



## Women's Roles in Fisheries Governance in Ban Laem, Phetchaburi Province, Thailand

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**Abstract** In the past, men have been played key role in the way of life of small-scale fishers. Because of their physical condition is more proper than women. Therefore, the women are mainly participating in fish processing and marketing. At present, participation of women in fisheries industry has increased day by day, particularly as a labor force in fisheries production sector. In this study, women in Ban Panern, a fishing village in Laem Pak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem district, Phetchaburi province was selected to examine the women roles that contributing to fisheries governance. Using key informant interviews and participant observation was carried out from August to September 2011. The results showed that, the roles of women in this fishing village were more or less the same of women's role in the third world. These roles are classified into 3 categories, i.e., motherhood role, labor in production role and community management role. Most of them have been involved in all three categories particularly, contribution to the fishery management in their community. They have participated in many activities that relating to public utility development, they have established and conducted a fish central market in the village in order to solve the unfair price of aquatic animal problem of the fishers. These demonstrated that, women have a high potential in strengthen the capability of fishing community in fisheries governance. The success of fisheries governance will lead to better livelihood of fishing households and a sustainable of their fisheries.

**Keywords** woman's role, fisheries governance, fisheries management, community fish market

### INTRODUCTION

For small-scale fisheries, man is major labor in this industry because of suitability in their physical condition (Arunpark, 1999). So that women have contributed to the processes after fishing work at the sea such as selling their products or fish processing. They had played important role in onshore activities. They undertook the administrative work of the fishing enterprise. In the past, most of people have had valued and expected in men should be more significant role such as leader, governor in society because men are physically stronger. Due to sex gender are defined through two factors including biological factor and social environmental as a psychological perspective. Biological factor concerns about the physical differences between male and female while social environmental is the factor to influence the appearances of sex (Jittayasothon, 2008).

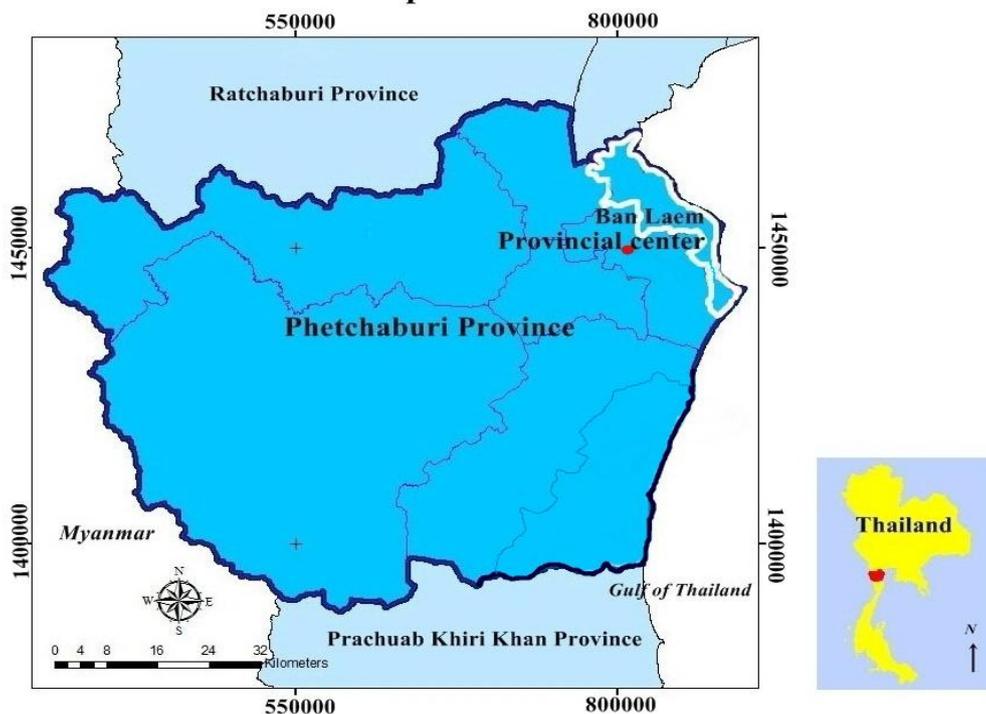
As same as fisheries sector, men have been played important role in fishing at the sea for a long time while women have involved in activities after fishing including processing and selling. At the present day, women have played role in their community increasingly, especially the economical aspect. As the record of National Statistical Office, we found that 45% of Thai women

have been involved to contribute to the income of their households, communities and country (Piamsomboon, 2008). Studies on women in fisheries so far have been more or less focused on fish processing and preservation techniques and activities and socio-economic status of women. This study aimed to examine the woman roles involving fisheries governance aspect besides their contributions in fisheries economics section.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study area**

