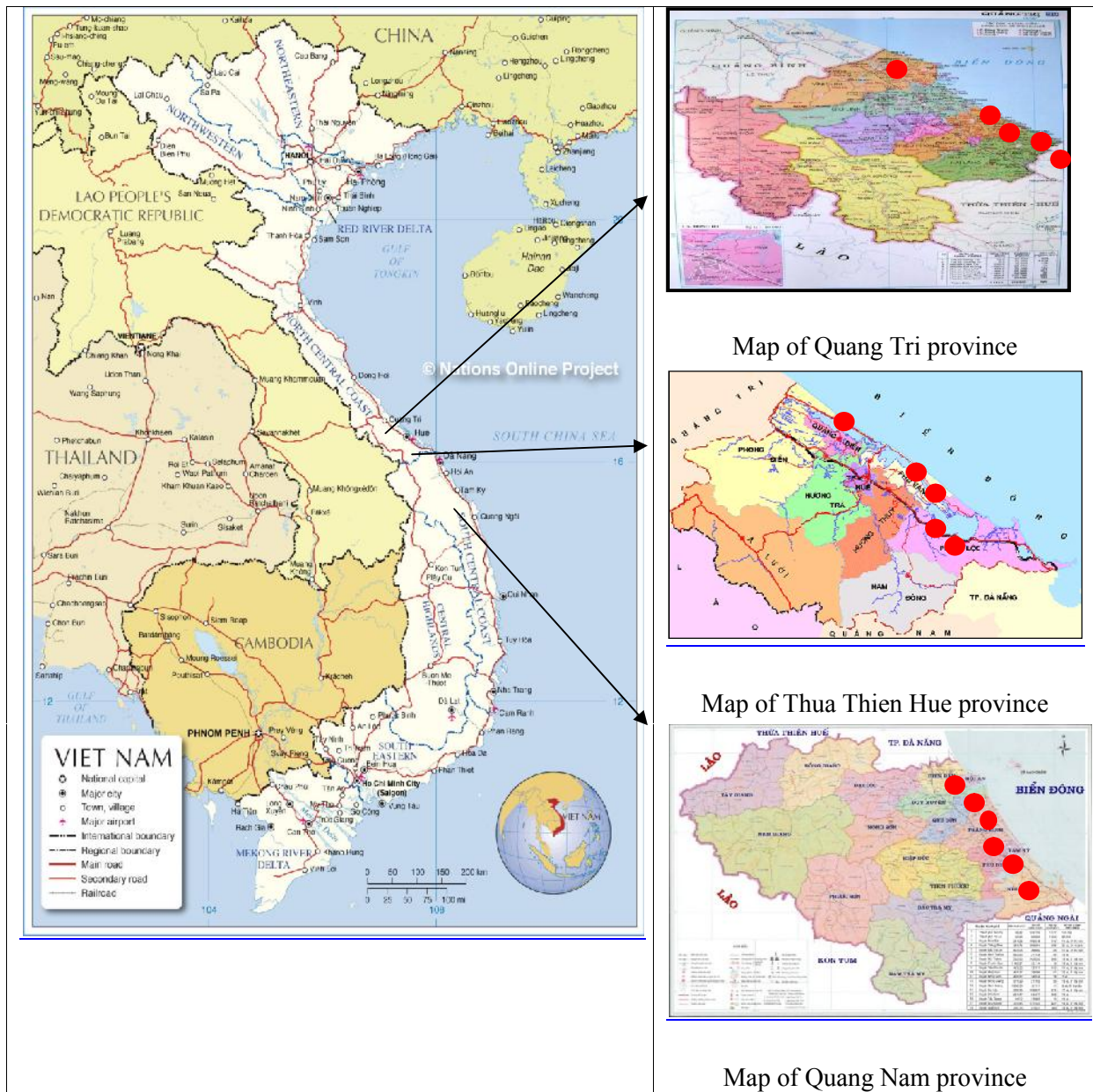


Fig 1. Target Central Coastal provinces and the study sites.

