



MINISTERIO
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES
Y DE COOPERACIÓN



Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)



Case study

Maximizing Women's Participation in a Fisheries Livelihoods Project: The Philippine experience

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Introduction

The Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme (RFLP) endeavoured to build capacity among partner fishing communities and institutions in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. Funded by the Government of Spain and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from 2009 through 2013, the RFLP worked to improve the livelihoods of fishers and their families while promoting sustainable fisheries resource management practices. It also underlined the necessity of looking into gender concerns in introducing livelihoods projects in view of the vulnerability of fishing communities.

In the Philippines, RFLP operated in the province of Zamboanga del Norte in collaboration with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) covering two coastal cities and nine municipalities. This case study describes the RFLP's interventions, its gender mainstreaming efforts, the gender impact of such interventions and highlights success stories as well as lessons learned and recommendations for programme improvement and sustainability.

The context

The province of Zamboanga del Norte is located in the northern portion of the Zamboanga Peninsula. It is bounded on the north and west by Sulu Sea, Misamis Occidental province on the east, and the province of Zamboanga del Sur on the south. The province occupies a total land area of 6,618 km². It has a population of 957,997 based on the 2010 census. Its population density is 130/km² and it is ranked 26th among the 82 Philippine provinces both in terms of population and population density (NSCB 2012).

The province's irregular coastline of about 400 kilometers from north to south has been touted as one of the richest fishing grounds in the country having at least seven fishing grounds, namely: Murciellagos Bay, Dapitan Bay, Dipolog Bay, East Sulu Sea, Sindangan Bay, Coronado Bay, Sibuco Bay and Siocon Bay. From these fishing grounds are harvested sardines species, yellow fin tuna, anchovies, mackerels, snappers, round scads, and marlins which are popular both domestically and internationally (Zamboanga del Norte Provincial Government 2012).

However, the baseline study conducted by the RFLP in 2011 in the 11 project areas (Figure 1) showed a negative trend in fish catch per unit effort. Of the 906 household respondents surveyed (or 5.95% of the 15,228 combined total household population of said cities and municipalities as of 2007 census), more than 50% of the respondents perceived that fishery resources in their areas have deteriorated mainly because of intensive and destructive fishing practices and other human activities, increasing population pressure, and the encroachment of commercial fishers into inshore waters. The latter, though restricted within the municipal waters, pose a threat and compete with the small-scale fishers. A little over one-fifth or 21% complained of being deprived of rightful access to municipal fishery resources because of the presence of commercial fishers. This had further marginalized the artisanal municipal fishers rendering them more insecure and vulnerable. Co-management system enforcement was not working well then and much needed to be done so that the local government units, the small-scale fishery sector and other stakeholders could work effectively together (JRMSU 2011).

The assessment revealed the urgent need to support fisheries co-management and sustainable livelihoods enhancement, in order to address poverty and halt ecosystem degradation that was negatively affecting fishers, fisher communities and entire coastal populations and economies. The key problem areas that needed attention were: (i) the lack of mechanisms and capacity for joint

management of the fisheries between the fishers and government authorities; (ii) the high level of vulnerability of small-scale fishers and their families due to their high risk occupation and exposed habitation; (iii) the loss of income from fish and fishery products due to poor handling, preservation and processing practices and inequitable returns from marketing systems; (iv) the need for alternative incomes to supplement the livelihoods when fishing activities have to be reduced for sustainable resource management; and (v) poor access to micro-finance to diversify income, adapt fishing equipment to new management regulations and to reduce vulnerability.

RFLP was therefore designed to address the problems faced by small-scale fishers in the Philippines and the other five participating countries, while supporting national poverty reduction, economic and gender targets outlined in their Poverty Reduction Strategies and in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

