

# Turning the Tide in Marine Conservation – The Women Leaders Forum of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security\*

*\*An article by CTI-CFF Regional Secretariat and Rili Djohani, Executive Director of Coral Triangle Center/CTC in supporting the conduct of CTI-CFF Side Event at UN Ocean Conference on SDG14, 6 June 2017, UNHQ, New York "The Coral Triangle – Partnerships to Achieve SDG14 (and more!!!) in the World's Epicentre of Marine Biodiversity*

## **Women and the Ocean**

Women's relationship with the ocean is shaped by their unique knowledge, solutions and interactions with its natural resources. While the men are away at sea, women play a crucial role in marine environments and fisheries economies, particularly playing important roles in small-scale and artisanal fisheries. They perform many of the pre-harvesting and post-harvesting tasks such as maintaining the equipment and the processing and marketing of the fish. Additionally, herbs and medicinal plants which are valued for their domestic uses are primarily collected by women who are responsible as household keepers. Their activities and services, paid and unpaid, managing sea resources from household to community levels are largely undervalued and unnoticed. Several international commitments such as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992 and the Declaration of World Food Security in 1996 have long seen the potential of women as environmental stewards and addressed how the full participation of women is essential to achieve sustainable development.

Despite their daily reliance on marine resources and representing half of the total working population worldwide in the seafood industry as a whole, the gender equality is still poorly represented in natural resource management and decision making in conservation. To recognize women's achievements and their leadership in the marine realm, the six countries of the Coral Triangle Region – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste launched the 'Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) Women Leaders Forum' in 2014. The first of its kind in the region, the forum serves as a platform to emphasize on the role of women leaders in protecting and sustaining the global centre of marine biodiversity. This aligns with developing gender-inclusive conservation strategy and policy recommendations for the CTI-CFF which has outlined its Regional Plan of Action with five goals: 1) strengthening management of seascapes; 2) applying an ecosystem approach to fisheries management; 3) developing and strengthening the management of marine protected areas; 4) implementing climate change adaptation measures; and 5) protecting threatened marine species. With their extensive local and traditional ecological knowledge, the Regional Plan of Action recognises the role of women in indigenous and local coastal communities who contributes towards the sustainable use and conservation of marine and coastal resources.

## **Gender equity marks success of marine conservation**

Programs and projects that don't factor in gender risk are inappropriate or inaccessible for a large proportion of target communities, and may even amplify existing social inequalities within these communities. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (FAO REU) with the support of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) convened a high-level conference, to provide an interactive platform to promote partnerships and joint learning for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030. The meeting acknowledged that women play a robust part in agriculture and food security: their labour force participation rate in the sector is 43 percent.

Studies have shown that improved societal status of women counted for as much as half of the global reduction in hunger between 1970 and 1995. Progress in women's access to education alone was linked to a 43 percent gain in food security — as significant as the gains from increased food availability (26 percent) and health advances (19 percent) combined.

Moreover, how culture dictates gender roles is a pertinent issue for marine conservation. The SDG Goal 14 of Life Below Water and protection of marine ecosystems and resources can only be fully achieved if integrated, gender sensitive conservation and development is pushed to the forefront of policy direction for all of the CTI-CFF.

### **The Women Leaders Forum: A Model for Gender Integration**

During its 10th Senior Officials Meeting and 5th Ministerial Meeting in Manado, Indonesia in May 2014, the CTI-CFF called upon Coral Triangle countries to actively engage and incorporate the perspectives of women and girls towards achieving its Regional and National Plans of Action goals and targets through the CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum. The CTI-CFF encouraged all its bodies and its six member countries to clearly demonstrate their engagement with and reflect upon the role of women and girls as stakeholders in CTI activities, and document these actions to provide testament to and serve as a model for gender integration.

Through the auspices of CTI-CFF development partners USAID, US Department of the Interior, Coral Triangle Center (CTC), the Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wide Fund for Nature, (WWF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Conservation International, in collaboration with the CTI-CFF Regional Secretariat and the CTI-CFF National Coordinating Committees, the CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum has organized several regional and national level activities since its inception, positioning itself as a leading network of women leaders working towards sustainable marine, coastal and fisheries management in the Coral Triangle region.

The WLF serves as a peer learning network for women who are playing key leadership roles in sustaining the marine resources of the Coral Triangle. Furthermore, the Forum collects and shares tools as well as good practices that integrate gender principles in marine conservation and sustainability projects and weaving it into existing CTI-CFF structures and activities outlined by the CTI-CFF Regional and National Plans of Action. WLF focuses on identifying and investing in the expertise of women conservationists for the purpose of promoting local, national and regional support and cooperation through meetings, conferences and training programmes.

