

ASIA WOMEN AND RIVERS CONGRESS



A Report of the three online workshops
convened by Oxfam between
July and September 2020



OXFAM

HOW THE WOMEN AND RIVERS CONGRESS BEGAN

In March 2019, International Rivers and partners convened the inaugural global Women and Rivers Congress in Nepal. This brought together close to 100 women from more than 30 countries to celebrate the fundamental roles women play in defending and stewarding freshwater resources, and to ignite collective action to challenge the deep-rooted gender inequities that women face in their efforts to safeguard rivers and freshwater ecosystems. The event celebrated and recognised women's leadership, effective strategies, and successes and the systemic barriers that women experience in their lives and their work as a result of patriarchal societies, and we shared and learned from each other's struggles to bring about transformative change.

The Congress participants made a number of recommendations to strengthen movements, collaborate for change and share learning through stories <https://www.womenandrivers.com/statement>. A key theme was to explore different forms of knowledge produced by, and about, women—considering their roles and experience in water management, research, and as stewards and primary users of water. This was intended to bridge the divide between academic, economic and science-based knowledge and that of local people and civil society partners. This recommendation was brought back into the Asia region with a commitment to hold an Asia region Congress.



WHY WOMEN'S WATER GOVERNANCE ROLE IN THE MEKONG AND NU-SALWEEN?

Women and girls represent over half of the Mekong region's population. The inter-dependencies between women, rivers and water, and the role of women in productive and reproductive work within the family and community challenges whether enough attention is being paid to the inclusion and leadership of women and their game-changing role in water stewardship and river protection. The water resource management field is perceived as highly technical and a male-dominated sector. With regards to the governance of water resources, at local, national, regional, global level, we see the same under-representation of women: at the decision-making table, in consultations on large-scale water infrastructure projects and in the way knowledge on water management is documented, valued and shared. Inclusion of relevant stakeholders is key to good governance. Understanding the ways in which gender shapes control and access over water and the differing needs and positions of women and men, is crucial to address poverty and water insecurity as well as contributing to the SDG goal on gender equality.

STATE OF KNOWLEDGE: WOMEN AND RIVERS IN THE MEKONG REGION REPORT

The report draws on a literature review and 25 interviews with key stakeholders. It highlights women's contributions—both actual and potential—to better governance, social and environmental outcomes for rivers in the Mekong region. The report spotlights women's achievements in water decision-making, river governance and the major barriers to their leadership and "visible" participation and identifies key points of inequity in its institutions and governance processes at grassroots, national and transnational levels. Women speak in the report on good practice how women have assumed important and influential roles in governing the rivers and water resources on which they and their communities depend.



ASIA WOMEN AND RIVERS CONGRESS 2020

Going on line rather than face to face, the Asia Women Congress aimed to bring together women leaders and stakeholders from across the Mekong, Salween and South Asia basins to develop and strengthen partnerships and networks within and across basins to discuss and learn together and identify regional action to support women's leadership during these challenging times of the pandemic.

OBJECTIVES-WHAT DID WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- Women leaders from different river basins share their knowledge, innovation and experience of their successes and challenges through story-telling and describing their strategies and journey to leadership.
- To provide opportunities to network, build solidarity and transboundary cooperation across Asia between women leaders of riverine communities and identify joint actions that draw from and take forward the global commitments made in Nepal in 2019.

METHODOLOGY-HOW DID WE ACHIEVE IT?

A series of three workshops were planned.

Invites to register were posted on a number of Oxfam and partners sites as well as the designated Women and Rivers site. Specific invitations were sent to previous participants in the region and priority given to them and those who had already registered for the 2020 Congress.

The design of the workshops began with the socialization of the “State of Knowledge: Women and Rivers in the Mekong” followed by a “deeper dive” into the conceptual framework building on participants lived experience.

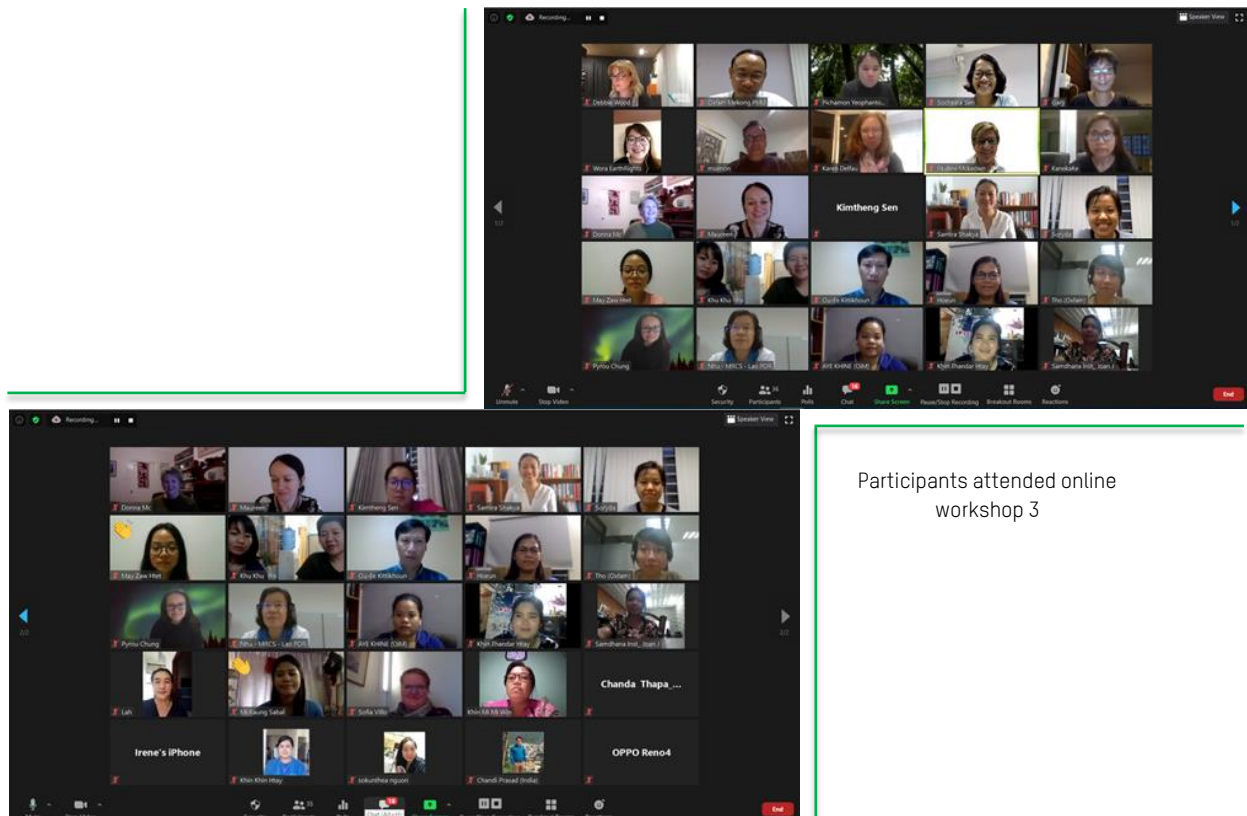
Limits on registration were made to facilitate group work as pre-Congress testing and previous evaluations had scored opportunities to talk together highly. Each registration resulted in a core group of targeted participants and unexpected participants (outliers) who may have been attracted by the description: women, gender, river, Asia or heard about it by word of mouth (see details below). In each workshop groups were allocated with previous and new participants and in the second workshop we convened one male only group (facilitated by a male) to draw out how men can support women’s leadership.

Whilst COVID -19 had been referenced in most discussions, the third workshop focused on the impact that the pandemic is having and will have on women’s leadership and potential strategies to ensure progress is maintained and not allowed to slip back.

Preparation for virtual workshops proved even more important than for face to face meetings and considerable time was spent preparing group facilitators and note takers.

WHO ATTENDED?

The workshop received great interest from participants across different fields, with 212 registered online (181 women) including representatives from the development partner community. Registration for each workshop was capped between 70-90 people. The graph below provides a snapshot of the representation of the participants who attended the three workshops.



Participants attended online workshop 3

THE SPEAKERS



Ms. Karen Delfau
Independent Consultant

Karen Delfau is an independent consultant working in Europe and across the Asia Pacific to support water governance, gender equality and social inclusion, and climate resilience through research, knowledge management, and facilitation.