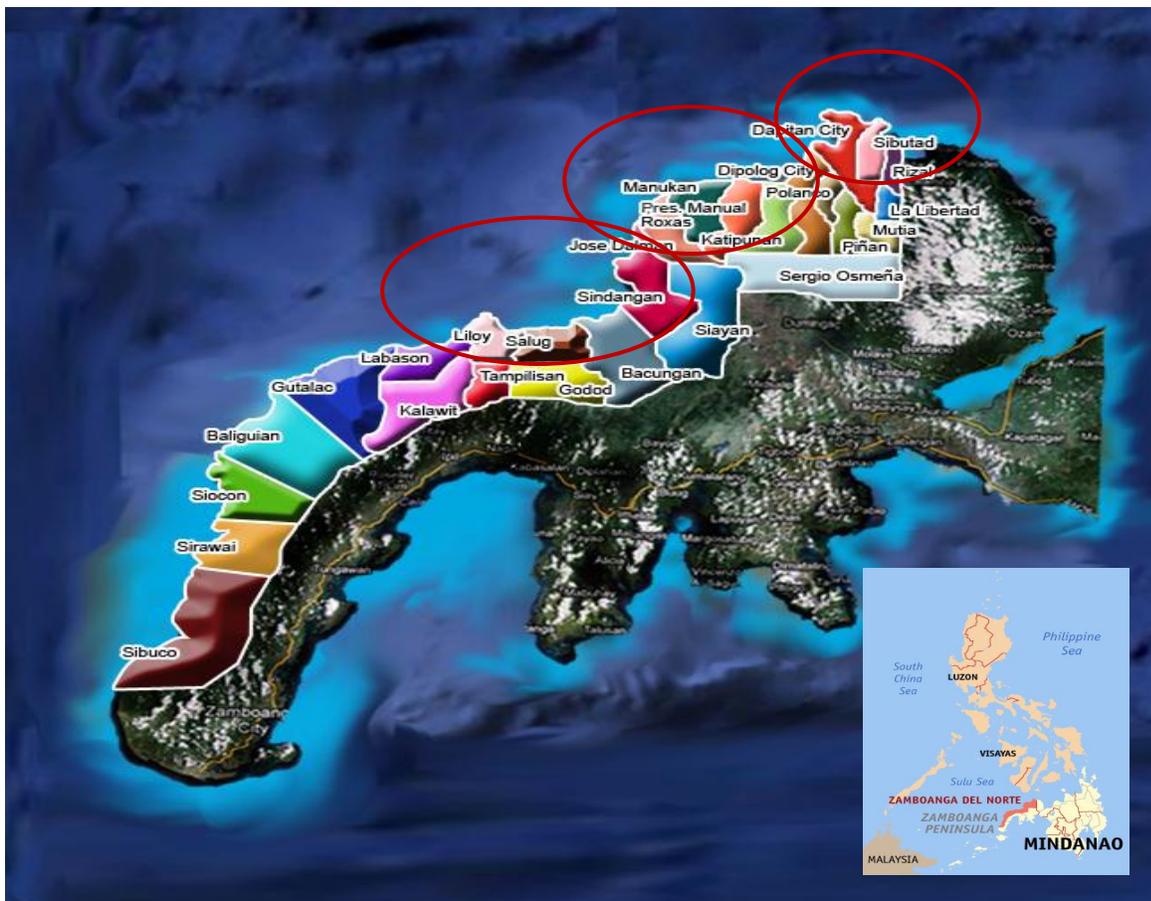


Figure 1. Map of Zamboanga del Norte and the RFLP project sites

Sources: <http://zamboangadelnorte.com/maps> and Google Map 2012

The Initiative

RFLP has six components that sought to create the following outputs:

1) *Co-management mechanisms for sustainable utilization of fishery resources*

Traditional centralized management regimes have often failed to address issues such as resource depletion and conflicts between fisheries and other sectors. Both users and government agencies therefore need to work together to jointly manage resources. RFLP and its institutional partners put in place mechanisms and enhanced local capacity for joint management of fisheries between fishers and government authorities. These include advocacy and technical support on marine protected area (MPA) establishment, organization and/or strengthening of MPA management bodies, institutionalization of fishery law enforcement teams, re/organization of fisheries co-management mechanisms like Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARMCs), and building inter-LGU collaborative mechanisms such as the Sindangan Bay Development Alliance.

2) *Measures to improve safety at sea and reduce vulnerability of fishing communities*

Accidents and loss of lives are common in small-scale fishing operations. Most of direct casualties are fishers but the tragic consequences are borne by women and their children who are at risk of poverty after losing the husband/partner or son. RFLP sought to implement measures to improve safety at sea and reduce vulnerability of fishers and other community members. It helped organize local disaster risk reduction management (DRRM) councils and facilitated drafting of DRRM plans (preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation) and conducted information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns to raise public awareness.

3) *Improved quality of fishery products and market chains*

At fish landings and markets, hygiene standards can at times be inferior. Fishers, however, could command higher prices for their catch through better market information as well as by adding value to products through post-harvest processing. RFLP sought to address fish harvest losses due to poor handling, preservation and processing practices through capacity building, value chain study and market information support, and IEC on food safety, among others.

4) *Enhanced and diversified income opportunities for fisher families*

Pressure on aquatic stocks cannot be reduced without a corresponding reduction in fishing capacity and effort, together with other management measures that allow stocks to grow and recover. To effectively do this, the adoption of sound fisheries management measures needs to be implemented jointly with alternative income opportunities for fishers (men and women), to make up for their income shortfall. In partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and the Livelihoods Skills Development and Enhancement Center (LSDEC) of Dipolog City, RFLP assisted 18 pre-existing groups, mostly women, to jumpstart their respective livelihoods and business enterprises. RFLP helped these groups through the development of respective business plans, conducting livelihoods skills trainings, introducing improved technology, and providing equipment and raw materials. The Project also provided training on financial literacy, capital build-up and savings generation, capacity building on financial and business management, and on-site coaching, among others.

5) *Enhanced access to micro-finance services for fishers, processors and vendors*

Access to credit and other financial services including savings and insurance, helps small-scale fishers manage the risks of fishing and reduce their economic and social vulnerability. Yet few micro-finance

institutions or commercial banks are willing to provide them with loans as they are seen as high risk. RFLP sought to facilitate access to micro-finance services for fishers, processors and vendors, while helping community members better understand savings and credit mechanisms.

6) *Regional sharing of knowledge*

Knowledge sharing was intended to broaden the impact of RFLP's activities. The lessons learned in the different countries were pooled together and analyzed at the regional level and communicated to participating countries and others in the region.

Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (GMS)

Gender equality, as a basic human right, was integral in the RFLP, supporting women's diverse roles in achieving food security and empowerment. In this view, it sought to reduce the gender gap across all areas of its work by mainstreaming gender in all its activities.