Sampling method

In this study, a two stage design for household surveys was applied. In the first stage, in addition to selecting the RFLP's 16 target communes in the target provinces, finer scale selection was made from a list of "clusters" of fishery villages. To make the selections, meetings were organized with key informants and local partners. The local partners included the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Extension Centres, District Divisions of Agriculture and Rural Development, and People's Committee and Social Organizations such as the Women's Unions and Farmers' Associations at various levels. In addition, documents and maps relating to the ecological diversity as well as socio-economic conditions in the target communes were analyzed.

The following criteria were used in selecting the survey areas (villages):

- The survey areas should be representative of the fishery livelihood patterns as well as of the diverse agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions in the coastal fishery area.
- The survey areas should capture the various levels of access to infrastructure (e.g. proximity to or remoteness from public infrastructure and services such as main roads, markets, district towns and cities, availability of services such as schools, health stations, etc.
- The selection of the survey areas should consider the variations in livelihood activities such as fishing, farming, non-farm wage work, migration.
- The selected villages should have various rural institutions and organisations.

In the second stage, two to three villages were selected from each of the target communes and, in each, group discussions were held with local partners to discuss and select the fishery households for the surveys. The main criterion for household selection was that the household should be representative of the village well-being level. In a wealth ranking exercise, the key local informants were asked to define the criteria for the well-being classification, resulting in three groups according to their well-being level, namely "better-off", "average" and "poor", based on key characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1. Criteria for household classification (better-off, average, poor) of the local people.

Criteria	Better-off households	Average households	Poor households
Housing	Concrete house or row house with spacious and attractive design and 2 roofs, large area.	Grade 4 permanent house with surrounding wall	Grade 4 permanent house with surrounding wall and small area.
Durable assets	Many good assets: beds, tables, chairs, fridge	Few durable assets	Very few durable assets and poor condition
Human capital	More workers and healthy, higher literacy, younger	Medium	Fewer workers, more elderly, children; low literacy level
Means of transport	Motorcycles, scooters, normally with 2-3 per household	Motorcycles, of less expensive type, below VND 17 m.	Old bicycles, or no means of transport
Means of production	High powered fishing boats, machines and engines, trucks, water pumps, processing equipments, big areas of shrimp ponds	Small fishing boats, few fishing gears, small-scale processing and shrimp and fish pond, cages	Few small boats and fishing gears. Some fish cages.
Means of recreation	Japanese colour television set, karaoke equipment and digital video recording	Cheap colour television set	Old colour television set
Means of communication	Desk telephone and mobile phone	Desk telephone and mobile phone	Desk telephone and mobile phone
Income	High income, much surplus for saving	Enough for living or little surplus	Low income, not enough for living
Children's education	Higher level of education	Medium	Lower level of education, stopped studying earlier

From the lists of households in each wealth group, households for the surveys were randomly selected, the number from each group being proportional to the total number of households in the village. This rule was likely to ensure that the household sample represented the full range of livelihood typologies in the village, the village gender balance and that the households were representative of different locations in the village. Due to budget limitations, in each commune about 30-35 households corresponding to each well-being level were chosen (Table 2). During the interviews, gender balance also was taken into account.

Table 2. Distribution of the surveyed communes and the respondents by the study sites.

Provinces	No. of communes surveyed	No. of respondents
Quang Tri	6	188
Thua Thien Hue	6	195
Quang Nam	7	218
Total	19	601

Source: Base-line survey, unpublished RFLP (2011).

Survey approaches

The participatory method was used for household surveys. Based on a bottom-up approach, the participatory method is a combination of several tools of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and, with respect to gender analyses, mobilizes and motivates the stakeholders to map and analyze gender related issues. In participatory learning and action, workshops and focus group discussions were conducted using the gender analysis matrix, the women's empowerment framework and the social relations framework (Arenas and Lentisco, 2011). Other tools such as trend analysis, day-time use analysis, social mapping, Venn diagrams, life-line, and ranking matrices were used to structure discussions.

Results and Discussions

Livelihood capital and access

Family structure and gender relations. According to the PRA survey, people in the study sites were relatively young (Table 3). Except for the poor, the population was equally distributed between female and male. On average, family size was 5 to 6 persons per household. Although family size had slightly been reduced in the last five years due to lower birth rates and high rates of out-migration, the average family size in the coastal regions was significantly larger than that of families nationally where average family size is 4.7 people. Traditionally, fishing couples preferred more children, especially male children who could contribute to fishing and later take care of them. Such traditions can cause difficulties for women, such as the preference for male children. Many couples have three children.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of the fishery households in the study sites of the Central Coastal region, Vietnam

	Better-off	Average	Poor
Family size (average)	5-6	5-6	5-6
Gender ratio (male: female)	50%	50%	40%
% of people of working age	80%	70%	40%
% of labour under-employment	0%	20%	40%
Workers/household (people)	3.5	3	1-2

Source: PRA reports from the target communes.