Dr. Pichamon Yeophantong
Australian Research Council Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales (Canberra)

Dr Pichamon Yeophantong is an Australian Research Council Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales (Canberra). Her expertise is in China, transboundary rivers and water governance in the Mekong region.



Dr. Bernadette Resurreccion
Senior Research Fellow at Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) in Asia.

Her research expertise includes gender, livelihoods, socio-political dimensions of climate change and disasters, migration and displacement, and natural resource management in developing Southeast Asia.

Ms Mueda Nawanat
Bertha Legal Fellow

She was born as a stateless person in a border province of Thailand and, as an ethnic minority Karen, she struggled for nine years to demand Thai citizenship. She studied law at Payap University in Thailand and attended EarthRights International's (ERI) Mekong School for local activists, and the Mekong Legal Advocacy Institute Class in 2012. She founded the Mekong Youth Assembly to advocate and promote the rights of the child and participation of children and youth in claiming their environmental rights in the Mekong region. She is a Bertha Legal Fellow at ERI's Thailand office.





Ms. Pham Thi Dieu My

Director for the Centre for Social Research and Development (CSR), Vietnam

She has a Masters in Natural Hazards and Disasters at Australia National University (ANU). My has a strong background in research methodology, survey design, data collection and analysis in the field of environmental management and gender analysis. For the past 18 years, she's been working with communities on natural resource management and is passionate about communities knowing their rights.

Ms Nguy Thi Khanh

Founder and Executive Director of Green Innovation and Development Centre (GreenID)

Her program promotes sustainable energy development, good water and air governance and green development. She was the first Vietnamese Goldman Environmental Prize recipient in 2018. Ms Khanh Chairs the Vietnam Sustainable Energy Alliance and is a member of national and international networks related to sustainable energy, climate change and environment.



Ms Chanda Thapa

Deputy-Secretary General of the Asia Indigenous People's Pact (AIPP) based in Chiang-Mai

She belongs to the Magar Indigenous Community. She is an indigenous woman leader from Nepal. She has 15 years of experience working on Indigenous Peoples Rights, women's rights, gender, peace building in Nepal and in Asia. Chanda is currently the, Thailand.



The 2020 Asia Women and Rivers Congress will hold a series of women-focused workshops on Zoom between July to September. Sadly, our plans to meet face to face in the region have had to change due to the pandemic but we are determined to keep the Congress spirit and networking alive through virtual workshops. The workshop series will prioritize participants of the previous Women and Rivers Congress in 2019 and those who would have attended the Congress in 2020, and is also open to the public. Interested participants must register to attend via Zoom.

REGISTER BY JUNE 28 for the series of three workshops: <https://intlv.rs/3cWMabb>

FIRST WORKSHOP

July 3rd 1500-1630 (BKK time, GMT+7)

Hear and discuss the findings from the study "State of Knowledge –Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region" (including the Salween basin). This study was recommended by Congress participants in 2019. It recognizes and values women's knowledge of their rivers and resources and how to bridge the divide between academic, economic and science-based knowledge and that of local riverine communities. The researchers will tell you what they found followed by reflections from a panel of local women and plenary discussion.

State of Knowledge report authors and workshop speakers



Dr. Pichamon Yeophantong is an Australian Research Council Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales (Canberra). Her expertise is in China, transboundary rivers and water governance in the Mekong region.



Karen Delfau is an independent consultant working in Europe and across the Asia Pacific to support water governance, gender equality and social inclusion, and climate resilience through research, knowledge management, and facilitation.

SECOND & THIRD WORKSHOPS

The second workshop on August 14th from 1500-1700 (BKK time) will expand on the findings and discussion in the first workshop and dig deeper into how to address the issues through tools and story-telling. We will start to look at the current and future challenges created by COVID-19. The third workshop on September 25th from 1500-1700 (BKK time) will build on the COVID-19 discussions and how women river defenders and groups can mobilize to meet these new challenges.



DISCUSSION ON THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE: WOMEN AND RIVERS IN THE MEKONG REGION

‘Women are hidden in **water governance** discourses. Traditionally, water is a technical (engineering) terrain that increasingly privileges productivity (\$ per drop). This automatically brackets out social and gender issues in making decisions about water.’ - Dr Bernadette Resurrection’

FORMAT: Participants began by describing their personal and emotional investment in rivers. This helped us to bring other cognitive dimensions into the virtual workshop and recognize our motivations for engaging with rivers.



The researchers, Ms Karen Delfau and Dr Pichamon Yeophantong introduced participants to the findings of the [State of Knowledge: Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region](#) report

‘When a woman steps into a leadership role, knowing there is a united network of women behind her driven by a shared purpose, this serves to legitimize her actions and embolden her and her cause. She becomes unstoppable.’ Executive Summary

The presentation focused around these key questions:

What is ‘women’s leadership’?

How do women engage in decision-making?

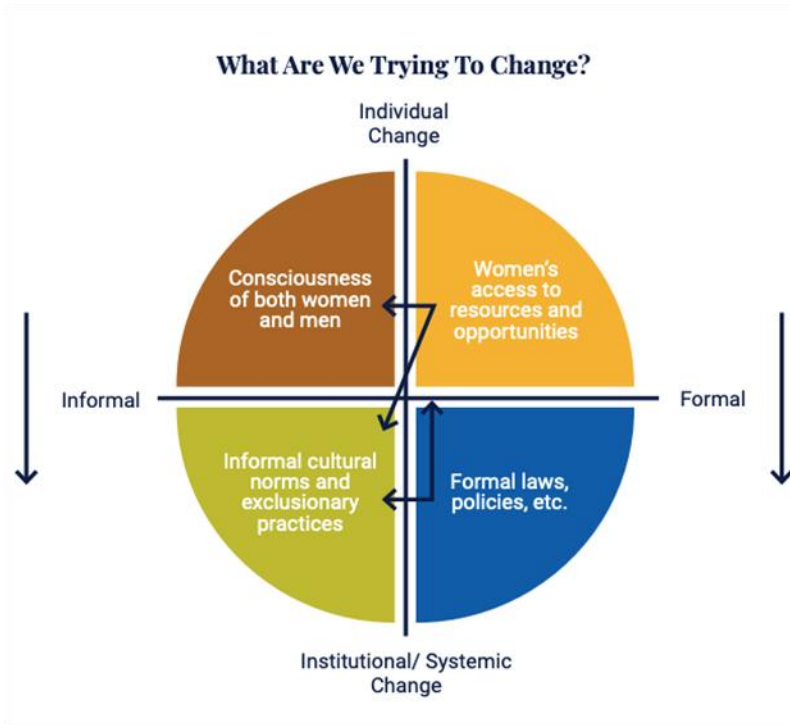
What are the major barriers and opportunities?

What are some case studies from the region that shed light on the actual and potential roles women play in river governance?

This was followed by responses from three regional women champion panelists (see speakers list) who spoke from personal experience related to the findings of the study and short plenary.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PRESENTATION

Conceptual Framework: Aruna Rao & David Kelleher: Gender Framework Analysis



THE FINDINGS

#1: MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED AND GAPS IDENTIFIED IN THE LITERATURE INCLUDE:

i) measuring gender transformation and social norm changes; ii) considering political ecology and political economy linkages; iii) incorporating a regional perspective; iv) feeding scholarship back to communities to enhance local ownership and validation of these issues and their solutions; v) defining the typologies of leadership in river and water governance

#2: ITS ABOUT POWER:

We are trying to change a structural system where men are in control. men are the ones who have their voices heard, men are the ones in the powerful positions, even when gender dominates the agenda”
Kaneka Keo, Cambodia January 17th 2020

#3 THERE IS NO SINGLE TYPE OF LEADERSHIP

Types of formal leadership	Types of collaborative leadership	Other leadership types
Structural Systematic Bureaucratic Rational Hierarchical	Transformational Participative Interpersonal Follower	Transactional Model/Moral

#4 HOW WOMEN UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE "LEADERSHIP" VARIES

- Determined by context (i.e. level of governance) and by necessity + question of intersectionality; Rural vs urban, indigenous; younger vs older woman
- Understandings and practices also change over time, accompanied by shift in focus;
- Leadership goes beyond participation and empowerment; it requires cultivating self 'consciousness' and appreciation.