The Coral Triangle (CT) is home to more coral reef species than anywhere else on Earth. Six out of the world's seven species of marine turtles thrive here as well as more than 22 species of marine animals and nearly 3,000 species of fish. 130 million people living in the coastal areas of the CT are directly dependent on the area's rich marine resources which highlights the need to recognise the different roles women and men play in managing, protecting and sustaining the coastal and marine resources of the CT. Thus, a gender-responsive approach reaffirms the different kinds of knowledge and activities generated by women as research suggests that this approach is more effective in achieving marine conservation goals if employed.

The CTI-CFF Women Leaders' Forum functions as:

- A peer-learning network for women who are playing key leadership roles in sustaining the marine resources of the Coral Triangle region,
- Recognize the achievement of grassroots women leaders who are championing marine conservation in the six Coral Triangle countries, and,
- Serve as a platform to build the capacity of women from the Coral Triangle to take leadership roles in preserving and sustaining the region's unique marine and coastal resources.



**CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE**  
ON CORAL REEFS, FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY



CTI-WLF works with **local women organizations** and **Development Partners**

## Let's work together

Platform for a Women Network

Expanding Partnerships to Advance Capacity Building

Men as Advocates

Investing in Youth

Private Sector Partnerships

Gender Mainstreaming

## CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum Activities

### CTI-CFF Women Leaders Peer Exchange to the United States



The US Department of Interior (DOI), with funding from USAID, worked with the Coral Triangle Center (CTC) to host women leaders from the six Coral Triangle countries to participate in a multi-faceted, peer exchange to the U.S. from April–May 2014. The program involved state-of-the-art leadership training, professional development opportunities, field-based learning, and

collaboration with other women leaders. Following the study tour, participants have helped organize and develop the roadmap of the CTI-CFF Women Leaders' Forum.

### Malaysia Jumpstarts Network for Women Leaders in Marine Conservation



The CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum Earth Hour Awareness talk was held in Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia on March 28, 2015. Organized by WWF-Malaysia and supported by USAID, DOI

and CTC. The talk had 40 participants and featured four women leaders from the proposed Tun Mustapha Park in Sabah, a globally significant priority conservation area in the Coral Triangle. WLF in Malaysia hopes to serve as a dynamic peer-learning network that shares best practices in marine resource conservation as well as a platform to build the capacity of women as environmental custodians.

### CTI-CFF Grassroots Women Leaders' Small Grant Awards



As part of the CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum launch, six grassroots women leaders were honored and awarded a small grant of US\$3,000 to carry out marine conservation and sustainability project in their communities. USAID, DOI, CTC supported and managed the grants for PNG, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste

while the Asian Development Bank supported the grants for Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

### SI Women Take Lead Role in Natural Resource Management



Environmental managers from the Solomon Islands gathered in Honiara on August 3, 2015 and agreed to form a network and develop a national work program that will foster closer collaboration among women, offer opportunities to share information, build capacity, and develop livelihood programs where women are

supported and empowered to take a central role in environmental issues and actively support the marine conservation and sustainability goals of the Coral Triangle Initiative.

### CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum Basic Training on the Principles of Marine Protected Area Management



Sixteen women leaders attended a training on marine protected area management on November 3-5, 2014 in Dili, Timor-Leste. The training was specifically customized for women and used creative ways of knowledge sharing, focused on strengthening the capacity of women from government, community, and

non-government organizations to take a more active role in preserving and sustaining Timor-Leste's unique marine and coastal resources. The women also developed a national network that will help coordinate activities and raise the profile of women leaders involved in marine conservation and management.

### Women Leaders in Biodiversity Forum



The CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum, in collaboration with USAID, US Department of Interior, CTI NCC Philippines, Conservation International and Coral Triangle Center, participated in the 3rd Forum on

Women Leaders in Biodiversity Conservation held in Manila on July 21, 2015. The event highlighted the accomplishments of the women leaders to serve as inspiration in promoting biodiversity conservation and environmental law enforcement.

### CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum Roundtable in Papua New Guinea



The CTI-CFF Women Leaders' Forum Roundtable was held in Alotau, Milne Bay on March 24, 2015 where 25 women leaders from coastal communities in Papua New Guinea (PNG) committed to work together, share experiences, inspire each other, and find ways to strengthen their capacity in leading marine and coastal resource conservation projects during the first ever gathering of women engaged in marine conservation and sustainable fisheries. During the forum, the women elected focal points and a secretariat for the WLF in PNG. The PNG Conservation and Environment Protection Authority, The Nature Conservancy, USAID-USDOJ-CTC organized the forum.

