**Written Submission**UNSR on the Right to Food’s IPC Consultation 17 November 2023: 12.00-14.00 (BKK) **Mr. Sattaya PHUKPHO
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Sustainable Development Foundation [SDF] is a non-profit organization in Thailand. SDF promotes and supports community-based, multi-stakeholder, participatory approaches to natural resources and environmental management, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and inclusive sustainable development.**Challenges of Fishers Communities in Thailand**

Due to the lockdown from **COVID-19**, the travel restrictions, and the limited operation period of wholesale markets, middlemen could not deliver fish and fishery products to major fish markets. As a result, the middlemen stopped buying fish or bargained at extremely low prices; thus, some fishermen discontinued their fishing operations. Some fishermen, most of them women, started to sell their catch by themselves, but there were not enough customers because tourism activities, restaurants, and local markets were also suspended.

Another element affecting small-scale fisheries is **climate change**. The existing issue that Thai fisherman encounter is **the capture of juvenile aquatic animals** and the **contamination of water from large-scale fisheries**. Recently, climate policies provided additional impacts on coastal areas and small-scale fishing communities. Specifically, it is the introduction of carbon credits policy, which is becoming more popular in mangrove forest areas.

According to an SDF study, government-sponsored mangrove forest restoration has changed the ecosystem's diversity. It has an impact on the food system as well as the livelihoods of women who work in mangrove forests. Catching aquatic animals in the forest is no longer possible since the forests’ varieties have been reduced to only mangrove forests**. The carbon credit scheme being implemented by Thai government agencies is another issue that will determine the diversity of mangrove forests and lead to infringement of communities' rights to participate in forest management**. The impact on livelihoods will lead to an increasing number of women being driven out of the fishing industry and forced to work outside their villages.

At policy level, Thailand also faces **problems defining local fisheries or providing a clear separation between small-scale fishing and commercial fishing**. This problem causes gaps in policies and laws implementation that regulate fisheries while government policies do not provide effective frameworks to protect small-scale fisheries. The **policy setting and enforcement does not take into account the context and way of life of small-scale fishing communities.**

In Thailand, **women fishers must work at different levels to deal with the multiple challenges they face**. They must work not only within fishing communities but also with other communities and the wider small-scale fisheries movement. However, the health of women in small-scale fisher-folk communities can be particularly at risk, as various pressures force them to both maintain their household work while simultaneously looking for additional work outside the community.

On the national level, women are participating actively in small-scale fisheries, but **national statistics in Thailand are not sex-disaggregated**, and the needs of women are therefore not taken into account during policy formulation. Because integrating women into decision-making also faces very fundamental policy challenges due to the barrier of equal participation of women and men in small-scale fisheries governance, such as lack of information about small-scale fisheries, especially on women and fisheries,  poor law enforcement, despite existing gender equality laws, **lack of strategic measures to promote gender in fisheries and natural resource management** in fisheries and natural resource governance, weak policy advocacy among small-scale organizations and NGOs networks, and insufficient programs and resources to ensure advocating for gender equity and equality in actions.

Other problems include:

1. Destructive fishing gears that are harmful to young aquatic animals;
2. The violation of housing rights of coastal fishing communities by forcing fishing communities living at sea to pay unfair rent for their homes. This practice conflicts with the income of small-scale fishermen;
3. Climate change has caused fishermen to be unable to fish as usual and made it more difficult for fishers to predict the weather. As a result, fishermen are unable to adapt to climate change in a timely manner while the government sector does not have a clear policy to support adaptation;
4. Thailand has a lot of mega projects, industry, and infrastructure construction on the coastal zone, and all of these projects affect coastal and fishery communities on both sides of the coastal zone, such as the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) as well-known Eastern Seaboard, the Land Bridge mega-project, which is being promoted as a new destination for future investments, developing deep-sea ports on the Gulf of Thailand and the shores of the Andaman Sea, etc.;
5. Thailand has a large animal feed production industry produced from young aquatic animals. Animal feed is exported to both inside and outside the country. These industries cause the capture of undersized fish and marine resources deterioration. The government sector does not have clear regulations and put economic values before protecting natural resources. This is a matter of concern for the future of resources and food security;
6. Marine protected areas (MPAs) link to community, livelihood, resources, especially how MPAs are governed and managed. These areas, including Marine National Parks situated near rural communities, are highly dependent on coastal resources. MPAs nowadays face negative impacts from tourism which affected fisheries and coastal communities’ livelihoods in return of economic benefits. Tourism undermines access to and support for community-based development of capitals – be it cultural, social, political, financial, natural, human, physical, and political assets. In Thailand, MPAs were a biological success but a social failure. MPAs limited participation, did not fairly share and distribute economic benefits, and did not have ways to settle disagreements. This was because MPAs’ framework had been shifted from community-based or community rights-based management and governance to centralized national management and governance.