KEY ACTION AREAS AND POINTS TO CONSIDER

Agency and Voice: how women are able to exert authority and raise their voices:

- Women may not feel safe or comfortable to speak openly and share their perspectives. They may lack self-confidence; feel they are not respected or listened to; struggle to comprehend technical or inaccessible language; or be constrained by gendered social and cultural norms, or power asymmetries within the room.
- To identify and empower women to step into leadership or decision-making positions, NGOs and civil society networks must enhance women's knowledge and self-confidence through training, field exchange visits, and participatory action research activities (e.g. Sao Baan).
- Community-led research (e.g. Sao Baan), knowledge co-production, and feminist participatory, bottom up action research approaches help to build women's technical and leadership capacity. Feminist participatory action research can help to create new forms of collaborative relationships essential to empower women, amplify their voices, and foster agency.

Access to and control over resources: whether and how women are able to gain access to and control over resources i.e. both 'natural' kind and 'power resources' (i.e. knowledge, finance, etc.):

- NRM is characterised by an overreliance on technical knowledge which, by nature, excludes women's (traditional) knowledge. Women are not trained in this language and feel uncomfortable when they participate in fora that are dominated by technical language.
- Realizing gender equality within the confines of a patriarchal social system is long term and requires changing institutional habits.
- Projects must ask women directly what kind of support they need, what skills they would like to develop, what government assistance they need, and how they would like to gain new skills and support.
- An improved understanding of water literacy, individual rights, and gender equity in relation to water and natural resource management must start in early education and continue through into adulthood. If women do not know their rights, they cannot exercise them!

Cultural and Social Norms, Beliefs and Practices: how (traditional) sociocultural norms, beliefs and practices in a community, sector and/or society impact women’s ability to lead:

- Efforts to empower women need to be sensitive to cultural and social norms in order to not trigger unintended consequences.
- Systems shift - Efforts to shift patriarchal social norms toward greater gender equity is a long-term endeavour—one that needs time and resources to accomplish well.
- The younger generation needs to be educated and engaged on equity in river and water resources management, as they possess the potential to shift social and cultural norms over time.
- Women have to shoulder multiple duties: for example, maintaining the wellbeing of their family; upholding harmony in their community; and generating household income. Leadership responsibilities, such as attending and participating in meetings, can add to these burdens, particularly when they clash with other responsibilities. Further, the psychological stress of speaking out on contentious issues can add to the weight of these obligations.

Legal and Political Context: how the legal and political context within a country—and the broader Mekong region—impacts women’s ability to lead:

- Structural opportunities exist to empower women through education about their rights, roles, and responsibilities. Such education is critical and must continue.
- Structural efforts to push policies, programs, and institutions toward gender equity should continue. However, these approaches (e.g. gender analysis, gender mainstreaming) alone will not guarantee equitable participation in decision-making.
- To prevent structural efforts at enhancing gender equality and equity from becoming mere box-ticking exercises, it is important that gender sensitivity is built into all stages of program or project design, development, and implementation to ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to relevant stakeholders and, in so doing, amplify inclusivity.
- Targeted efforts need to be made to educate political leaders at all levels on the significance of gender and women’s rights as cross-cutting issues.

Opportunities and Obstacles—two sides of the same coin? key challenges that arise from new opportunities vis-à-vis women’s empowerment and leadership:

- The Burden of Leadership (‘role conflict and competition’: i.e. leader of household v. community v. environmental steward roles);
- The Problem of “Silent Crackdowns” (i.e. risk of co-optation by government and the private sector);
- Intergenerational Differences (i.e. more outgoing younger population, but greater generational distance from older generation due to traditional norms/values);
- Local Women’s Knowledge and Climate Change Adaptation (i.e. shouldn’t be just about fetishizing women’s knowledge or following an issue fad, but about building longer-term awareness and pathways to implementation).

Recipe for Women’s Leadership

The report proposed a “recipe” that identifies the key factors contributing to a woman’s assumption of a leadership role:

- 1) **Identity:** strong personal and collective attachment to a river and its resources;
- 2) **Necessity:** strong threat or risk perception (e.g. from large-scale irrigation or hydropower development);
- 3) **Knowledge:** creation and sharing of knowledge that is accessible to women, and/or which is used to support women and their communities to develop the capacity to raise their voices;
- 4) **Network support:** existence of formal and/or informal networks to support women in their leadership roles;
- 5) **Agency:** ability to navigate insecurities and self-doubt and maintain good psychological health

through household, wider community and/or organizational support.

KEY POINTS MADE BY PANELISTS

- **Transformation** is dynamic and situated: examining processes of change may capture more rather than measuring against a standard norm/s
- **Leadership** can be a burden unless (women) leaders can fully exercise rights. It is the power in empowerment. If not, it adds to women's long list of caring roles.
- We need to see that women are not a homogeneous group. The lens of **intersectionality** enables us to see that women in the Mekong region experience threats to livelihoods according to their ethnic, class, age, or ability.
- Women are hidden in **water governance** discourses. Traditionally, water is a technical (engineering) terrain that increasingly privileges productivity (\$ per drop). This automatically brackets out social and gender issues in making decisions about water.
- **Men** also experience gender issues as younger men, pressured as breadwinners. They, together with ethnic groups, LGBTQI, the youth, must be part of the solution for realizing just, equal and sustainable futures in the Mekong region.

How we talk about gender: Participants were asked to pay more attention to **Gender awareness** and its forms within organisations /offices NOT just in communities and amongst most vulnerable groups. People may find it easier/more important to talk about the negative impacts on their lives rather than interpreting as a gender construct alone. A model from existing practice was presented.

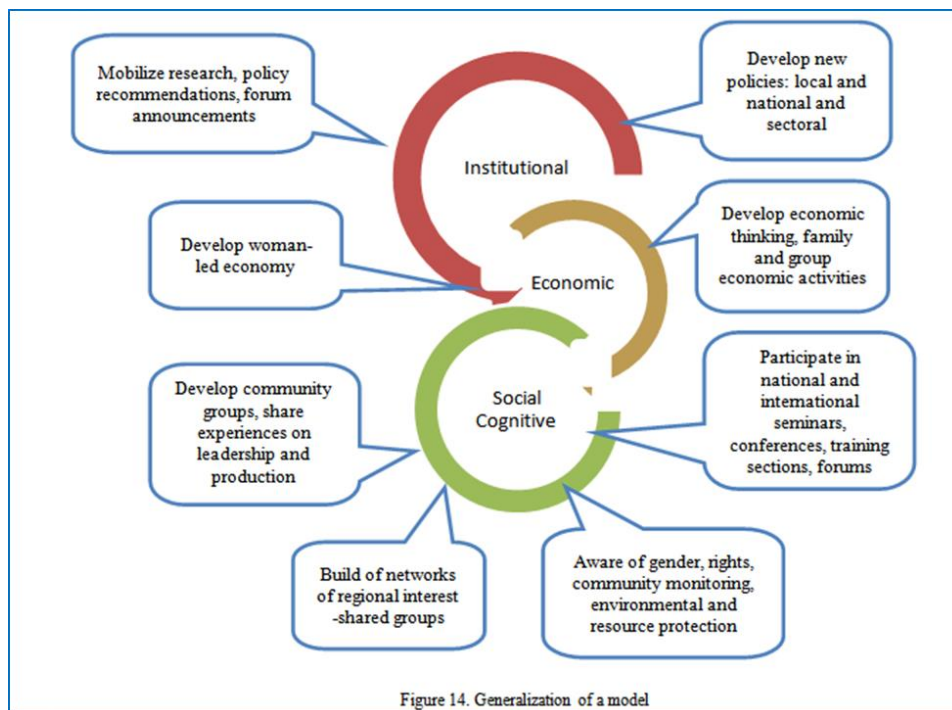


Figure 14. Generalization of a model

The **diversity of women's leadership** in the Salween was discussed (ethnicity, religion) and the challenges faced within the context i.e. statelessness, dam and national park projects –all of which will have an impact on communities.