In this study, Laem Pak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem District, Phetchaburi Province was chosen to investigate. Phetchaburi province is located in Western, Thailand at the northern end of the Malay Peninsula, with the East of Gulf of Thailand. There are four of the eight districts located along the coast that is why fisheries are economically important to the province. In 2010, fisheries provided over 25,000 tons of products or approximately THB 1.5 billion (USD 50 million) in value (Office of Phetchaburi Province). There are four villages in this sub-district including Ban Panern, Ban Donnai, Ban Donklang and Ban Donkadee (Fig. 1). Marine fishing is a major occupation in all of these villages. Ban Panern is the center for fishers due to be the place where landing, fish market and the crab bank project located.



**Fig. 1 Study area: Laem Pak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem district, Phetchaburi**

### **Data collection**

This study was conducted using a mixed method of literature review, key informant interviews (Table 1) and participant observation. A series of open-ended question was used in the key informant interviews. They consisted of questions related to the role of women to fisheries governance in the study area.

**Table 1 List of key informants interviewed in this study**

Category	Number of key informants	
	Male	Female
Fishers	2	2
Villagers who are not fishers	1	1
Housewives of fishers	-	2
Fish traders	-	1
Fisheries group leaders	2	2
Other group leaders	-	1
Governing officers	3	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The natural system characteristic

Laem Pak Bia is one of the ten sub-district located in the southeast of Ban Laem district. This area consists largely of mud flats and sandy beaches, with some mangrove forests (Pollution Control Department, 2004) that serve as important habitats for juvenile fish and crabs and especially dwelling animals like clams (Aksornkoae, 2007). Numerous aquatic species were found, such as threadfin, longtail sard, sand whiting, mackerel, large-scale tongue sole, hard shell, blood cockle, razor clam, banana shrimp, blue swimming crab, mud crab and squid according to the Office of the Royal Development Project Board (1997). Dolphins and Bryde's whale could be found in the area as well. In addition, artificial reefs had been installed in this area to help increase fisheries productivity. There is also the waste water treatment system, which enhances the abundance of coastal fisheries resources, especially those in the benthic zone such as blood cockle and hard shell. These natural characteristics have contributed to fishing for a long time even though some situation happened such as mangrove forests were decreased during the aquaculture boom.

### The socio-economic system characteristic

From the interviews and field observation, the study found that small-scale fishing was major occupation. The other occupations consist of salt-farmer, labor and merchant. Small-scale fishers in this area used multiple types of gear, targeting multispecies. The main type of gear were crab gill nets, fish gill nets, shrimp gill nets, octopus traps and collapsible crab traps. Large-scale fisheries also existed, to a lesser extent, using mackerel purse seine and squid nets. Most of this kind of fisheries hired foreign labor. Some women gather hard clam and blood cockle using small hand dredges and some go fishing with their husbands, in the case of small-scale fishers businesses. The majority of small-scale fishers are members of three fisheries groups; the crab bank project, the community fish marketing group and the community boat repair service. There was also a women's enterprise, which produced ceremonial flowers for funerals.

### Women roles in fisheries governance

The study found that women in Laem Pak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem district, Phetchaburi province had collaborated to establish the group named "Woman development volunteer group" following the government's policy that desired to increase woman participation in their community. However, this group had not been in any action which relate to community development. Until the women in this sub-district, especially who were live in Ban Panern, had re-organized the group in order to encourage the alternative occupation for women through producing the local products or others for sell that mentioned earlier. Involving to fisheries, the some women in this community also had joined to community fish marketing community group under the leading from the mainstay fishermen.

