

# Promoting Ecosystem Resilience by Engaging Women Fishers in Fishery Management

## Sekong River, Lao PDR

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### 1. Introduction

Village fishery management committees emerged in the 1990s as Lao PDR endorsed a co-management model. Though more than one-half of subsistence fishers in Lao PDR are women, the committees rarely include women fishers. Engaging women in village fishery governance will strengthen the social cohesion in river ecosystems now threatened by industrial development.

### 2. Objectives

This study was conducted to determine what role women play in village fisheries on the Sekong River in southern Lao PDR, what factors determine their participation in village fishery committees, and what impact village fishery committees have had on the well-being of women and children.

### 3. Methods

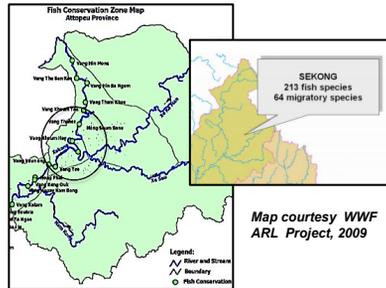


#### Focus Groups

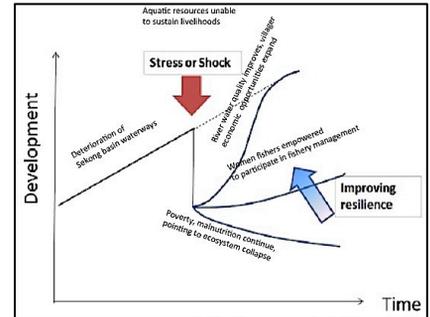
Using action research, a social science methodology that gathers data through narrative inquiry, about 100 villagers (women and men) were interviewed over a 3-day period in 2013. Focus groups were conducted in six fishing villages in Attapeu Province on the Sekong River. Villages were selected based on their range of village fishery management options.

#### Mekong Water Dialogue

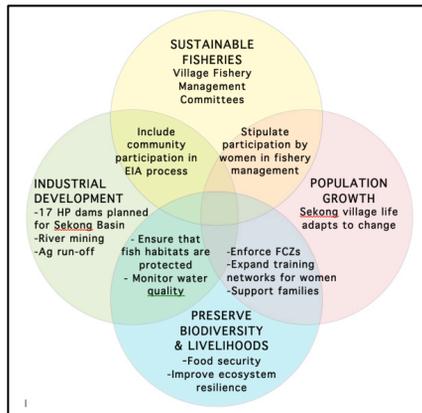
A full-day workshop was coordinated in Attapeu Town by IUCN-Lao PDR attended by 40 people, including 24 villagers from the six study villages; PONRE officials; LWU representatives; and researchers from Lao National University. Two brainstorming groups, divided between women fishers and men village chiefs, identified gaps and bridges to including women in village fishery committees.



### 5. Conclusions



### 4. Results



-Families are more dependent on women's wetland catches as sources of protein.

-Women have few training options for alternative livelihoods.

- Little change in the self-confidence of Lao women fishers has occurred since an FAO gender assessment conducted in 1998.

- Village committees have had limited success managing FCZs.

- Deteriorating river water quality is villagers' greatest concern.

-Village fisheries management is part of a complex ecosystem that includes traditional culture, food security, natural resource management, livelihoods, government policy, and social cohesion in a time of economic and demographic change.

-Cultural biases exist in Lao PDR that impede women from participating in non-domestic decision-making.

-At present, men village chiefs are unlikely to appoint women to village fishery committees unless they are required to by law.

-Gender-sensitive training at the village and provincial levels will improve outcomes for resiliency in village fisheries.

### 6. Acknowledgements

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1993-2014 - Lao PDR Fisheries Co-Management & Women in Fishery Management											
1993	1995	1999	2000	2001	2004	2005	2009	2010	2012	2014	
Isolated Lao PDR Villages establish FCZs and fishery co-management projects on Mekong River.	Environmental Action Items for women are endorsed by Lao PDR delegation to conference.	Workshop on Women's Role in Aquaculture and Community Fishpond Mgt with Dept. of Livestock & Fisheries.	Lao PDR participates in this new independent NGO, loosely associated with MRC Fisheries Programme.	Mekong River Commission launches gender division for Lower Mekong Fisheries Programme.	MRC Fisheries Program publishes paper on Lao women fishers' access and rights to natural resources.	26 FCZs are established on Sekong River through WWF's Aquatic Resources Management to Improve Rural Livelihoods (ARL) project.	First Lao PDR Fisheries Law endorses village fishery co-management model. Guidelines do not stipulate women's participation.	Lao PDR women fishers are disaggregated in data for the first time in this landmark study by FAO.	Mekong Integrated Water Resource Management Plan (2012-2015) calls for new village fisheries management committees on Sekong River.	Aquaculture Gender Assessment Synthesis Workshop held in BKK. Lao PDR does not participate.	