Levels of how women advocate were outlined		
Community Level	Public level	Policy Level
By sharing opinion, building connection between young people and adults and by establishing good partnerships between communities through cooking and entertainment	By making speeches (although men are more likely to do this), shared decision-making, building networks	By issuing public statements and sending protest letters.
Barriers to women’s leadership include lack of trust and women’s burdens and duties that prevent them taking capacity building opportunities		
Opportunities for women include women groups and being able to build their capacity on women’s empowerment and leadership		

Plenary Discussion: The panelist contributions on intersectionality were appreciated and a discussion followed on how to navigate differences between older women’s ideas on leadership and those of younger women with some feedback that this can result in younger women being silenced. Speakers recognized it is a complex and frequent problem but needs to be treated with respect and recognition of generational difference and different social structures. Solutions lie in dialogue and finding common language to transform opinions.

A story from workshop 2 illustrates this generational point:

In a workshop presenting to a senior government official on a gender research study, a local young woman presented. The senior official was horrible to the woman, attacking the appropriateness of her being there presenting the research. She was stopped from continuing by a senior consultant (a white, foreign man). No one else present at the workshop pushed back. This kind of behavior is allowed and even endorsed. These kinds of major barriers further limit the prospects for becoming a future leader of young women.



ASIA WOMEN AND RIVERS CONGRESS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SECOND WORKSHOP 14 AUGUST 2020 | 15:00-17:30 BKK time, GMT +7

How can we build on our shared experiences to encourage and nurture women's leadership?

The 2020 Asia Women and Rivers Congress is holding a series of women-focused workshops on zoom between July to September to build on and further develop the Congress spirit of sharing experiences and networking. Following the highly successful first webinar where we heard and discussed the findings from the study *State of Knowledge: Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region* (including the Salween basin), the second workshop will build on the "recipe for women's leadership" and draw on participants' personal experience to share practical ways to nurture and encourage women's leadership. REGISTER BY JULY 30th for the second workshop.

HOW TO REGISTER

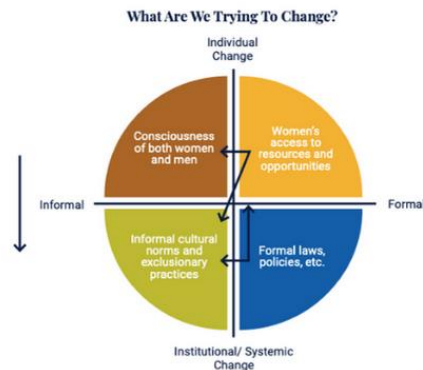
All participants must register to attend via Zoom by July 30: <https://intrlr.rs/30sUBqs>

Owing to the high demand for places and because we plan to organize a more interactive second workshop we will be limiting numbers to 60 participants.

Priority participation will be given to those already registered and those who attended Workshop One but there is still time to register as a new participant. Those who registered for all 3-webinar series, please reconfirm by July 30 and select your preference group.

New participants please confirm your interest and register your preference group by July 30. Please read on below to determine your preferred group.

WORKSHOP FORMAT



The *State of Knowledge* study identified 4 areas of change (with strong intersectionality) and proposed 5 "ingredients" needed for women leaders.* These 4 areas will frame the workshop.

Each group will share experiences/stories on how they have or could provide women with opportunities to develop leadership and take action in this particular area of change. You do not have to be an expert as the aim is to share experiences and identify opportunities. Materials from other groups will be made available after the workshop.

CHOOSE YOUR BREAKOUT GROUP

- GROUP 1:** Formal: Women's access to resources and opportunities
- GROUP 2 (MALE GROUP):** Formal: How can men support women access to resources and opportunities and support more inclusive laws and policies
- GROUP 3:** Formal: Laws and policies etc.
- GROUP 4:** Informal: Consciousness of both women and men
- GROUP 5 (MALE-ONLY):** Informal: How can men be supported to promote consciousness of both women and men and address the informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices
- GROUP 6:** Informal: Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

A more detailed agenda will be made available in early August so please check the [workshop webpage](#) and please come prepared by reading the *State of Knowledge or Executive Study* (in Mekong languages). We are looking forward to welcoming you and your stories and experience on August 14th at 15:00!

*Five Ingredients for Women's Leadership as laid out in the *State of Knowledge* report: Identity: strong personal and collective attachment to a river and its resources; Necessity: strong threat or risk perception (e.g. from large-scale irrigation or hydropower development); Knowledge: creation and sharing of knowledge that is accessible to women, and/or which is used to support women and their communities to develop the capacity to raise their voices; Network support: existence of formal and/or informal networks to support women in their leadership roles; Agency: ability to navigate insecurities and self-doubt and maintain good psychological health through household, wider community and/or organizational support.

DELVING DEEPER INTO OUR EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

"If they don't give you a seat at the table bring a folding chair"- Shirley Chisolm 1924-2005

Format: The workshop built on the first webinar and feedback on the "recipe for women's leadership" and drew on participants' personal experiences (stories) to share practical ways to nurture and encourage women's leadership.

Following the Key Note speaker's personal experience of being a Woman Leader (see speakers), participants were reminded of the conceptual framework and findings from the State of Knowledge report. Groups were allocated with a facilitator and note taker to discuss one aspect (quadrant) of the conceptual framework. Feedback in plenary followed with full notes available after the workshop.

Highlights of Personal Reflections from the Keynote Speaker

Ms. Khanh spoke a woman leader who has 70% women in her team. She noted the importance of her working style and spirit as an influence on the team and the need to create space for women to empower them.

The organization focuses on the power sector which is seen to be a technical area and designed for men so she is often asked why this focus? Her answer lies in the 'way they work.' She recognizes that men and women think and contribute differently but if women's contribution is ignored then we are missing half of the world. When she first began talking about the impact of the coal and power sector there was apprehension as women said they had no technical expertise but Ms. Khanh wanted to show that everyone benefits from development activities and issues should not be sectionalized.

She noted it is a challenge for women to engage in this sector especially if they do not have technical expertise but women are sisters, daughter and mothers and can influence and it is possible for male experts and women to work together and important that the urgency of change is recognized and everyone counts.

She acknowledges that it is not easy (creating space for women) but nothing is and it is important to have a strategy to navigate when men are so powerful in the sector. It takes skill to survive so you need to build the team capacity and enhance young women's leadership. An important point is to decentralized and expand the network of men and women working on the issue.

Ms. Khanh finished by noting that women need to be proud of the work they are doing and the support they are giving to vulnerable group to ensure there is social justice.

Question from the floor: You mentioned that there was a perception that you were looked down on the because of the lack of technical skills. What did people value when they did engage with you?

A: new inputs and shared interests

SUMMARY OF THE GROUPWORK DISCUSSIONS: Participants discussed each of the 'quadrants' of change.

Key points: recommendations for future programming

There is interest to follow up with national level research and workshops to build on local experience and reflect the importance of context

There is a need to engage men more when discussing women's leadership and gender equality so that they increase their understanding and that there is two-way communication. Men can influence men

Relating to the recipe for women's leadership:

Knowledge

Knowledge plays an important role so women can utilize with soft skills. NGOs can play an important role to bridge between local authorities and women in forest conservation. Women can share knowledge about issues-such as climate change as well as reporting on criminal activities. Knowledge and agency can play a real role at local level in support of marginalized or disenfranchised women. NGOs working with local women (with allied researchers) can see power increased for local women.

Access to knowledge is important e.g. land rights, build knowledge and confidence in technical level and providing this for women is often ignored

The prejudice of gender roles acts as a barrier yet women led groups work better and they should be provided with more capacity building initiatives to instil motivation among them.

Countries that are lagging behind on gender equality are also lagging behind on development. Male policy makers are often gender blind and need to understand the success of policy implementation depends on including women, men, and others;

Understanding how leadership in organizations e.g. hydropower companies exclude women: focus on technical knowledge, non-flexible work arrangements for work/life balance, safety / security of women (not hired for certain roles), harassment

working together to create a safe space and resource it adequately for women to speak and better-understood language of gender equality

Agency

The importance of care and focus on support to local women-not to extract or create burdens on already busy people e.g. by teachers, students, government agencies, developers, researchers coming into communities.

Need for pragmatism between access to resources and livelihood options, being responsive to new opportunities versus being overly focused on ensuring women have a voice, as being involved in political or decision-making processes may detract from livelihoods

Ensure we are careful to not undermine resilience, and entrepreneurship of women and families to adapt to change. Some people have agency but this can be different from political power.

