



Evaluation

# WAVES: Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality in Thailand 2019–2022



## **WAVES: Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality in Thailand 2019–2022**

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Evaluation

November 2022

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# Foreword

RECOFTC believes in a future in which people live equitably and sustainably in and beside healthy, resilient forests. One of its four strategic goals focuses on social inclusion and gender equality, whereby women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups are an active and empowered part of forest management.

RECOFTC recognizes that gender equality and equity are matters of fundamental human rights and social justice and a precondition for sustainable forest governance and the achievement of its goals. It uses an equity-oriented intersectional approach to help expand the representation and leadership of women and other excluded groups. This approach helps increase their access to income and other economic assets, promote gender-inclusive policy and extension mechanisms and tackle root barriers, including harmful gender norms, practices and knowledge gaps.

Tackling these long-standing inequalities and structural barriers to gender inequality is a complex process that requires dedicated attention and resourcing. RECOFTC established Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality, or WAVES, based on the idea that having stronger leadership and expertise will improve policymaking and investments in ways that promote gender equality and social inclusion. RECOFTC has positioned and engaged with WAVES as a regional network that leads, inspires and sustains long-lasting changes. WAVES operates in partnership with “gender leaders” who are change intermediaries creating context-relevant inclusive solutions that work for women, Indigenous Peoples and youth across the forest landscapes.

The WAVES results from the first nearly three years of the program, which are captured in this report, demonstrate innovative approaches, such as how engaging gender leaders and supporting them in determining national and organization-based gender issues and priorities can lead to locally acceptable and sustainable solutions. The results also showcase the absolute value in power-sharing and inclusive engagement for co-creating long-term solutions on topics of gender and social inequalities.

The type and spectrum of changes brought about by the gender leaders that were evaluated for this report differed among them but were contextually relevant and significant.

We invite you to take time to read this report and learn about WAVES and its gender leaders who have led different initiatives to make the forestry landscapes more equal and inclusive. We hope that WAVES will inspire you to be a gender leader, with each one of you taking actions to realize a more inclusive and equal world, especially in the forest landscapes.

## **David Ganz**

Executive Director, RECOFTC

## **Kalpana Giri**

WAVES Program Manager, RECOFTC

# Acknowledgements

The research report was produced under the technical oversight of Kalpana Giri, now the former Senior Program Officer for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, RECOFTC and who also managed the WAVES program. Independent consultant Dibya Gurung, who is the Coordinator of Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management in Nepal, collected and analysed the data and wrote the report.

Kanokporn Deeburee, the WAVES country focal point, reviewed and provided technical inputs. Vanessa Hongsathiviz and Julian Atkinson from RECOFTC provided technical inputs to finalize the report.

RECOFTC recognizes the partnership with and engagement from the gender leaders and their organizations in the WAVES network in Thailand: Jaroopis Moolsarn, Division of People's Participation Promotion, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Attjala Roongwong, Forest for All (civil society group)<sup>1</sup>; Ratchadaporn Chanasawang, Village Chief Assistant and Field Coordinator from Kaeng Lawa Wetland Conservation Project; Yupin Uppajak, Village Chief Assistant and Women's Group Leader from Mangrove Forestry Network; Cham Phetchan, Women's Group Leader and Mangrove Forestry Network; and Kritsana Fongdee, women's leader from Pong Daeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Muang District, Tak Province.

RECOFTC is thankful to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for funding WAVES.

# Executive summary

Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality, or WAVES, is a RECOFTC initiative that promotes gender equality in the governance of forest landscapes in the Asia-Pacific region.

WAVES has built a network of 36 gender leaders from seven countries where RECOFTC works. In Thailand, six gender leaders from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Management, forest conservation projects and networks and a subdistrict administrative office involved in forest management and gender equality were supported in advocating for social and gender-equitable programs in their communities and institutions.

In early 2021, two years into the program, an evaluation was conducted at country and regional scale to document the initial results and learnings. Gender leaders, partner organizations and stakeholders provided inputs.

The evaluation found that the program triggered a range of results and changes among WAVES leaders and partners at the individual and institutional levels. Gender leaders reported personal and professional growth in their ability to articulate gender and inclusion concepts, formulate effective plans and strategies and influence high-level policymakers and community leaders through negotiation and advocacy.

In Thailand, WAVES supported the Citizens' Forest Network to integrate gender and social inclusion into its charter and governance mechanisms. Gender leaders worked with the Royal Forest Department to mobilize women leaders as resource persons in community forest extension work.

The gender leaders facilitated a gender and leadership orientation and training that brought women in community forest and ethnic groups together to introduce gender concepts and forest laws and assess and analyse gender in forest management. Together they developed a community forest management plan for Pong Daeng subdistrict.

The gender leaders, through regional-level participatory learning, identified barriers and opportunities for future gender and social-inclusion programming. They also assessed impacts of forest policy reforms on poor households and women community members.

The evaluation process documented several lessons:

- An accurate understanding of the capacity of stakeholders that allow for reasonable timelines for complex activities and the ability of stakeholders to commit to long-term workplans are all important determinants of project success.
- Gender action plans can be most effective when they are demand-driven, results-oriented and context-specific.
- Understanding and being responsive to intersectionality is important to achieving inclusion and equity.

