

FILM

Give a woman a fish

Produced by Conservation International and Fintrac; filmed and edited by Dominique Tardy, scripted by Olivier Joffre and narrated by Susan Novak. Duration 12 min 29 sec; Language: English

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This documentary is about women fishers living in the floating villages of Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia, considered the world's most productive inland fishery. In these villages of floating huts and boats, both women and men depend on fishing and fish processing, and there are few other livelihood options. Most are trapped in a cycle of poverty, often indebted to middlemen to buy fishing gear and for daily expenses. This documentary describes how a successful project supported a women's group to upgrade their fish processing techniques, introduced savings and helped to diversify livelihoods.

As a result of the project, a women's group came to adopt improved production techniques for prahok (fermented fish paste) and smoked fish. With new equipment such as new stoves, it was able to make more hygienic and better quality products, leading to better incomes and newer markets, including in Phnom Penh, an exposure that led to further improvements in quality to meet the higher standards demanded in Cambodia's capital city. The project organized savings groups too. Through repeated borrowing and repayments, these groups were

able to cultivate mutual trust. The low interest loan allowed the women members to diversify their livelihoods to non-fishing activities like growing vegetables and maintaining livestock - activities that would seem impossible to carry out on water and which make the documentary a must-watch!

There are beautiful shots of floating villages with villagers pursuing their daily chores to the soothing sound of lapping water. Floating villages represent a particular way of life, and this documentary is a good introduction for those who wish for a glimpse of this unique water based lifestyle. The documentary would be an excellent educational tool to demonstrate the importance of supporting women's groups in fishing communities.

There are certain aspects, however, that the documentary does not particularly address. We might like to note, for example, that women do fish in these communities alongside men, unlike in coastal villages where it is mostly the men who fish and women engage in fish marketing and processing. Also, while this may be a successful project, the problem of poverty still remains an enormous challenge. These floating villages have a high level of labor outmigration. Children start school late because of the difficulties of transportation on water. There are also issues of racial division between ethnic Vietnamese and Khmer, and, in fact, the ethnic Vietnamese usually are unable to come on shore because they cannot access land without Cambodian citizenship. There is a threat from capitalists working on tourism to capitalize on their lifestyle while leaving no opportunity for the local people to benefit from such tourism. There is also the serious issue of pollution in the Lake.

This documentary was shot in 2014, but the fish catch has drastically decreased since then, leaving fewer and fewer resources for women to process fish. When we view it, we need to remember the huge challenges that still lie ahead.

The documentary can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/138482914>



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 1200 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women

and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.