Importance of women role models inspiring men and women to change their perception. Different experiences changes perceptions of what is possible.

Women taking the lead and not waiting for men to make decisions about things that affect them has changed their lives.

Data about participation of men and women in different roles, access to information, access to resources. Use information-based knowledge to advocate for more women participation.

Recognize if we are the society that dominate by patriarchal thinking, just participating is very hard.

Necessity

Having access to other livelihood opportunities seems more important than having a say in bigger decisions. Be pragmatic on food, livelihood replacement. Women under a lot of pressure, lots of burdens exacerbated by change from dams.

Power and interests can differ between government and community. How communities experience development (immediate and large scale at micro / local level), but where development of a river is measured at basin scale the potential for undervaluing local impacts can be very real. This disconnect can be sectoral e.g. power of the hydro sector, compared to local people interests, local food security and economic value of a river.

Issue of exclusion of women's perspectives / gender issues in laws and policies - example of ESIA in hydropower sector not looking at impacts on women.

Identity

Identity (women feel valued) and being networked results in more market access and status within the community so women are prepared to take up leadership roles
Women as collaborators and supporters of men, not attackers

Network Support

Promoting young generations to participate and play a role in changing mindsets and tackle some of the exclusionary practices and challenging the norms.

Importance of women role models supporting other women and inspiring men and women to change their perception.

Male leaders can be important in promoting and supporting women leaders but first need to understand there is a problem. Strengthening awareness of the inequality issues.

Cultural norms and exclusionary practices are "invisible" but very limiting

Positive examples to encourage women leaders...

Personal observation from a biodiversity monitoring project where men perceived to be more suited to patrolling and conservation. The project has made deliberate efforts to involve women in capacity building on the laws and regulations, electing women to village level committees for monitoring and reporting on environmental pressures and result that 30% of women are involved.

Experience from teaching: allow new students to talk about opportunities for women leadership across gender/sex and promote discussion with males. Use videos, movies, popular media to raise issues and model women's agency

Re Use of **rapid care analysis** between men and women is a tool we've used to demonstrate what unpaid care responsibilities women and men have. Men openly say that women don't do anything. Results of rapid care analysis show women are working more than men. Making this more visible, contributes to increasing understanding amongst men. Then they can offer support.

Working with young men and women together can provide better results. They can help contribute to changing the dynamics within the households. Engaging young men is producing the results. They have also grown up in a different context e.g. seeing more women around them in public settings; different views.

POINTS FROM PLENARY DISCUSSION

Data Governance and Sovereignty of data

- Importance of promoting and collectively managing indigenous data governance so knowledge is generated and traditional knowledge is not lost. It was noted that technical support through specific apps is being developed and examples given where attention to indigenous knowledge is being revised in light of recent disasters. The challenge of men's indigenous knowledge versus women's knowledge in the community is the same gender issue whether it is indigenous or general knowledge.

- Issues of sovereignty of indigenous knowledge –challenge because difficulties lie in systemic gender problems. Conservation attempting to define knowledge and which elements of traditional knowledge should be conserved. Feminist Participatory Action Methodologies mentioned as providing a good starting point as the methodology respects all stakeholders as equal contributors.

What gender equality looks like in practice?

Participants discussed the household level and why some communities appear to be more supportive of women’s leadership? It was recognised that young people may be more receptive but concerns that gender equality is not context specific, rather that it is a Human Right.

- The need to work more on gender with men was noted, from youth to political leaders to build their own understanding so they can gradually expand opportunities to women. A participant noted that there are very few women leaders in SE Asia because women leaders are “cut down” or harassed by men and become disillusioned and it is difficult to challenge the patriarchy norms.
- This led to how to support emerging women leaders and whether network support could ignite the sisterhood /partnership? Positive experiences were given as well as of older women being unsupportive to younger women -almost believing that they should have to go through all the same hoops and challenges.
- Recognition that it is important to create more opportunities to support women leaders so that women’s leadership becomes ordinary i.e. the norm rather than the exception.

Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn’t be that women are the exception”

Ruth Bader Ginsberg 1933-2020

American Supreme Court Justice

Karen Indigenous Woman Leader Fighting against Water Diversion Project on the Salween River
Story by: Worawan Sukraoek

I am Wora, Mekong Campaign Coordinator at EarthRights International. My passion is to promote women’s leadership in river protection and development in the Mekong region and to strengthen the women’s rights defender’s movement against destructive water infrastructure development. My past experiences have led me to create long lasting bonds in support of my woman peers in the Mekong and Salween River region as they defend their rights over their natural and river resources and their rights to participate in decision-making around water infrastructure projects. At EarthRights International, I have an opportunity to

use the power of law to defend the power of the Salween people and to support women in their movements against large dams and ill-conceived



Caption: Nawa and Karen woman leaders in Ta Rue village.
 Photo credit: Chalefun

water diversion projects. I lead advocacy against Thai-funded [Salween dams](#) that are causing [human rights violations](#).

The story that I would like to share today is the story of a Salween Woman Leader that I work with, Ms. Nawa. Nawa is an indigenous Karen woman who lives in Ta-Ruea village in Mae Hong Son province. When she heard about the Salween Water Diversion project, which will divert water from the Salween River to the Yuam and Ngao rivers in Mae Hong Son, she questioned how many people in her community would know what the project looks like, the scale of the project and the environmental and social impacts that the project would bring. The diversion design includes digging a tunnel which will destroy farmland and houses.

Nawa is leading a community movement to demand inclusive public participation in the consultation process, and right to know about the project's impacts, and the right to participate in decision-making as to whether the project should go ahead in her village.

The movement that Nawa is leading has become bigger and stronger in the sense that the community has been able to lodge a complaint with the concerned agency in Thailand to demand the right to participate in the environmental impact assessment of the project and the right to decision-making.

Nawa's commitment and passion to support her community and her peers is well recognized. Nawa

challenged cultural norms by encouraging women in her village to attend important meetings with men and to raise their voices. She led the youth movement on the Salween to fight against this project and led efforts to submit a complaint to the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) and United Nations Agencies to demand the rights of the indigenous woman in decision-making. Intervention by the UN and NHRCT has resulted in a recommendation to the Thai government that the Royal Irrigation Department conduct wider consultations with indigenous women in Mae Hong



Caption: First public consultation on the Salween-Yuam-Ngao Water Diversion project. Photo credit: Suwat Salween

Son who are impacted by the Salween-Yuam-Ngao Water Diversion project.

Through my work to support the Salween communities, Nawa's story, her passion and her endless commitment has inspired me and fuels my spirit and commitment to continue supporting women's leadership and the movement in the Salween.



ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIRD WORKSHOP

25 SEPTEMBER 2020

15:00–17:30 BKK TIME, GMT+7

How can we support Women's Leadership in a time of COVID 19 response and recovery?

The 2020 Asia Women and Rivers Congress is holding a series of women-focused workshops on zoom between July to September to build on and further develop the Congress spirit of sharing experiences and networking.

Following the highly successful previous two workshops where we heard and discussed the findings from the study [State of Knowledge: Women and Rivers in the Mekong Region](#) (including the Salween basin) and discussed practical ways to nurture and encourage women's leadership ([workshop 2 summary](#)), the third workshop will explore practical ways to meet the challenges and support women leaders during COVID 19 response and recovery. Building on the "recipe for women's leadership"¹¹ participants will share their experiences through stories and identify joint actions that can support women's leadership during unprecedented times.

REGISTER BY: SEPTEMBER 15th (previous participants to reconfirm) SEPTEMBER 18th for new participants. Please use link to register [HERE](#).

HOW TO REGISTER

Owing to the high demand for places and because we plan to organize an interactive workshop we will be limiting numbers to 70 participants. Priority participation will be given to those who attended [Workshop One and Two](#). There is still time to register as a new participant but we do request you to prepare by reading the linked documents.

SPECIAL REQUESTS FOR REGISTRATION

All participants must register to attend via Zoom. Please register with the ID you intend to use to join the workshop.

As you register, please send us a short personal profile (2-3 lines) so we know where you work and why you are interested in women's leadership in water governance during the pandemic.

If you can contribute a story /example of women's leadership during the time of COVID 19 based on what you have experienced or heard, please tick **YES** in the registration and we will send you further guidance. Written audio or video stories in English should be with us by **September 21st**.