To fulfil their reproductive functions, women spent considerable time pregnant, giving birth and taking care of children. In addition, women were mainly responsible for the house-work, traditionally a women's duty. Information from group discussions indicated that women often spent about 7 hrs day⁻¹ for their house work, while men spent only 1.5 hours. In order to do their housework, women woke early in the morning and went to bed late. Housework included preparing food; feeding animals; and feeding, cleaning, washing, and taking care of the children. In addition, women in the Central Coastal regions participated increasingly in economic activities such as agriculture, non-farm and off-farm work. Consequently, the women's working days were longer than those of the men; women worked from 12 to 14 hours while men worked from 9 to 10 hours. However, due to feudal practices that have persisted for a thousand years women were considered to be weak or inferior to men. In families, men often made the decisions and although matters were discussed, women's inputs were limited.

Access to education. Education levels were low in the fishery households of the Central Coastal region (Table 4). Of the poor, only about 65% of workers had completed primary school and 20% of them were illiterate. About 80% of working age people did not have professional training and education.

Table 4. Worker Education Level and Literacy in study sites of Central Coastal Vietnam (% of household members).

	Better-off	Average	Poor
Illiterate (%)	5	10	20
Primary	40	50	65
Lower secondary	35	30	10
Upper secondary	20	10	5

Source: PRA reports from the target communes.

In recent years in the study sites, gender equality in access to education has significantly improved. However, there is still a disparity between the educational attainments of girls and boys and between the average education levels in the Central Coastal region compared to the national average. For example, in the Central Coast the enrolment rates at all education levels were 78% for girls and 83.7% for boys, compared to the Red River Delta with 85.1% for girls and 91.6% for boys. Due to the high cost of education, households tended to give priority to boys if they could not afford to educate all their children. Girls of poor households tended to have fewer opportunities for education than those in others. The dropout rate for girls was higher than that for boys, because they were not encouraged by their parents. After graduation from secondary school, most students stopped studying and began earning a living, girls in particular.

Access to resources. Access to natural resources and finance has been central to rural development. The ways in which these resources are used and ownership is defined and transferred have profound effects on economic, social and political outcomes, especially on the position of women and men in rural society. The study sites all have open access to marine aquatic resources. Over 70% of the local fishery households depend heavily on near-shore fishing for their livelihood. The main near-

shore resources include shrimp, crab, fish (tuna, mackerel, scads, anchovies) and squids. Information from group discussions in all sites indicated that aquatic resources, particularly fish stocks, had been gradually depleted due to overexploitation and unsustainable fishing practices such as use of bottom trawls, electric fishing, explosive fishing, and very small mesh sizes.

In Vietnam, following the economic reforms in agriculture in 1988, land was still controlled by the State but the farmers obtained land use rights. In 1993 a Land Law (Law on Land, 1994) was enacted to define the long-term and stable use of land use rights for households, granting 20 years for annual crops and 50 years for other perennial crops and forestry. Unfortunately, the land use rights certificates in accordance with the Land Law carried only the name of the husband who was considered the household head, resulting in unequal access to land use rights for women and men. Women, therefore, often meet difficulties in using land-use right certificates as collateral for loans. With improvements of the land registration system and clearer administrative procedures, the Land Law of 2003 (Law on Land, 2004) stated that both husband and wife have equal access to land. A new feature is the requirement that the land use certificate certifies the names of both husband and wife, if the land belongs to both. However, the implementation of the 2003 Land Law is slow because the reissue of previous land use certificates is slow. Many fishing community families also own land.

As in other Vietnamese households, many women in the Central Coastal area are responsible for household financial management. Women often make household financial decisions on small expenditures but they must discuss major financial decisions with their husbands. Many women reported that they found keeping cash a burden because they could not spend it without their husband's approval. For poor women, the situation was worse because their family incomes were not sufficient to cover needs. Consequently, poor women often fell into debt to traders and private money lenders.