RFLP adheres to the universally accepted definition of gender mainstreaming as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated" (ECOSOC 1997). This means that for RFLP, gender mainstreaming was a process, to be worked on over time and at all levels of programme interventions. The definition also involves an approach and a *modus operandi* in order to assess the implications for women and men of planned actions and to take into account their specific (and often different) concerns and experiences.

As conceived, the RFLP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (Lentisco, 2012) was comprised of five areas which can be summarized as follows:

1) *Information gathering systems*

This was in the form of Gender Analysis during the initial baseline survey to help define activities in national work plans and the setting of gender targets and indicators in national log-frames and the sex-disaggregation of data for all project activities, especially for training and relevant meetings.

2) *Knowledge sharing and advocacy*

These were facilitated by: i) the assignment of RFLP Gender Focal Points at regional and national levels; ii) liaison with the Gender Focal Points from the national fisheries administration and other relevant government agencies; presentation and/or organization of national and regional meetings relevant to gender; iii) discussions on gender-related information with RFLP stakeholders, especially government counterparts; iv) debating on gender dimensions at RFLP country offices during team meetings and meetings with stakeholders and other agencies and NGOs in order to design and implement strategies which maximized benefits to both women and men; v) creation of the Women in Fisheries Award to highlight activities done during two years of RFLP implementation and to share the impact and results obtained across countries on gender equality; vi) publication of the handbook/field manual *Mainstreaming Gender into Project Cycle Management in the Fisheries Sector* designed to facilitate gender analysis and project planning in fisheries development projects among fisheries development practitioners; and vii) conducting a regional workshop on Best practices for Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector, Siem Reap, Cambodia 2-5 November 2010 arranged by RFLP with the specific purpose of field testing and obtaining feedback on gender analysis tools in

the RFLP gender handbook and to provide best practice recommendations for gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector.

3) Implementation of activities

There was increased flexibility of activity implementation to promote women's participation in different RFLP interventions. Project proposals, training designs and letters of agreement (LOA) or contracts with implementing partners were screened and analyzed to ensure that they specified the number of women and men participating in project interventions and had adequately assessed the likely impacts. Efforts to improve women's participation (in terms of the absolute numbers and proportion of women involved, and the level and quality of their involvement) in project interventions and in decision-making mechanisms, especially in co-management such as FARMCs or MPA management bodies, took into account the double burden issue and/or the potential lack of mobility among women.

4) Monitoring and Evaluation

Gender targets and indicators were set in all six RFLP national log-frames, for measurement of the gender-related impact of activity implementation over the project life and to allow checking of progress towards target gender indicators during monitoring and evaluation missions. The RFLP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system also included sex disaggregated M&E data and highlighted gender specific target indicators. The RFLP also added a specific gender section in its six monthly progress reporting format provided to the Spanish donor, FAO and the implementing governments.

5) Capacity Development

Capacity building was done by identifying the needs of RFLP country staff and government officers and other stakeholders at country level for training aimed at improving their understanding of gender equality and the principles of women's empowerment.

Framework for Gender Impact Assessment

This gender assessment documents RFLP's efforts to address gender issues and identify opportunities to strengthen those efforts which can be continued by other institutions and projects to maximize development impact. The assessment will ensure continuity in learning and also support a holistic approach in integrating gender which will further build on the RFLP experience.

The assessment not only highlights successful approaches and activities but also gaps and constraints in project implementation where new entry points for addressing gender issues are identified, and suggests how other government and non-government institutions can build upon RFLP activities by using gender as a cross-cutting theme. A gender focus was used to identify and analyze common issues across interventions in support of RFLP's cross-cutting gender theme.

Gender and Development Perspective

Development programs that do not address the problem of gender inequality and women's marginalization have often worsened poverty and neglected women, children and minority groups. In the fisheries sector for example, goals are yet to be achieved in ensuring that women's contributions are fully accounted for. While women play important economic roles in fishing, particularly in processing and marketing, their roles are often neglected in projects and programs in the sector.⁴ Women are particularly concerned about over-fishing, which is reducing the viability of fishing communities, and they are keen to participate in protection and sustainable management efforts.⁵ Yet these efforts are downplayed and subordinated vis-à-vis the role of men as the family 'breadwinner'. Moreover, while women's significant participation is an important goal of many development projects, it is crucial to examine how this may affect women's other roles at home and in the community, and how such multiple roles may impact on their health and overall well-being. Development planners have thus introduced a rights-based perspective in their scheme to break the cycle of poverty in a given society which equally recognizes the importance of the role of women in promoting sustainable livelihoods for the achievement of the desired quality of life.

Analytical Framework

The team made use of Sara Longwe's (in NEDA 2007) Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Framework which distinguishes the various levels of women empowerment as a result of development intervention or efforts at gender mainstreaming in development projects.

Level	Empowerment Achieved
WELFARE	Addressing the material and physical well-being of women and men, girls and boys. Empowerment here refers to improvement in the physical condition of women and girls.
ACCESS	Because women's entitlements are generally more limited, empowerment here means greater access of women to resources, services, and facilities, and making available to women appropriate and effective means to secure resources, services, and facilities.
CONSCIENTIZATION	Empowerment means sensitizing women and men to sexist beliefs and recognizing that

⁴ <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2006/agri2.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

Level	Empowerment Achieved
	women's subordination is not part of the natural order of things, but is imposed by a system of discrimination that is socially constructed, one that can be altered.
PARTICIPATION	Empowering women at the participation level means making them equal with men in their involvement in the development process.
CONTROL	As women's participation increases at the decision-making level, they will have increased control over the means of production and thus ensure equal access to resources and the distribution of benefits. Equality of control means having a balance of power between women and men, so that neither is in a position of dominance.