Subject to time availability we hope to hear most of the stories during the groupwork and to incorporate them into workshop documentation so all participants can read the stories. By sharing your story you are giving permission for it to be included in the workshop report so you may want to consider any sensitivities names, location etc.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU ON SEPTEMBER 25th FOR ANOTHER THOUGHT PROVOKING WORKSHOP

¹¹ **Identity:** strong personal and collective attachment to a river and its resources; **Necessity:** strong threat or risk perception (e.g. from large-scale irrigation or hydropower development); **Knowledge:** creation and sharing of knowledge that is accessible to women, and/or which is used to support women and their communities to develop the capacity to raise their voices; **Network support:** existence of formal and/or informal networks to support women in their leadership roles; **Agency:** ability to navigate insecurities and self-doubt and maintain good psychological health through household, wider community and/or organizational support.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY?



The face to face Asia Women and Rivers Congress had been moved online due to COVID 19 and each of our workshops had been held with the backdrop of varied and changing impacts of the pandemic across the region. The anticipated negative and disproportionate impacts of COVID 19 on women and girls in all aspects of their lives was being reported so it was important to consider how women’s leadership could be supported during these challenging times.

Format: The workshop picked up on the second webinar and feedback. Participants were asked to re-register and there were a number of new participants with a specific interest in this workshop. Participants were asked to submit stories from their own experience. Other participants did not submit stories but told them during the group work.

Following a key note speaker who set the scene by talking about the impact of COVID 19 on indigenous communities and their coping strategies, the researcher’s Dr Pichamon Yeophongtang and Ms Karen Delfau framed the group work. Significant time was allowed for group work culminating in a short plenary. Throughout the workshop a graphic illustrator captured the discussions.

Highlights from the Keynote Speaker

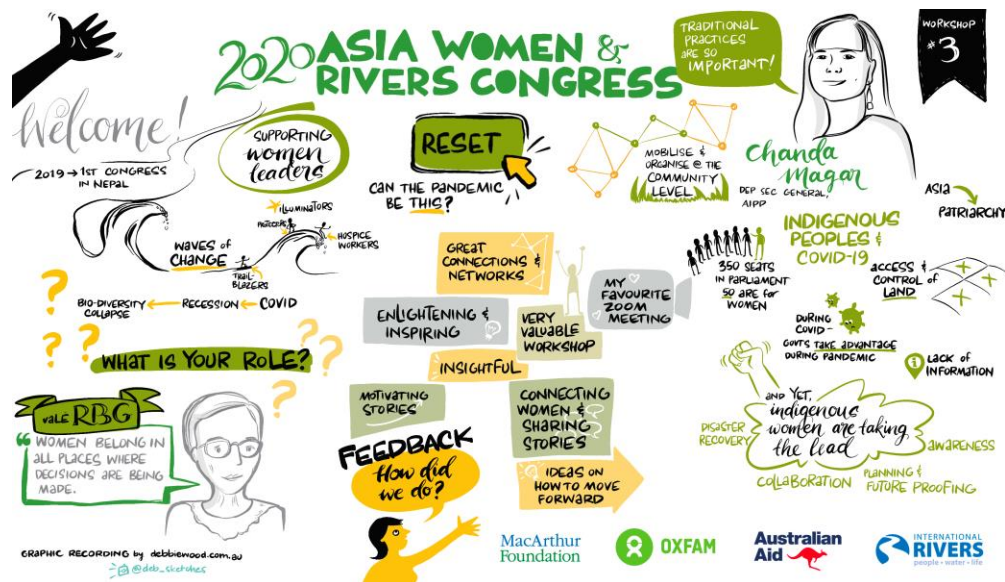
Ms. Chanda Thapa magar, Deputy Secretary General: Asia Indigenous People Pace (AIPP)

AIPP has been working on the rights of Indigenous People (IP) since 1992. There are 411 million indigenous people in Asia of whom 50% are women. Most states deny indigenous people their social, political and economic rights and patriarchal traditions further deny indigenous women their rights.

Challenges and contributions that had been made by indigenous women during this time of COVID. IP play a significant role in land management - 70% shifting agriculture is done by indigenous people yet they have no control over the land, indigenous women are custodians of the land for livelihoods, environmental resource management and biodiversity. IP are excluded from decision making in the judicial, civil administration and Parliament e.g. of 350 seats Bangladesh Parliament allocates 50 for women but none are taken by indigenous women.

COVID-19 has worsened the situation and disproportionately affected the indigenous elderly and women reducing livelihoods, access to food and criminalization e.g. Human Right defender arrested in Philippines. Governments have used COVID-19 legislation e.g. restrictions on social gatherings to allow illegal land grabs to continue e.g. in Bangladesh and the presence of the military has led to abuses and harassment in some areas. Indigenous women and those living with disabilities have been further denied access to timely health services and there has been no health information in indigenous languages. In the absence of disaggregated data, it has been hard to target intersectional issues.

However indigenous women have been at the forefront of managing COVID in their communities. They have produced their own protective equipment, kept local school running and used traditional practices to quarantine and network to e.g. use local energy systems to increase independence. Traditional agricultural practices have contributed to food security (Malaysia). IP communities have used local knowledge for food security, translation health messages into local languages (Nepal in 43 languages) for broadcast or used traditional painting for health messages on walls (India).



Illustrations presented by Ms. Debbie Wood

Framing The Discussion

Do we need to shift knowledge and value systems?

Re-evaluating knowledge creation and communication
Valuing women's roles in unpaid and informal sectors

Growing Women's Agency - Action-enable-influence tactics:

Leadership training, Personal Action Plans, In-community network building
Importance of deep resilience – 'psychology of safety (looping back to action-enable etc).

Roles within a system of change:

what roles could we play individually and together?

Has COVID increased burdens on women? E.g. @multi-level impacts, with primary (e.g. healthcare) and secondary effects (additional economic and psychological burdens)

How should knowledge and values be re-evaluated and produced in a post COVID environment?

How can women navigate and grow their agency in this 'new normal'?

Is COVID as a "reset opportunity"?

Groups recognised that:

COVID 19 is intensifying the impact of systems that already didn't work for women, indigenous groups, people with a disability and poor communities – including migrant workers, informal workers and social isolation and economic pressure is contributing to an increase in violence against women.

Current COVID 19 responses are increasing economic inequality e.g. land grabs, more competition for fewer livelihood opportunities and the constraint of political and civil rights in some countries. Key points from the plenary and group work have been captured as Congress learning and ordered according to the recipe for women's leadership.

LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Identity

Supporting women to seize the opportunity: The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to raising awareness and improving river biodiversity and the ecosystem as well as highlighting pressures on the environment. This is an opportunity to reinforce the importance of protecting rivers and communities are experiencing the food security and safety net rivers can provide. As river defenders, women have the opportunity to play a leadership role in advocacy by putting biodiversity and environmental protection on the policy and reform agenda in e.g. Myanmar upcoming elections.

All women need to be seen and understood: Despite the current challenges of access, increasing and improving the disaggregation of data and improving research on particularly rural women will ensure women's knowledge and traditions are not overlooked or lost and will enable the monitoring of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women.

I am Khadiza Tul Kobra Nahin from Bangladesh and this is a story about our family. I live in a family which is female headed and here live my mother and sisters. All of us are independent women who are doing both business and household works. During this pandemic our business was quite hampered. My mother's rented houses were being empty, my elder sisters travel business was paused and my second sisters' products which were ready to be imported got stuck. Well, financially that was not much of a problem for the first few months, but the problem was buying groceries and collecting my mother's medicines. We have no helping hand who could safely deliver our necessary things to us. We were too protective about our mother who is a diabetic patient, we didn't let her go outside for her everyday walk. Gradually my mother got high diabetes as a result. But we couldn't even take her to consult a doctor. As my sisters also couldn't stop their business for long, they had to go outside regularly. We passed four months somehow, but then my sister and I suddenly had COVID-19 symptoms. We panicked and blanked at first, because it was difficult to think if we would get worse conditions

then what my mother will do! We were more tense about her than ourselves. Both of us got isolated together and tried to take care of each other. But at one point that was not possible. Our mother was doing too much hard work, she was earning, she was doing household chores alone and taking care of ourselves too. As we couldn't eat the usual foods, she had to make extra efforts in cooking. She was also taking care of my sister's child. It felt like our mother got extra hands these days to look after so many things at once. After a few days we recovered from illness, my sister started her business again and the days of hardships were eventually gone. But we could finally understand what it is to be a mother. How my mother handled the situation, did earning, household chores and took care of us and finally taking care of her health too was more than praiseworthy. Also, I realized that the society's services should be designed thinking about emergencies faced by us women. The male members of the house should come forward to help the women members of the house and share the difficulties they are facing while dealing with the extra responsibilities they have during lockdown.