Access to social capital. Social networks, institutions and organizations play important roles in rural areas. Access to social networks was considered an important element of social capital that strongly influenced household livelihoods. In rural Vietnam, complex and wide social networks at different levels linked the fishery households with the governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations and social organizations. In addition, informal social networks existed, based on local cultures. The official social networks included the Women's Union (WU), the Farmers' Association (FA), the Youth Union, the Veterans' Union, the Fatherland Front and professional groups dealing in extension, shrimp, gardening and livestock raising. However, the WU and FA were the most popular social networks and they attracted most of the fishers in the study sites (Fig. 2).

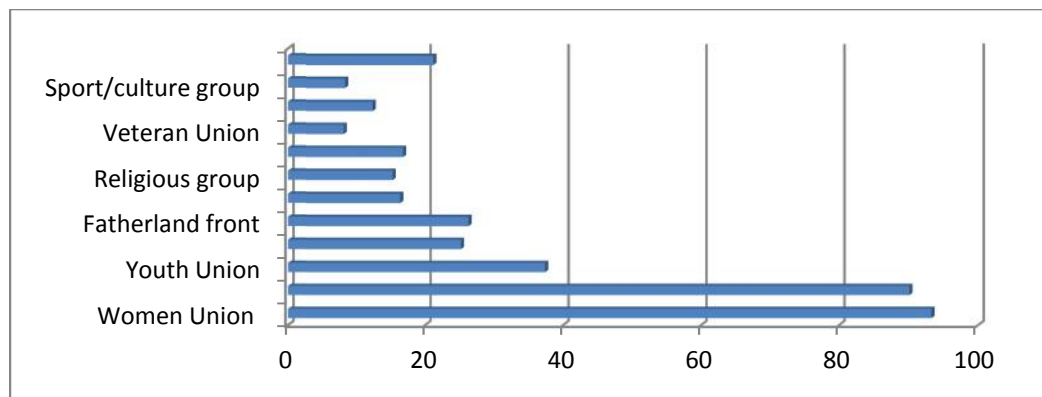


Fig 2. Extent of fishery households' participation in social networks in the study sites (% of households, N=601).

The WU and FA had wide networks from the centre to the grass root levels. Most WU activities focused on protection of women rights, engaged women in social life, provided training and gave advice on reproductive health and family planning. The main functions of the FAs were the transfer of government agriculture and fishery policies to farmers and assisting farmers in production. In recent years, both WUs and FAs have increased their participation in activities such as financial guarantees, for the poor in particular, to facilitate bank loans, and organizing study tours and training courses on animal raising and crop production.

The surveyed households, however, reported that they saw the WU and FA as too bureaucratic and not generally attractive to members. Despite high levels of membership, the survey participants reported low levels of participation by fishers, women and the poor in the WU and FA's activities. Many fishers said that they participated only in a passive manner. Both WU and FA bodies offered little more than sympathetic support and the opportunity to share experiences (Figure 3).

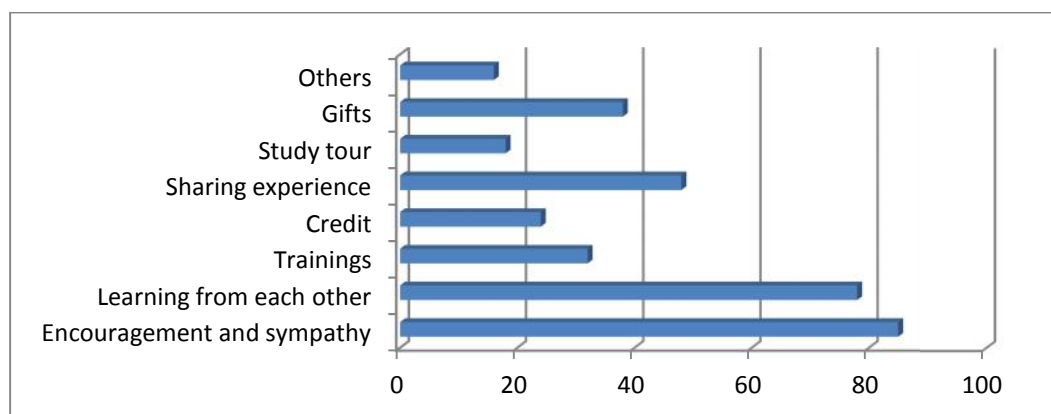


Fig 3. Major benefits gained from participation at WU and FA's related activities (% of surveyed households, N=601).