Methodology

The team undertook the gender impact assessment to answer the following questions:

- 1) What were the effects of RFLP interventions at household level, organizational, and community levels, identifying possible changes of gender roles and relations, and relevant issues on gender equity and equality?
- 2) What were the potential negative side effects of the project on women and men (e.g., double burden) and how were they dealing with it?
- 3) What were the empirical evidences or demonstrations of women's empowerment as a result of project interventions?

In approaching the above points of enquiry, the team reviewed pertinent project documents, interviewed project implementers and partners, conducted site visits and focused group discussions (FGD) with project beneficiaries as well as in-depth interviews with selected key informant (KI) beneficiaries whose success stories were developed into interesting case studies. All the field-generated information and data, along with project documents and monitoring reports informed the team's analysis and interpretation of assessment results.

Below is the coordination matrix between the data sets and methods used.

Box A. Coordination Matrix between Data Sets and Methods

Key Area	Data or Information Required	Source of Data/Data Gathering Method
The effects of RFLP interventions at household level, organizational, and community levels, identifying possible changes of gender roles and relations, and relevant issues on gender equity and equality (including women's participation in decision-making; Any potential negative side effects (e.g. increase in domestic violence, double burden, etc.); the existence (or not) of	Link between gender across sectors for similar interventions (for example, economic-based activities, life skills training, community participation)	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KII with Gender Analysis Matrix) of RFLP staff and key stakeholders and implementing partners involved in the current program, including local gender focal point/persons
	Assessment of project impact on women and other negative externalities	Review of project-related documents (minutes of meetings, organizational structure, accomplishment and monitoring reports, etc.)
		Case studies
		Observation at project sites

Key Area	Data or Information Required	Source of Data/Data Gathering Method
<p>double burden as a result of RFLP activities, and how women are dealing with it)</p>		
<p>Specific examples through a case study that illustrate gender impact as a result of project interventions</p>	<p>Positive project outcomes/impacts and good practices</p>	<p>Case studies Observation at project sites</p>

Revisiting RFLP's Gender Mainstreaming Efforts in the Philippines

The RFLP's gender mainstreaming work among its partner fishing communities and local government units in Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines, took off with baseline data gathering for the RFLP area of geographic coverage, paying attention to gender-disaggregated data. With the baseline study results, RFLP then launched a major activity which was a three-day Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management Workshop conducted from 8-10 June 2011 in Dipolog City. The concept of Gender Analysis was introduced among its partner beneficiaries and institutions.

In attendance were one to three members of each local government units Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management Technical Working Group (CRFM-TWG), including two representatives from women's associations. There were a total of 29 participants with 13 men and 16 women from Dipolog City and the municipalities of Liloy, Salug, Leon Postigo, Sindangan, Manukan, Roxas, Katipunan, Rizal, and Sibutad.

The Gender Mainstreaming Workshop jumpstarted the gender mainstreaming activities with the expectation that participants would have learned of gender analysis tools and would come up with a best practice for gender in each LGU. Its salient accomplishments included one seminar on Gender Mainstreaming in CRFM with 29 participants, 16 of whom were women, and the identification of gender mainstreaming strategies submitted to each partner-local government unit.

While the above supplied a promising backdrop for the intended gender mainstreaming, the actual implementation fell short due to staffing/technical, logistical and time limitations, among others.

Nevertheless, RFLP had a sound gender mainstreaming strategy at the programme level aimed at contributing to the promotion of gender equity and the improvement of fisheries livelihoods. Targeting women for livelihood activities was part of the gender mainstreaming strategy and practical gender needs were also partly addressed by the livelihood opportunities provided by the project.

Given the women in development "WID" approach of the interventions, the concrete, highly visible impact of the livelihood activities was the gainful employment of women, the monetization of their labour which used to be "free" inside the home. Technically, by just engaging women in livelihoods, allowing them to exchange their time and labour for money, women's economic benefit could be achieved even without a gender and development (GAD) framework to start with. Contrast that to the gender mainstreaming initiative as defined by ECOSOC (1997) which proposes a deliberate effort to assess the implications of any intervention and conscious integration of women and men's concerns and experiences, rendering them integral to every phase of the project cycle. This did not happen to RFLP Philippines, and the Gender focal person admitted that the only major activity done for gender mainstreaming was the conducting of the Gender Mainstreaming Workshop which involved only a handful members of the PO.

Hence, despite underscoring the importance of gender in the whole project and the single gender workshop, gaps and limitations were observed during the implementation of the RFLP interventions vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming. These included the following:

- 1) Absence of a Gender Analysis conducted at the partner organization level;
- 2) Lack of Gender Sensitivity Orientation/Gender Sensitivity Training conducted for each of the PO and LGU partners;

- 3) The formulation of CRFM Plan assisted by RFLP was not properly gender-informed. Out of the 11 only two LGUs had CRFM plans with budget allocations earmarked specifically for women's activities and these remain to be implemented. Monitoring of the CRFM plans was not also covered due to time constraints. Accordingly, these were plans which remain un-adopted and unimplemented. Earmarking budgets is the most plausible indicator there is of gender mainstreaming in the CRFM plans if the plans are yet to be implemented. Moreover, since there were very few women who were TWG members and who were involved in the drafting of the CRFM plans (only those who were employed in the fishery department of the LGU), it is hard to deduce whether women were involved in the decision-making process. The proposed plan of introducing women-managed mangrove areas was also not realized.
- 4) Given its technical and funding limitation as regards gender and development (GAD) initiatives, the project however failed to tap potential technical and financial support from national government agencies and the LGUs' GAD budget. The GAD focal person who was at the same time an administrative staff member accepted this as a shortcoming. On the other hand, her hands were already full, given her workload as an administrative staff.