Necessity

Story from the field: The resilience of Women's Leadership in a time of crisis

Unexpected Flood of Tears

By: *Khamvichai Phommachanh*

Noua Deng Village (known as red cow) is one of the developed villages of Sanasomboun District, located about 12 kilometers from Pakse City, the capital of Champasak Province, Lao PDR. Over 75% of the population are farmers who practice rice transplantation, livestock and poultry raising and growing small cash crops such as garden vegetables that grow along the river bank.

Last year, the village, which sits on the banks of the Se Don River, was hit with a flash flood. This was very unexpected, as last flood had happened in 1978. Back then, most villagers, especially those with livestock, were able to make shelters and set up short-term camps in higher areas that were not affected by the flood. Prior to this flood people had been noticed that the level of the river was low, but it very quickly increased by 48 centimeters and only lasted for 30 hours.

The 2019 catastrophic flood lasted for 4 days in September, and was the worst-case scenario for Pakse City and surrounding areas. The Mekong River rose as high as 4 meters and flooded the wider areas, especially the villages living along the Se Don River, which is one of the tributaries to the Mekong River in the mouth of Pakse. The villages affected by the flood were Ngoua Deng, Paksone, Keng Keaw, Deua Tai, Deua Neua, Solo, Champii and That Villages.

One of the worst hit was Noua Deng Village. Since the village had been safe for 40 years, they were unprepared for this disaster, resulting in devastating damage to their beloved village temple and hundreds of homes. The river started flooding at midnight and the water travelled swiftly from one village to another - it took only an hour for the water level to rise 40 centimeters and continued to rise up to 4.50 meters over the next four days. Many were not prepared to move any of their property up to the

2nd floors of their house or to the safer places. This included vehicles, livestock, poultry, food, drinking water and many personal possessions.

The long-term effects are still being felt today as the loss of resources led to severe economic hardships for many. The village people banded together to look to the future and will be working with local government authorities to implement better water management systems and disaster preparedness.

During such flooded there were no any agencies come to help us, only relatives and cousins and villagers nearby whom were not affected like the villages mentioned above. They came across to help us overcome such serious situations as provide their supports in moving some villagers out of the village and some livestock into the shelters where there were far and higher than the level of the flood. The most reasonable places to make as shelters by that time were the Monk and Novice's houses, and the 2nd floors of Secondary School Building. And that finding



the best solution to resettlement the villagers into three sites. They were: 1). the highest surface (Done Phu Mouang); 2). Kilometer 8 (Bus Station) and 3). Non-Saad Village. At the same time, all the cattle and other livestock including poultry are resettled into the 1st floor of Ngoua Deng Secondary School Building properly.



After that, there were some agencies from government, foundation and charities came over to help people/villagers in the village out of their village for a wide. There, they provided some basic foods for survival to all villagers whose settled in the three different shelters and camps. Due the high level of the river flooded with the wider spaces.

Thus, we could not calculate on the cost of damages. Within the full four-day and nights of flooding, the first estimated worse around 2,000,000,000 LAK (Two Billion Lao Kip), particularly in Ngoua Deng Village alone.

Upon the level of river went down, all villagers focused to clean their own houses, cross-checking of all their properties that left-over at their houses. However, there were some goodwill and charities still provided their supports to us. Especially, foods and drinking water to us continuously. All these supports made the villagers in the village were very gratitude to their supported and encouraged them to over-come such crisis with a strong manner.

There are strong threats to women and for their leadership: For some women impacted by COVID-19 the situation is dire and it was reported there have been cases of suicide. Alternative sources of income need to be found for e.g. migrant women workers who have lost their jobs and, due to the lock-down, cannot return home.

Ask women what is needed in relief and economic packages:

Where government relief systems exist, they are complicated, difficult to access for the poor and discriminatory. It is important to make them more targeted and accessible to women and for women to be involved in advising government on the relief packages.

I read a newspaper article during the lockdown period of Covid-19 back in April in Vietnam, about a Tay woman named Vay from Yen Bai province in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, who recently moved to Hanoi with her husband to be a worker in a factory. The couple had a loan which they borrowed to build their house in the village a few years ago, and with the salary, they were able to repay half of the loan but then Covid-19 happened and the lockdown was enforced. The couple had to move to a smaller rented place, and Vay was still lucky to receive 70% of her salary while staying at home, but only for a short period. Their money was draining out and in Hanoi, they cannot grow their own food like back in their home village, so they had to rely partly on the charity rice/food distribution. Vay has two small children who stay with their grandparents at her home village, but she could not go back home to visit them because of the lockdown. I don't know how their circumstances are

now, but given the ongoing situation, it might still be dire and trapped.

This story makes me think about what forced Vay to leave her home village in the first place. I think that if she had a choice, she wouldn't have left home and her children for the big city. It must have something to do with the 'development' process which should have improved people's lives instead of causing more difficulties for them, especially for indigenous women. This is quite similar to what happens with the development of hydropower in river basins.

We might want to work to minimize the impacts of the development on people's lives, but more importantly, our work focuses on building the awareness of communities about their rights and helping them to raise their voice and claim back these rights, so that women like Vay can have more control of her life and wouldn't have to migrate and become trapped when things like COVID-19 happen.

Extend and make microfinance and livelihood support mechanisms easily available to women

Women farmers and food producers and indigenous women have demonstrated their resilience during COVID and have reverted to traditional forms of communication and resilience e.g. bartering between communities for food security and maintaining local markets. Despite their increased household burdens, they know the importance and value of local food production and this is an opportunity to empower communities and women whilst remaining close to home. All the evidence is that women are good managers of resources and a low risk for lending.

Story: Women trying to Access Support

My name is Areeya. I am a daughter of a very strong hearted woman who is capable of providing for her family and her daughter. This story is about my mother. I choose to talk about my mother because she has given me the opportunity and all the basic resources and capital to keep learning. I believe I can work as a development worker in the NGO sector and with local communities simply because my mother has provided the basic needs and we need not to worry about it.

When COVID-19 broke out and the government of Thailand declared a state of pandemic emergency and a lockdown, I was fortunate enough not to worry much about what would happen to me and my mother for the next six months. We are not farmers and we do not own land but we still have access to food and comfortable shelters. I believe it's my mother managerial and accounting skills that allow us to live comfortably and provide for 4-5 close relatives as well. Every day, my mother would tell me how much she has spent and how much we have left and how long we would be able to live with our savings. She would search for sales coupons and look for opportunities to get any discounted price from the shops. She would also try to shop at a local farmer's market (we call it green market) in order to support local farmers in times of the pandemic. As we were in the rural areas, quarantine and travel restrictions were not as strict as in the cities but we were cautious of where we went and who we interacted with.

When the government released news about providing 5,000 baht for three months to help any worker or citizen in times of COVID19, my mother registered online but it was unsuccessful. We went to the banks and local government departments to ask for reasons, but all my mother received in return was a paper to write down her problem. We finally went to Bangkok to ask for a reason at the Public Relations Department. Again, they asked my mother to sign the same paperwork. She did it again. The

government broadcasted on the television that anyone facing the registration problem needed to go to the bank to file the complaints. My mother went to 3 banks. All provided the same paperwork. My mother signed them all again. She finally went to the Ministry of Finance, only to be stopped by a government worker saying she's not allowed to go in to file the complaint (even though the government said on live television a few days earlier that citizens could file complaints at the Ministry of Finance). She persisted. A few meters away, a few dozen people stood in front of the Ministry's gate. We all came with the same purpose and question: Why couldn't we register online as others? What's wrong with our application? What's wrong with our ID card? How come no one told us anything? At that moment, my mother persisted and asked the government staff again about where she could file her complaint. The staff pointed her in the direction to a door. It was when she arrived at the door that she realized that the door was meant for an exit not to the reception or entrance.