Participation in training and meetings. Information from group discussions and household surveys indicated marked differences in the level of participation in the meetings and training sessions between women and men. In general, men's participation was greater than that of women. Except for meetings and training courses in which the organizers ensured a gender balance, women took part less often. In most study sites, men were dominant in the extension training since they were traditionally considered more supportive of new technologies: "men know everything and they understand better than women". Men often had greater say in decision making on technology use, even though they may have been less responsible than women for activities such as livestock production. Similarly, men were assumed to be the ones to attend the village and commune meetings, rather than women because of traditional beliefs, or women being considered "slow to understand", and women's voices being less respected. Also, meetings were often at night when most women were busy with house work, and when tradition was against their venturing out.

Gender divisions in economic activities

In the Central Coastal regions, gender divisions in household tasks were well acknowledged (Figure 4). Women had fewer opportunities to work in sea fishing because it was considered dangerous and risky. Information from group discussions indicated that hundreds of fishermen were killed annually by hurricanes and storms. For example, in 2006 the storm Chanchu killed 257 fishermen in the Central Coastal region. Consequently, a lot of women were widows and trapped in poverty.

In aquaculture, except for pond cleaning which was equally shared, men were responsible for important activities such as pond building, seeding, feeding, weeding and harvesting. Men also took more of the marketing decisions. By contrast, women had fewer opportunities to engage in shrimp raising, especially in intensive farming where women were not allowed to go to the shrimp ponds because they were considered unlucky.

Although both men and women were engaged in farming activities, men were often responsible for heavy tasks such as ploughing, pest control (spraying herbicides and insecticides) and irrigation; women were in charge of seeding, transplanting, weeding and post-harvest activities (processing and marketing). For some tasks such as fertilizer application, harvesting, and planting the gender division was less clear since they were shared by both women and men. For livestock raising, women did most of the work such as collecting and preparing animal feed, feeding and cleaning. Men were little involved in these activities, but they had equal power with women in marketing decisions.

For non-farm activities, women's involvement was greater than that of men. Women were mainly engaged in fish processing, petty fish trade and handicrafts. Fish trade is hard work. To buy fish, women had to wake up very early and compete at the landing docks. They often had to stand in the sea and struggle with others to get the fishes when the boats arrived. After purchasing, the

women usually went directly to the market, still wearing wet clothes. As a result, many women had gynaecological diseases. In fish processing, women's health was also of concern, e.g., from muscular injuries. Most fish processing workers were women; men were more involved in transportation and as construction workers, because they were relatively free from housework.

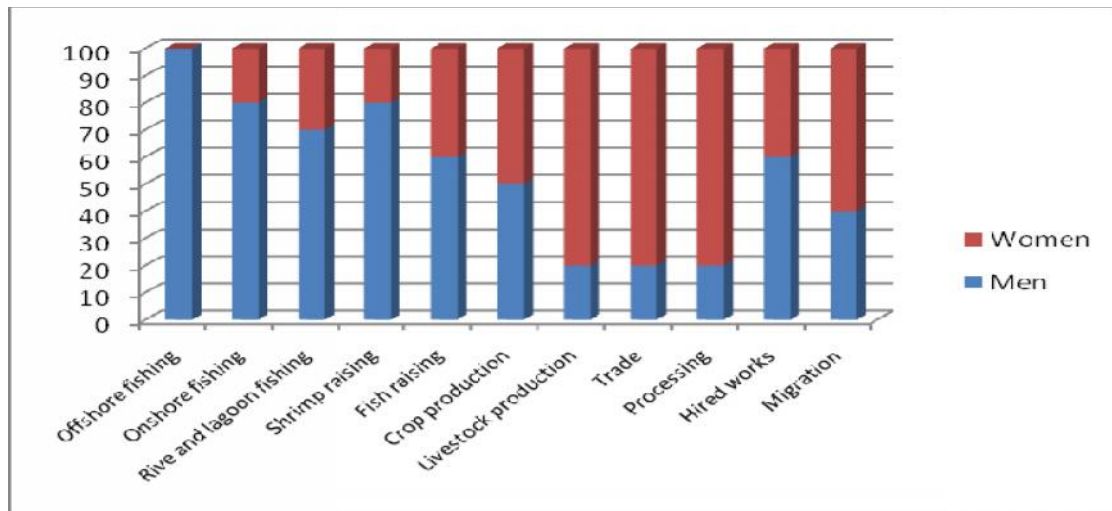


Fig 4. Division of labour between men and women in the income activities (% done by men and women, N=601).