These gaps and limitations challenged one of the key points in gender mainstreaming which is "that gender issues must be addressed at every stage in the programme cycle, beginning with identification and formulation, and continuing through implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases."⁶ These influenced the direction and realization of the objectives of gender mainstreaming and brought forth issues and effects at household, organizational, and community levels, which are described below.

Changes in the welfare and status especially of women

The most tangible impact of the RFLP interventions was the presence of alternative livelihoods for women in the fishing communities. Although still meagre, the women now have a weekly income thus improving their purchasing power. Aside from new skills and increased income, women have been introduced to budgeting, recording and basic accounting. Social and economic capital was also augmented as the association allows for cash advances especially in times of emergency.

The livelihoods have resulted in an increase in economic and social capital among households. This has provided husbands and wives with options and more ways to meet their basic needs, education for their children, among others. Domestic squabbles over meeting household needs have in effect been minimized.

The women's associations were trained in formulating a business plan, including how to calculate pricing. The women have not only learned new skills but also generated gainful livelihoods. Further capacity building for the women and the association as a whole was also facilitated through the project as they gained access to assistance and opportunities from the LGU and/or other government agencies in the form of training and/or seminars.

Membership in the association and working together has become an outlet for solidarity with other women. This was where women find self-actualization or find self-worth as when they were then able to share skills with other women.

⁶ Mainstreaming gender into project cycle management in the fisheries sector: Field manual, M.C. Arenas and A. Lentisco, UN-FAO, 2011.

In another light, the physical workload of women has been made less burdensome with some facilities constructed through RFLP interventions. Regarding seaweed cultivation, for example, a seaweed drying facility has lightened their workload particularly among women as there was now no longer the need to gather the dried seaweed every time it rained. This benefit was even extended to other community members who were non-members of the association as they were given access to the solar dryer which doubles as a copra dryer.

While livelihoods activities had predominantly involved women, and given them the opportunity to experience paid work and earn income, this however did not free them of, or diminish their domestic obligations, hence the issue of unequal gender division of labour persists. Also the concept of the “head of the household” being the husband or the eldest male, regardless of whether that male was keenly interested in the project or not (take the case of the Nasipang Seaweed Planters Association {NASPA}, where membership is predominantly male) was evident. Yet it was the women who reportedly attended most of the organizational meetings, on behalf of their husbands. In all of the seven groups interviewed, women claimed that even with their involvement in the livelihood activities outside the home, there was no change or reassignment of their domestic responsibilities, although there were also men who helped their wives in their livelihood (see case study 1, bag and caps sewing). However, women were still the ones doing household chores. This claim was corroborated by the men themselves. They were unequivocal in saying that women were still largely responsible for housework. They just managed to juggle their time between house work and livelihood work. In a simple analysis, there was an addition of workload and no reduction or diminution; therefore, the result was double burden. Had the project included this in its agenda awareness-raising and advocacy for husbands to participate in domestic and reproductive roles (and this could have been covered during the gender sensitization training or gender orientation), perhaps there would have been changes in gender division of labour in the home or, at the very least, men would have realized how the disparity of the home workload adversely affected the women; and that this role assignment was unnatural; and unless they initiate changes now, this practice would be replicated by their children and continue in perpetuity in generations to come.

This situation then directly impacted on the time available for rest and sleep, and potentially this could impact on their health, as it naturally follows that longer working hours means less time for rest and/or sleep. Moreover, the livelihoods groups were as yet only at a subsistence level and could not afford to provide health care and/or social protection for group members. In fact, there was a woman who was part of the sewing group in La Concepcion, Sindangan who had to temporarily leave the group enterprise to fully recover from a mild stroke. In this case and in those of others who occasionally complained of backaches, headaches and other occupational-related stress conditions, their coping strategies were basically their own resilience and the support of their immediate family members. It would be helpful, if at a later date, the groups could also put in place some safety net system to address similar issues in the future.

Stereotypes and practices affecting project and organizational policies

The most evident link of women’s involvement in marine protected area (MPA) management was their association’s contribution of a portion of the proceeds from their livelihoods for MPA management. However, there was an apparent dichotomy as demonstrated by the thinking that MPA management was for men, while the alternative livelihoods were for women. Although the women expressed their appreciation of the idea of MPA management, very few women were conversant with the MPA policies and regulations. This dichotomy and women’s lack of familiarity with the MPA operational policies was

observed in all three livelihood groups interviewed with MPAs. The reason was that MPA management was undertaken by men, as it involves patrolling duties. The MPA management committees were also composed of men. This was the existing set up in most MPA councils in the Philippines, and was probably why the same system was continued by the project.