My mother later joined a Line group (instant messaging service) with a few hundreds of people who needed the subsidy during COVID19 but never knew why their application never got responded or accepted. My mother read me the messages sometimes. A woman said she needed to know why her application got rejected and she needed to find ways to take care of her children. Others told similar problems. Some were laid off during the pandemic and never knew where to go.

My mother and I were lucky that we could live comfortably during COVID-19. She went through all that process to simply seek answers to what's wrong with her ID card. She never got any answer. She only found out that there were at least a few hundred other people who never got any response or help to get through COVID-19. As citizen, I don't know either where to check what happened to the government spending during COVID-19.

***** Human rights should be respected and governments held accountable to maintain their priorities for the most vulnerable during COVID 19 special measures**

COVID has negatively impacted on government maintaining its priorities and may be used as a delaying tactic to avoid legitimate and urgent human rights issues. The restrictions on people gathering has been used to prevent civil protest whilst cases are continuing to be brought against activists.

Network Support

As context is so important ask women what they want...

Continue and increase support to strengthen formal and informal networks and develop new ones: Whilst recognizing that women are time poor and have increased household and work burdens, there are opportunities for generating new, empowering connections for women e.g. outside their own geographical area. Focusing on young women as the gateway not only because they have the technological “know-how” but also to increase their capacity can lead to innovation. One participant organisation explained they are receiving multiple requests for support but require partners to collaborate before responding to their requests.

Strengthening and re-purposing existing networks and increasing the use of translation: by providing new or re-shaped inclusive meeting places or platforms for women and girls to share stories and experiences in different languages or with sub-titles and providing a ‘co-learning’ platform for women to share other media. Coordinate women’s networks on specific issues e.g. biodiversity, rivers energy. Experience of working with women on water governance is that they think and plan long term so they will be thinking beyond the current COVID-19 crisis.

Mobilise more flexible, responsive funding: existing designated funds should be freed up to support coordination and collaboration including access to technical communication.

Agency: ability to navigate insecurities and self-doubt and maintain good psychological health through household, wider community and/or organizational support.

Bring practical facilitation experience and knowledge on-line: Men and women’s mobility is restricted so women have more of a chance to participate on-line providing similar strategies to face to face meetings are utilized e.g. working with women only prior to a community meeting, facilitating women to speak first. However, need to be alert to men’s wish to ‘protect’ women does not lead to exclusion on-line.

I am Socheat working in the adult education field. I choose to do this work because I am passionate about cultivating critical thinker and responsible citizen through self-awareness, critical thinking and soft-skills education. One of the youths from the training I delivered in 2018 and a non-experienced fresh graduate female engineer became my project officer and working closely with me early this year. Because of the Covid-19, the team, my officer and myself decided to adapt Zoom as a new way of facilitating one of our education programs after thoughtful discussion. Also, she is encouraged to be a main facilitator of 8 participants; and this is her

first time. At first, she declined as she has no experience in facilitating online learning before, so she was afraid to make mistake and ruin the whole program. After few quite minutes, I asked her to look at her first month at work and workshop- what was happening? And, what was inspiring you to continue doing this work? I heard her deep breath, and she said "Yes, I will do it". Definitely, she did it, "yeay!" Plus, she got positive feedback from participants. On top of that I delegated to present the result of this program to the country manager and lead the insightful Q&A session. She always has my back.

Maintain girls and women's access to (online) education as they need education to be leaders.

The closure of schools and move to online schooling has negatively impacted on rural children and particularly girls. Factories have been closed affecting family income. One participant described a family where the older sister was the main bread winner but lost her income so could not afford online schooling for siblings and they were forced to resort to child labour by falsifying their ages.

Build on positive examples of on- line communication to ensure it creates opportunities and reduces risks for women and that information and psychological support on COVID 19 reaches women

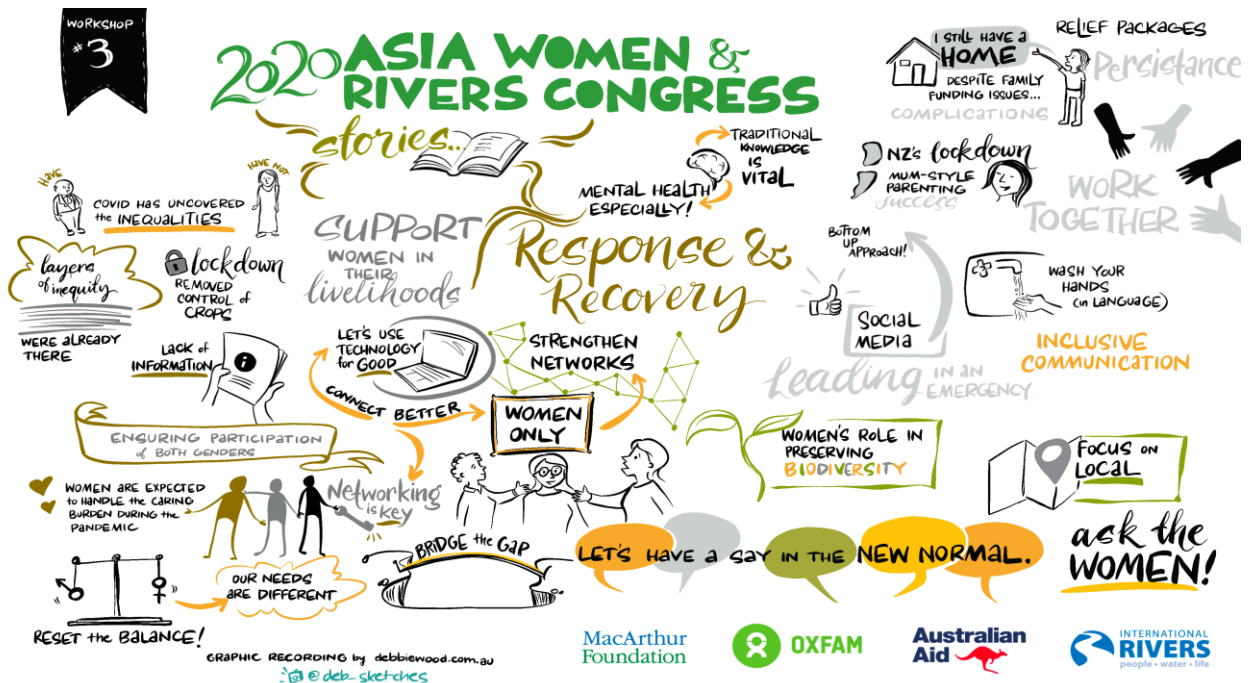
Challenges remain in making access more inclusive, particularly for women in rural areas: costs, limited or no internet access, language barriers, technical barriers and the safety of human rights defenders. Participants had practical examples of:

providing funding support for participants to travel to areas with – and pay for costs to access – better internet; invest in simultaneous translations in online events
Supporting young women leaders who have better access to the digital technology can be the conduit to older women leaders and could bridge the generational /technology barrier.
The example of an indigenous woman from Bangladesh explaining to a young girl in ethnic dialog how to wash your hands properly was made and posted by a small group and went viral. It not only showed cross generational learning but also how to use social media.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo_BlyHJoSY

Capturing our Third Webinar

Illustrations presented by Ms. Debbie Wood www.debbiewood.com.au



THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS

Thanks to all the participants to the 2020 Asia Women and Rivers Congress and we hope to see you all again soon. We will be working on how to put the learning and recommendations into action so please check our websites.

Thanks to **Ms. Pauline Taylor-Mckeown** for facilitating the webinars.

[Blogs on the workshop series can be found here:](#)

<https://cambodia.oxfam.org/latest/blogs/asia-women-and-rivers-congress-online-workshops-glance?fbclid=IwAR26oaixpYUrRBovkELKRsP9kixZ0dWTGcUG25qYtRTPUrf905tFCTVNixQ>

https://www.womenandrivers.com/blog#h.p_inz04L0g2mrX



Women boat driver tour youth participants at Oxfam's "Youth Exchange and Storytelling Workshop" at Kampong Pluk Community Ecotourism on the Great Lake, Cambodia.

Photos by: Savann Oeurm/Oxfam

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