The Central Coastal regions are densely populated, have limited land farming area and relatively poor access to income earning opportunities. Migration was thus common and the remittances they sent were becoming important. In recent years, migration has also been motivated by better employment and income opportunities in the urban centres, especially in Ho Chi Minh City.

In the survey, many households had migrants. People from poor households were more likely to migrate than those from average and better-off households. About 62% of the poor households reported that a household member has worked in other locations such as in Ho Chi Minh City, Central Highlands or the Southern provinces. Most of the migrants were young and their education and professional skills were limited. Most migrants did unskilled work. Female migrants were mainly tailors, shoe makers, traders, housekeepers and coffee harvesters; male migrants were likely to do fishing, construction work, and mechanics.

Migration generated many difficulties. First, a rapid increase in migration depleted the local labour force for fishing and farming. Second, due to the migrant's low education levels, most were unskilled labourers, their employment unstable and their wages low and not sufficient to cover expenditure, i.e., they generated no surplus. Third, fishing migrants had met difficulties such as poor housing conditions, long working hours, and lack of a social safety net. Information from group discussions indicated that most migrants did not have social and medical insurance. Consequently, they faced special difficulties when they fell ill, were involved in accidents or losses. Finally, there was a serious concern about the spread of HIV/AIDS for women when their husbands migrated.

Living far away from home, some of men had unprotected commercial sex, became infected with HIV and later passed it to their wives.

Household income and gender contribution

In the provinces surveyed, incomes and their components from various activities differed (Table 5). On average, annual household incomes in Thua Thien Hue were highest, perhaps due to differences in livelihood assets, particularly in access to land and the livelihood strategies chosen by the households. As the households in the survey were chosen for their fishing orientation, fishing was the most important activity in income generation, but households showed considerable differences in income.

Table 5. Composition of household annual income in the target provinces.

Household income and components	Quang Tri		Thua Thien Hue		Quang Nam	
	x 1,000 VND	%	x 1,000 VND	%	x 1,000 VND	%
Total	19,400	100.0	62,824	100.0	47,136	100.0
- Fishing	11,800	59.0	49,420	78.7	38,396	81.5
- Fish processing	2,100	10.5	2,376	3.8	463	1.0
- Other activities	6,100	30.5	11,028	17.5	8,277	17.6
Number of respondents/households	188		195		218	

Source: Base-line survey, unpublished RFLP (2011).

The total income and its components varied remarkably between household groups as well as between women and men. For example, for better-off fishery households in Duy Hai commune, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province, trade (fishing tools, input materials, groceries), sea product collecting, seafood processing (fish sauce, dried fishes), and seafood trade (for export or providing to restaurants) were the main income sources (Table 6).

Table 6. Income generating activities of the better-off households in the study sites of Duy Hai commune, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province (N=48).

Income activities	Amount of income (1,000 VND/year)	Rating	% Women's Contributions
Fishing and aquaculture	100,000 -150,000	2	20
Trade	120,000 -150,000	1	80
Sea product collecting	100,000 -150,000	2	20
Fish processing	150,000 - 250,000	1	80
Outsourcing activities	120,000 – 140,000	1	60
Migration	5,000 -10,000	5	70

Ratings: 1 very important; 2 important; 3 average; 4 less important; 5 least important.

For the average households, the important income generating activities were fishing, hired labour, and agricultural and unskilled labour. Income from fishing was the most important. Income from agricultural production was also important for this group of households. Small business, small-scale processing and trade (buying and re-selling) activities played an average role in providing income for these households. In general, men made most of their income in fishing activities, while women made more income of their income in small-scale processing, agricultural and trade activities (Table 7).