Illustrating gender impact as a result of project interventions

Despite the gaps and limitations of the gender mainstreaming strategy, especially during implementation, the RFLP still had positive impacts on women's lives, such as increased access to economic and social capital and increased participation in community activities and decision making. However, the short time of operation of the RFLP, scarcely four years and with only just over two years of field activities, makes it difficult to address more inherent gender relationships between men and women, and particularly strategic gender needs, which require considerably more time and commitment than RFLP was able to provide.

The case studies below showcase that positive changes were still effected by RFLP support despite some shortcomings in gender mainstreaming efforts. The project, nevertheless, benefitted from its approach of building on the strengths of the existing partner organizations primarily through capacity building initiatives and provision of raw material, equipment items and technical inputs to the livelihoods projects. Soon after the RFLP interventions began, women became more active outside the household. Women's significant role in fisheries was also given more attention with the increased implementation of project activities. It was also the first time that there was a donor funded intervention in these areas of Zamboanga del Norte. The link between fisheries management and livelihoods also became more apparent as communities saw the ample gains of the women in each of their livelihoods projects.

Gender Impact and Significant Change Stories

Case Study 1: "Bags and Caps: Beyond Narrowing Livelihoods Gaps"

The lack of livelihoods and the need to augment family income was a common challenge, especially among women in the coastal village of Linay in Manukan town. Like many other fishing villages in the province, many of the men fish while women tend to the house work and the children. Some women peddled food around the neighbourhood or just stayed in the house and did household chores.



Figure 2. Linay women at work in their production centre

Skills training on bag-making organized by RFLP in late 2011 kicked off the livelihood project of the Linay Women's Association (LWA). This has greatly enhanced the women recipients' skills and further developed the group's cohesiveness. The Linay Women's Association established a shared production centre (which is a local government-owned building), but also permitted home-based working. Five women began to actively pursue sewing and bags making, while 16 members assisted in sewing. Aside from sewing machines

provided by RFLP which are installed at the shared production centre, some members bought their own sewing machine paying in instalments. This allowed them to work on orders at home, while at the same time, attending to household chores.

The women's group received a share of the income from their sewing as orders were taken through the association. Some women were able to find a market among new mothers for baby clothes. Some others were earning P600 in only three days.

With this increase in income, some women had engaged in a monthly mandatory savings scheme and had begun enjoying the benefits of having a monthly income. Although most of their earnings were spent on household expenses, there were others who were just as thrilled to be able to buy personal items such as lipstick.

At some point, husbands came to assist the wives in their sewing. While some fisher husbands were still able to share with the household chores, some others were unable to help as they were too tired after fishing when they reached the home. Maria Bautista Bohol, President of the Linay Women's Association narrated how she had to bring along her five-year old child whenever she peddled food in the neighbourhood, attended association meetings or when it was her turn to sew at the production centre (there were only four sewing machines at the centre shared by a total of 12 members). She also had to begin her day early, waking up at dawn to do laundry and prepare breakfast so that she could juggle the time for sewing, care giving and attending to her responsibilities for the association and her church activities. Asked if she felt burdened by the additional tasks, she answered she only felt emboldened to do more.

The women's association contributed two percent of its income for the maintenance of the Linay MPA, one percent for rental to the barangay for the shared production centre and donated flashlights to the same for fishery law enforcers. The women understood the connection between their association and the MPA, so they do not question why they had to contribute a percentage of their association's income for MPA maintenance.

Further capacity building for the women and the association as a whole was also facilitated through the project as they gained access to assistance and opportunities from the LGU and/or other government agencies in the form of training and/or seminars.

The women of Linay have not only learned new skills, but have also generated gainful livelihoods. Modesta Villarín, one of the active sewers, shared, "This has been a great help. Before, when my husband used to get a meagre catch from fishing, we often quarrelled over tuition fees for our children. Now, we don't have these fights anymore. We are able to buy Coke and other stuff." The

Monthly Earnings / cutter & sewer		August	Sept. & Oct.
Oct. 2011	April 2012		
1. Modiq	6,789.00	1,177.95	1,059.00
2. Ana	2,577.00	98.50	419.95
3. Nerieth	2,481.00	780.00	520.00
4. Soima	2,478.00	672.95	582.00
5. Luz	212.00		
6. Eva	762.00		
7. Harlyn	2,478.00	639.95	384.95
8. Tata	2,481.00	126.95	171.00
9. Mary	958.00	366.95	120.00
10. Gina	58.00		
11. Viviana	12.00		
12. Josephine	14.00		
13. Maribel	3.00		
14. Annelid	1,071.00	243.95	408.00
15. Leticia	77.00		
16. Willylyn	373.00		

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Figure 3. Record of monthly earnings posted conspicuously in the production centre



Figure 4. Linay women's finished products (bags & caps)

groups' book-keeper, a retired public school teacher Amelia Nacalaban, chimed in with, "I have learned new skills, gained income, while enjoying myself and having fun. Through this, I am also able to contribute to the group."

Beyond narrowing the livelihoods gap, being a member of the association and working together sewing bags and caps has become an outlet for sharing life's joys and pains— a bond that Linay women believes was one among their many gains.

Case Study 2: "From Gambling to Sewing Undies for Families and the Seas"



Figure 5. Training on sewing for La Concepcion Women's Association

Disengaging themselves from gambling as a pastime, the women of the coastal village of La Concepcion, Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte made a decision to turn their idle time into a worthwhile undertaking and took to sewing undergarments to increase family income. Other women in the village who do not have any form of livelihood followed suit; even those who tend sari-sari stores.