### CTI-CFF Women Leaders Entrepreneurs' Roundtable



Four women leaders from Indonesia participated in roundtable discussion at the sidelines of 4th CTI-CFF Regional Business Forum in August 27, 2015 to inspire and engage women entrepreneurs to successfully catalyze sustainable and environment-friendly businesses that

support and sustain marine resources across Indonesia. By sharing lessons learned and highlighting best practices, the women leaders who each built their sustainable businesses that promote marine and coastal conservation aimed to inspire more women to pursue a similar

## 2nd Roundtable of the National PNG branch



On 15-17 June 2016, the 2nd roundtable of the National PNG branch of the CTI-CFF Women Leaders' Forum was held in Manus province, Papua New Guinea with the theme **'Rights-Based Management is empowering women in food security, sustainable community fisheries and climate adaptation programs in rural communities of PNG'**. The event had 120 participants who came to reaffirm their commitment to, and leadership role in, the sustainable management of the coastal and marine resources of PNG. A survey conducted amongst participants showed that they saw the primary role of the WLF as being

a forum for women, and to enable consultation amongst women leaders. They identified the top 3 issues PNG WLF should focus going forward as: Natural Resource Management; Social Development and Consultation and Cooperation. The event was convened by The Nature Conservancy's PNG program, supported by the German and Australian Government, in collaboration with the PNG National Government and the Manus Provincial Government. It involved other partners including the PNG Women in Business Foundation, the National Council of Women, the Provincial Council of Women, and the PEDF.



Co-funded by Australian government and WWF's corporate partner John West Australia to improve livelihoods and food security of coastal fishing communities in Madang Province, PNG. Innovative approaches to sustainable fisheries and fisheries management, linked to empowering women. Includes micro-finance and revolving loans for women to help develop small business opportunities for local fishing communities. 12 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) with 120 women registered with the People's Micro bank through the micro-finance programme. Worked to establish a process to assist new members open accounts with commercial banks and People's Micro bank.



## 1st Capacity Building Workshop for the Malaysian WLF branch

The 1st capacity building workshop for the Malaysian Women Leader's Forum (WLF) was held on the 13-15 October 2016 attended by 15 women leaders. The workshop covered: i) Effective Public Speaking & Presentation Skill, and ii) Non Finance to Non Finance People. The group listed activities and plans for next year which will be discussed on Nov 7, 2016 with women leaders and CTI-CFF implementing agencies in Malaysia, and youth and community groups. The workshop was convened by WWF Malaysia and supported by the Malaysian Wildlife Conservation Foundation (MWCF). The participants were from Green Semporna, Kudat Turtle Conservation Society, Wanita Pulau Omadal, Padang Kemunting Turtle Friendly Village Community, Balambangan Community and WWF -Malaysia Community Education and Engagement team.



## Private Partnership in the Solomon Islands



Co-funded by Australian government and WWF's corporate partner John West Australia to improve livelihoods and food security of coastal fishing communities and small scale and artisanal fishers in Gizo, Western Province, Solomon Islands. Innovative approaches to sustainable fisheries and fisheries management, linked to empowering women. Includes micro-finance and revolving loans for women to help develop small business opportunities for local fishing communities. Community-based fisheries work includes focus on women's economic empowerment, recognizing this can help address some underlying socio-economic drivers of unsustainable practices. Micro-savings scheme has 738 savings club members who have saved over USD30,000; with 100 loans granted; and 70 new small businesses started.

## CTI WLF at the International Symposium on Capacity Building for Sustainable Oceans



On 19-20 July 2016, a WLF representative presented at the **International Symposium on Capacity Building for Sustainable Oceans in Tokyo, Japan**, hosted by the Nippon Foundation, the Government of Japan, and supported by TNC. Ms Roziah Jalalid, Chairperson of the Omadal Women's Association from Sabah, Malaysia represented WLF and shared how WLF allowed her to learn from other women working on sustainable marine and coastal management across Malaysia. Ms. Roziah has been involved in community engagement, outreach and

capacity building for marine conservation in Sabah, Malaysia since 2010. Roziah was first exposed to the CTI-CFF WLF in 2015, when a national level WLF event was held in Sabah, with support from WWF Malaysia.

## CTI WLF at the International Coral Reef Symposium



As part of the side events of the **International Coral Reef Symposium in Honolulu, Hawaii** CTC and the CTI-CFF Regional Secretariat presented the CTI-CFF Women Leaders Forum milestones at the East-West Center on June 24, 2016. In September, TNC brought together WLF representatives from PNG and Solomon to a week-long learning exchange during the World Conservation Congress in Hawaii. The women worked on grassroots natural resource management, and the learning exchange provided an opportunity to share their experiences, knowledge and challenges with one another. The WLF representatives had the chance to learn from local indigenous leaders in Hawaii about traditional resource management practices, as well as to share their stories with global participants attending the congress by hosting a 'Knowledge Café' session focused on women's leadership in conservation. The WCC Women's Learning exchange provided an important opportunity to showcase women-led initiatives like the WLF, and to connect these inspiring women leaders with others from across the region.

