

Productivity and the promise of integrated rice-fish systems: How gender will shape success or failure in an era of rural transformation in Myanmar

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Background

- Unprofitable and unproductive farming; monoculture rice the lowest productivity in Southeast Asia
- Complex land tenure and land use policy
- Rural poverty 38.8% : Urban 14.5%
- Outmigration (seeking better jobs)
- 1 in 3 children suffer a form of malnutrition
- Absence of gender in the rice-fish discourse

Research Questions

- What are women and men smallholders aspirations, needs and preferences in relation to rice-fish production; to what extent do emerging technologies meet these?
- What are the barriers to gender-equitable outcomes from improved/integrated rice-fish production system?
- How can integrated rice-fish production systems contribute to gender equity and women's empowerment?
- Any unintended consequences or trade-offs and why?

Project



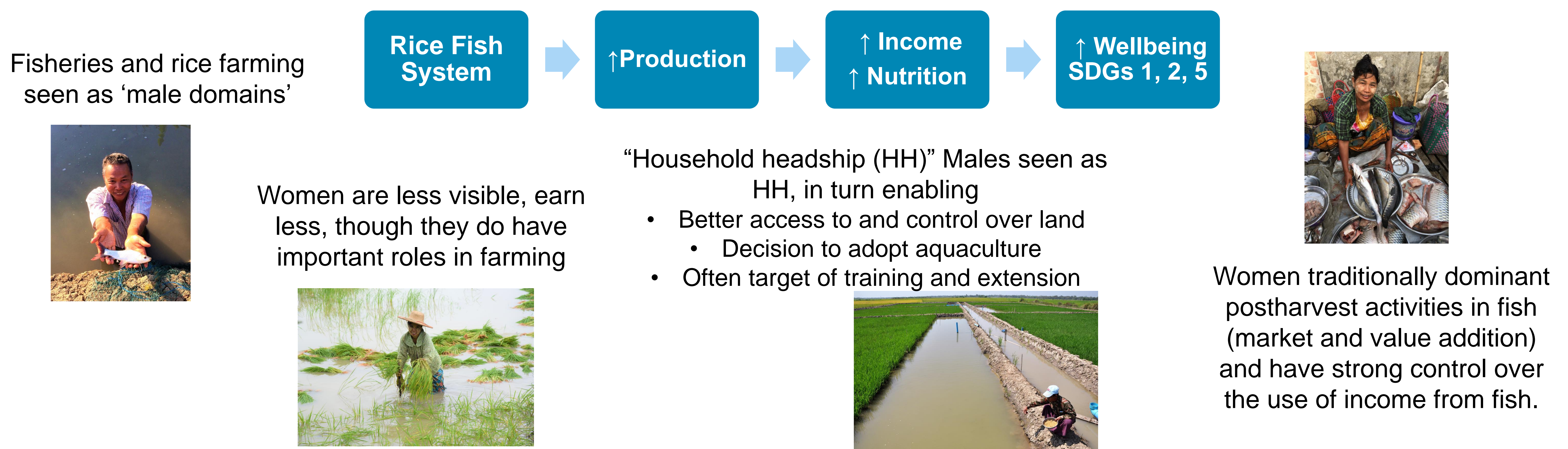
- ACIAR funded WorldFish, IRRI, Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries collaborative research on rice-fish systems.
- Ayeyarwaddy Delta (2016 – 2020)
- Demonstration farm phase; integrates mixed methods longitudinal social studies through to scale out.
- Results presented: first round findings of FDG's and KII's in communities surrounding the demonstration plots.

"... We don't want our children to be farmers... cannot get rich as a farmer."

Male smallholder rice farmer, Myaungmya focus group discussion

Rice-fish systems offer increased production, profits, improved livelihoods and nutrition; but these outcomes will rely on gender barriers being addressed.

In order for rice-fish systems to increase production leading to increases in nutrition and income, leading to increases in household wellbeing; both women and men will need to be equitably engaged in and benefiting from the systems, including having access to extension and control over income. Yet current gender dynamics and barriers challenge the assumption that this will happen on its own.



Gender and social inequalities overlook a large proportion of the agricultural workforce (women and landless persons), limit equitable employment and risk the opportunity of rice-fish systems in achieving the overarching development outcomes.

From the individual farmer to the policy dialogue, our applied research continues to inform the project design in inclusive strategies and ways forward for piloting and scaling rice fish systems.

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