RFLP delivered five sewing machines, housed in a shared production centre, and organized training on sewing as a livelihood for the members of La Concepcion Women's Association. In all 18 members attended the five-day training on sewing undergarments. Judith Laguna, who was already engaged in

sewing, shared her sewing skills with the other members. The association members were trained on how to formulate a business plan including how to calculate pricing. Of the 170 members, nine were active, with seven directly engaged in sewing. Three members sew during the day, while one member does quality control for P1.00 per item; while another one was responsible for attaching ribbons.

The members of the women's association have agreed not to take any sewing work home. They also agreed to work on a shift basis to divide their labour. They still make undergarments even without orders so they can have samples to show to prospective clients. Although still meagre, the women now have a weekly income. Aside from new skills and increased income, women have been introduced to budgeting, recording and basic accounting. Social and economic capital was also augmented as the association allows for cash advances especially in times of emergency. With their purchasing power improved, husbands and wives can now buy a fresh batch of underwear for themselves, something that is very basic yet oftentimes relegated to least priority to give way to



Figure 6. A husband shows off newly sewn underwear

more urgent household needs. The husbands support the women’s endeavour as they themselves benefit from the fruits of women’s labour.

Improved self-esteem by being able to share skills with other women marks Judith’s meaningful outcome of the RFLP project. For other women, self-actualization was realized with having been given the opportunity to visit Manila, the national capital for the first time, stay in a nice hotel, and speak before a foreign audience; a feat made possible when the association’s effort was featured in a video project entitled “From Gambling to Earning” that earned recognition in the RFLP 2012 Women in Fisheries Award which highlighted significant and inspiring changes among the women of La Concepcion.



Figure 7. Advertisement of Coastal Trend, brand name for La Concepcion women's underwear products

See <http://www.rflp.org/gender>.

Despite current challenges, particularly that women members still have to do their reproductive and domestic work and a few problems in the production line and marketing, there was no doubt the project has come a long way. Their brand, Coastal Trend, has reached other places and continues to expand its market. From their earnings, they have contributed to the maintenance of their fishing grounds, while sharing household expenses with their husbands. The women have not gone back to gambling and are positive that sewing undergarments will provide for their families while nurturing the seas.

Case Study 3: “Seaweeds Guarantee Future Needs”



Figure 8. Women members of NASPA

Seaweed cultivation has long been a thriving livelihood among residents of Rizal, Zamboanga del Norte. It was, however, an occupation dominated by men. The Nasipang Seaweed Planters Association (NASPA) has existed for nearly a decade, having been registered as an organized group under the Philippine’s Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) in 2004. Membership was predominantly male, for two main reasons: 1) the father, or the eldest male member of the family, has been traditionally regarded as the household head; and 2) it is always the men who went to sea to fish. Of more than a hundred members, only three women were listed as members. Two served as the secretary and treasurer of the group, respectively, while the other was a widow who had replaced her deceased husband and also sat on the Board of Directors. While other women were not officially members of the NASPA, they were technically *de facto* members as they were actively involved in almost all

stages of seaweed farming and ably represented their husbands or male partners during group meetings.

Traditionally, NASPA members dried their harvested seaweed under the heat of the sun on roads and pavements, the basketball court, or other open spaces around the neighbourhood as drying areas, which exposes the seaweed to dust, dirt, domestic waste, and moisture. The drying time was, therefore critically dependent on the amount of available sunlight, with significant losses and spoilage commonly occurred during inclement weather. The women claimed that their work at home was often interrupted when rain came because they had to drop whatever they were doing in order to gather the seaweed and to protect it from being drenched. They then had to put the seaweed back out to dry when the sun came out again.



Figure 9. Seaweeds grown in Nasipang

Generally, seaweed can be cultured all year around with as many as two crops per year. However, the normal planting season was between the months of November to February, and the harvest season was usually in April and May. The ideal time for planting out seaweed is when it is cooler. Labour rates per bundle were pegged at P30 for bundling, P20 for unbundling, and P20 for planting. NASPA members' seaweed farm sizes ranged from a quarter to half a hectare, half of which was allotted as a nursery area. Each farmer usually maintained a nursery to secure the planting stock for the next crop. However, a scarcity of seedlings was still common especially when seaweed farms were destroyed by extreme weather events.

It takes two people to harvest and about two to three days to dry the seaweed depending upon the volume. For a six-month cropping period for a 1/4 hectare farm, the gross income was estimated at P20,740 less expenses of P6,400, thus a net income of P14,340 or P2,390 per month.

Seaweeds are usually bought by collectors or bulk buyers onsite. Some buyers make advance payments to seaweed farmers to provide working capital with an agreement that this will be repaid at harvest. Consolidators then sell their stocks to the Shemberg Marketing Corporation and other



Figure 10. Women enjoying the benefits of a solar dryer in Nasipang provided by RFLP

seaweed processing firms in Cebu Province in the central Philippines.

Women generally sort and dry the seaweed and also help the men with the planting. The women interviewed declared that they were more efficient and better than men at tying and preparing the seedling seaweed stock, and the latter agreed. Men, however, were largely involved in staking and planting, which were commonly considered to be the physically more demanding tasks. Yet the women claimed that they were able to do whatever the men did, and this has demonstrated by some women who worked side by side with men.