Table 7. The income generating activities of the average households in the study sites of Duy Hai commune, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province (N=48).

Income providing activities	Amount of income (1000VND/year)	Rank	% Women's contributions
1. Fishing and aquaculture	40,000 - 50,000	1	20
2. Small buying	25,000 - 30,000	3	40
3. Small selling	15,000 - 20,000	3	100
4. Small processing	10,000 - 20,000	3	80
5. Agricultural	20,000 - 30,000	2	70
6. Hired labour	40,000 - 50,000	1	50

For the poor households, livelihood assets were very limited (Table 8). These households were dominated, in numbers, by the elderly and people who could not work, and/or dependents such as children, especially small children. Because they did not have capital or the means of production (such as ships, machinery, etc.), people in the poor households depended on hiring out their labour (to ship owners, processing and outsourcing units), and doing unskilled work (as masons, motorbike taxi drivers, fish carriers, etc.). They also took part in small scale trade (fish, vegetables, waste materials, lottery tickets, etc.). Agriculture did not provide much income as poor households did not have enough land to plant. Except in the hired labour activities, women played a more important role in income providing activities.

Table 8. The income generating activities of the poor households in the study sites of Duy Hai commune, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province (N=48).

Income providing activities	Amount of income (1,000VND/year)	Rank	(%) Women's contributions
1. Small-scale trade	5,000 - 10,000	3	80
2. Hired labour	15,000- 20,000	1	20
3. Unskilled labour	10,000- 15,000	2	70
4. Agricultural	5,000 – 10,000	4	70

The contrasts between the income providing activities, shares of household income and women's and men's contributions show that options become narrow in the poorer households.

Except in the better-off households, women's contributions were much higher than men's from small scale and less remunerative activities. Men's income dominated in fish production from fishing and aquaculture.

Conclusions

In Vietnam, despite significant improvements in recent years, such as the provisions of the Land Law of 2003, women still experience many disadvantages in the Central Coastal regions. Discrimination is often intangible, for example, women have less access to and control over resources such as education, health care, information, technology, land and social capital. Traditional gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs stress the importance of men in the family, while women are considered as weak or inferior. Although various social organisations exist in the Coastal areas, of which the WUs and FAs are the most important and do help by organizing training courses, credit, and social services, women in the Coastal areas have fewer opportunities for social activities and meetings due to their overall responsibilities. In planning and policy making, their voices are weak because women have low levels of participation and their opinions are not well respected by men.

Thanks to Vietnam's high economic growth and Government support policies, economic opportunities are significantly improved for both women and men. However, in the Central Coast regions, household income is lower relative to that in other regions. The majority of fishery households in the Central Coastal regions are strongly dependent on fishing for their livelihoods. Due to overexploitation and destructive fishing practices, aquatic resources have been depleted and so too has income from fishing. In the region, women and men have different income earning opportunities. Due to their housework burdens, women are mainly engaged in agriculture and home-based income generating activities such as fish processing and petty fish trade while men are more engaged in fishing and cash earning activities. Generally, men have contributed more cash income compared to women. In most study sites, women experienced a severe lack of alternative income activities, making them dependent on their husbands.

In order to improve conditions for women in the Central Coastal region, women need better access to services from health to education. In education, although universal primary and secondary education has been achieved, about 70% of the children have no access to upper secondary school, especially the girls. Socio-cultural biases against educating girls need to be removed. Health care and social services also must be improved in the Coastal region so that fishery populations have better access to these services.

Rural development policies need to be gender sensitive in order to permit equal access to resources, income generation, a voice in development planning, training courses and decision making processes. The relatively lower income of the women suggests that women need support to access alternative income generating activities. They need help in getting credit, training on starting

new businesses, business skills and technology transfer. Local as well as national authorities need raised gender awareness.

Gender is a complex and multidimensional concept which has complicated interrelationships with culture, socio-economic conditions and other cross-cutting issues such as institutions, policies and legislation. Although the present study examined several dimensions of gender differences in the Central Coastal regions of Vietnam, much more needs to be understood. In particular, we were able to obtain limited data only on other important issues, such as the trends in gender relations over time and violence within families. As this was a preliminary baseline survey, more specific treatment of gender differences in fishing and aquaculture were not analysed.

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