As to consider following the woman role in the third world which were classified into 3 categories, i.e., motherhood role, labor in production role and community management role (Wangpittaya, 2008 cited Kittasanka, 2002), we found that the roles of women in this fishing area were more or less the same. Most of them had been involved in all three categories particularly, contribution to the fisheries governance in their community, namely:

1) Motherhood role: this role was considered as the biological aspect that women had pregnant, taking care for well-being of their children and family members.

2) Labor in production role: this role was concerned working in the way to earn their remuneration either as a monetary compensation or non-monetary compensation. For example, gathering blood cockle and hard shell using small hand dredges at the coastal area near their houses after housework finished which had been doing for a long time until the present day. Some women were hired from the large-scale fishers to sew the crab net, fish net and shrimp net. They would buy the nets, then sewn those together to the larger pieces and bounded the piece of lead at the lower net. Many women were pleased to do this work since they could do it at home that also could take care of their children as well. Moreover, these women had collaborated as a group to produce the flowers for funeral ceremony under the Laem Pak Bia Sub-district Administration Organization supporting through allocated the experts for demonstrating and training. On the other hand, some women had work without returns in cash due to they had been as a labor in fishing with their husbands.

Most of the women in Laem Pak Bia sub-district had been played both motherhood role and labor in production role because these roles were main role of general women in fishery families as Nasae *et al.* (2002) examined the role of women in fishing community and found that women had play important in motherhood role and labor in production role such as going out to fish at the sea and selling their catches. In the past, fishing has long been considered a male occupation and women were thought to be involved only in post-harvest activities. However, there is growing recognition of women's contribution in capture fisheries in all activities (Kusakabe, 2003).

3) Community management role: it involved to women's participation in planning and decision making to improve the public utilities such as canal dredging, health and education development activities *etc.* Some of women in this sub-district also had played this role in term of collaborating in those activities i.e., cleaning public areas, participation in planning and decision-making on monthly meeting through proposed their opinions in order to find the approach to solve the problem in the villages. The obviously community management role of these women were organizing community fish marketing group. Actually, this group was originated by a group of fishermen who wanted to solve the unfair price of fish. Cost in fishing, especially fuel, was high. Their income was not covering their cost which induced them to take a loan from the middleman or fish market owner with the condition to sell the catches to creditor only. These fishermen realized that creating of the community fish marketing group could solve unfair price problem.

The community fish marketing group had administrated as cooperative with all of women proceeding. The group was initiated through informal meeting of some fishermen to discussion about unfair price problem with staff from the Thai Sea Watch Associate, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in southern Thailand. The Thai Sea Watch Associate organized a visit for a small group of women to observe an ongoing fish marketing group in Pattalung province. Upon their return, the chair-person and the committee for this group were appointed. The community fish marketing group started to proceed with private funding of the group members in 2009. Fishers who want to sell their catches must be a member to the group. Besides the fair price of fish, they would receive dividend as well. Until now, this community fish marketing group has been carried out continuously and smoothly. It demonstrated that women have potential to governing the fisheries. As Limanon (1999) examined the women have an incentive to manage that showed their high enough potential to develop of the community.

For resource conservation concerns, from the study of The Environmental Fund of United Nation in 2008 (Wangpittaya, 2008) found that women had more awareness in the problem and tend to do actions to protect the degradation of the environment and natural resource than men. Also women often had better vision to how environment decaying. As though women in this study area always had participated with community in resource conservation through attended a monthly

meeting in the their villages and encouraged her husband to donate gravid female crab to crab bank project, including to join with the government campaign involving mangrove planting.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results in this study showed that women in Laem Pak Bia sub-district had played important roles in terms of taking care well-being of their households and economics aspect as were recognized that women’s economic contribution in fisheries is divided into two categories namely; the recognized work in fishing or processing through formal employment and the unrecognized work by fishers’ wives, mothers who are in charge of different tasks within the family business (Frangoudes, 2011). Moreover, women in this community had played important role to community management in term of participation and collaboration in community development activities and also organized the group “Community Fish Marketing” that contributed to solve the unfair price of fish problem. Growing in woman’s role on management aspect is important part to drive to fisheries governing achieved.



**Fig. 2 The community fish marketing group operation area (The Thai Sea Watch Associate, 2011)**



**Fig. 3 The community fish marketing group members were classifying the fish**

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