Seaweed planting was labour-intensive. Women reportedly experienced headaches and dizziness during planting especially when the sea was rough. Considering the tediousness and the manual nature of the tasks, women complained of back pains and other forms of physical stress. The men, however, did not register such complaints either because they were used to work at sea or because they were too shy to complain.

The provision of a solar dryer by RFLP offered great relief, particularly to women. It lightened their workload considerably as they no need to gather the drying seaweed each time it rains. "I can now just sit back and relax even if there is a downpour, because now we have the solar dryer," said Hazelyn Abella, NASPA secretary, beaming with pride. "The drying time has also been shortened and the dried seaweed is more hygienic and of better quality than before," she added.

The group imposed a modest user's fee of P1 per kilogram for 49 kg and below of fresh seaweed and P1.50 per kilogram for 50 kg and above. Despite some slack months when seaweed was not harvested, the organization earned a total of P2,500 (roughly USD 62.5)⁷ for the period from May 2012 to March 2013. This was the net proceeds less the caretaker's share of 20% of the gross income and that of the secretary and the treasurer who each received 10%. The balance goes to the organization.

NASPA has also opened access of the facility to non-members. On some occasions, especially during the rainy season, the solar dryer has also served to dry copra. In order to develop their business acumen, RFLP also trained some NASPA officers on business planning, financial and business management and financial literacy.

NASPA members were also engaged in other livelihoods such as fishing, vending, hired labour, and as barangay government workers, among others. However, for Hazelyn and several other women and men of NASPA, seaweed farming has been their trusted source of income which guarantees their future needs. They vow to maintain and sustain the solar dryer and hope for more productive years ahead.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Many of the gaps and limitations in the gender mainstreaming efforts in each of the individual project initiatives stemmed from the lack of focus and non-integration of gender and development principles into the planned project activities. Follow-through on gender mainstreaming activities were not cascaded down, at least, to the PO level. The presence of a gender expert or focused team equipped with knowledge and skills on gender mainstreaming is vital, first, for conducting a situational analysis of gender relations of the partner communities, second, to conduct gender sensitivity orientation to introduce such concepts, and third, when integrating gender in individual

⁷ The exchange rate is pegged at 1US\$ to Philippine Peso 40.

interventions as well as in assessing change in gender relations and status of women, if any, that may arise from such interventions.

- ***Gender mainstreaming should be implemented at all levels of the project cycle.*** This is critical so as to cascade gender equality and equity down to the level of the partner associations, communities, and households.
- Some gender relations were reinforced (i.e., reproductive/domestic work was still being conducted by women/wives despite the fact that they were already sharing in the productive work). Many, if not, all of the RFLP interventions failed to free the women involved from their reproductive work and domestic chores, nor did the initiatives result in men taking on an increased share of household chores i.e. a more equitable gender division of labour. As a result many of the women had increased workloads, i.e. double burden, even if they did not acknowledge this as such.
 - ***Gender Sensitivity Orientation and Gender Sensitivity Training should be conducted at the PO and community levels.*** Understanding gender relations down to the household level is essential for the project to be gender-responsive and therefore to create meaningful impact in achieving more equitable gender relations.
- One of the more plausible and explicit indicators that gender has been mainstreamed is the earmarking of funds for women- and gender-focused or -related activities among LGU plans. The formulated Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management (CRFM) Plan in Dipolog, for example, facilitated by RFLP, was not properly gender-informed and, therefore, there is little indication of what resources, opportunities and roles women will have in supporting fisheries co-management.
 - ***Leveraging budgetary commitments earmarked for women and gender in policy should be ensured to improve the sustainability of gender mainstreaming initiatives.*** Facilitative action by the project on integrating gender into municipal or barangay development plans (such as the Comprehensive Development Plan, the Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management Plan, etc.), is important in gaining leverage over funds and budgetary support for gender mainstreaming activities.
- Although women appreciated the link between fisheries management and livelihoods, for example when they contributed a part of their association's earnings to MPA maintenance, gender integration was not fully realized as manifested in their lack of familiarity with MPA operational policies and their minimal involvement in MPA management which was male dominated, while women figured very prominently in RFLP supported alternative livelihoods activities. This was partly due to traditional thinking that men were the primary stakeholders in fishery management while women only undertook supportive roles. On top of that, there were also implementation gaps due to budgetary cuts which prevented gender mainstreaming from coming full circle. For one, the MPA management planning process in most of the LGUs was truncated and the MPA plans were not fully completed. These activities would have been an opportune time for women to be more engaged in and form part of the MPA management planning process and to acquire deeper understanding and appreciation of their roles in fisheries management as well.
 - ***Gender mainstreaming should be promoted by ensuring gender parity in stakeholder involvement in MPA management.*** Popularization of MPA management and

regulations should target both women and men. This would emphasize that both were stewards of their source of livelihoods, and at the same time, were stakeholders in sustainable fisheries.

**Photos courtesy of G. Labrado and R. Macalandag*

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About RFLP

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) sets out to strengthen capacity among participating small-scale fishing communities and their supporting institutions in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. By doing so the RFLP seeks to improve the livelihoods of fishers and their families while fostering more sustainable fisheries resources management practices. The four-year (2009 – 2013) RFLP was funded by the Kingdom of Spain and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) working in close collaboration with the national authorities in participating countries. For more information about the Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) see www.rflp.org.