- Financial support for WAVES-like interventions must be scaled up to achieve more widespread and sustainable impacts. Enabling follow-up action and partnerships is crucial to sustaining the momentum created through the activities made possible by WAVES.



# The evaluation

## About WAVES

Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality, or WAVES, is a RECOFTC initiative that promotes gender equality in the governance, management and use of forest landscapes and their resources in the Asia-Pacific region. RECOFTC implemented the three-year WAVES program from March 2019 to September 2022. It was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

RECOFTC established WAVES based on the idea that having stronger leadership and expertise will improve policymaking and investments in ways that promote gender equality and social inclusion more broadly. Creating transformative change requires identifying and supporting individuals working in natural resources management who can advocate for and negotiate such change on an institutional level.

The WAVES initiative so far has built a network of 36 gender leaders from seven countries where RECOFTC works: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam. Although the WAVES program has ended, RECOFTC continues supporting the gender leaders as they advocate for equality and lead gender-equitable programs in their communities and institutions.

The gender leaders across the region include technical experts, senior government officials, politicians, academics, directors and officers of civil society organizations, local community leaders, business managers and a journalist.

WAVES has equipped them with the knowledge and capacity to understand, design and implement gender-equality measures in forest landscapes. It has built up women's leadership skills to promote gender equality across public agencies, the private sector and local communities. And it has worked with men as allies to support gender equality.

WAVES has supported the leaders to integrate gender equality into policies, investments and actions. WAVES has helped the gender leaders maximize their potential by cultivating leadership skills and providing technical and financial support as they implemented action plans. Through regular mentoring and ad hoc psychosocial support, WAVES has helped the gender leaders create new narratives and visions in leading gender equality efforts and amplify their work by linking them with wider networks and collaborators.

With support from the WAVES team, the gender leaders have learned to challenge conventional ways of thinking and promote gender equality in policies and processes related to climate change, REDD+ and forestry, forest law enforcement, governance and trade. And they have revived and are driving the gender agenda to remind their society that the goal is inclusion and social justice for all.

The WAVES program is part of RECOFTC's dedicated effort to achieve its strategic goal 4 on social inclusion, gender equality and public action. In its work, RECOFTC tackles systemic inequities and marginalization prevalent in the natural resource landscapes by using a participatory approach of critical framing and co-engagement and co-creation of knowledge.

## Four pillars of the WAVES program

WAVES was designed using participatory action research principles to activate self-discovery, analysis and actions (referred to as "co-creation") through a regional network of gender leaders.

Participatory learning and action were activated by using participatory engagement approaches that allowed for taking into account the gender leaders' demand-driven needs and priorities. Multiple strategies were employed to address intersecting barriers and drivers of gender inequality. The four pillars outlined here are part of the co-creation structure put in place to cultivate discovery and actions.

### Demand-driven

- The gender leaders were selected for their commitment to gender issues and on their ability to work on context-specific issues and achieve results. They were involved in the program's conception and through its implementation.
- Before launching the program, the WAVES manager and focal points from the seven countries where RECOFTC works conducted informal outreach and national-level discussions with potential gender leaders. Together, they identified gender issues relevant to the national context and priorities and assessed potential positive outcomes as well as challenges, conflicts and barriers. And they planned risk mitigation strategies.

The gender leaders were selected based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated commitment: They had experience with initiatives on gender and social inclusion work in forestry but were limited by the institutional set-up or facing resistance.
- Understanding of gender issues and activities: They had some level of understanding of gender issues, activities and changes that result from interventions and barriers.
- Scope of manoeuvrability: They had a mandate to create institutional influence over people working on gender, policy or planning who provide opportunities to influence institutional changes and were willing to lead work on these areas.
- Diversity of partners to deliver different changes: They had collaborated with a wide group of organizations and people who can bring diverse levels of changes from the policy level to practice, with a good representation of state and non-state actors and the private sector.
- Period of engagement: They were willing to commit to working with the WAVES program for three years (2019–2022).
- English proficiency: They had a working level of English sufficient to participate fully in the program.

## Participatory engagement approach

- **Meaningful engagement:** WAVES created spaces for deliberation and dialogue. It enabled ownership, power-sharing, knowledge co-creation and multifaceted engagement strategies. The gender leaders were involved in every step, from program scoping and implementation to unpacking tensions and nuanced resistance that they encountered. Problems and solutions, including unintended changes and resistance, were analysed as a group. The program's methods were defined by the participatory approach and power-sharing between the WAVES team and the gender leaders.
- **Tailored capacities:** WAVES provided the gender leaders with targeted and timely support at the regional and national levels. They were offered trainings and workshops on various gender concepts and skill sets, based on each leader's specific skills, needs and interests to implement their action plan.
- **Learning space:** WAVES created learning channels to connect gender leaders at the national and regional levels to share their accomplishments, challenges and pitfalls in a safe and trusting environment. WAVES focal points in each country moderated the learning channel at the national level.
- **Results-oriented:** WAVES provided support to the individual gender leaders to implement their action plan and to link with other RECOFTC programs to expand their outreach and garner more support.

## Intersectional interventions

- Different types of interventions were needed for the gender leaders to implement their respective action plan.
- The WAVES program design employed diverse strategies and actions to address gender gaps and structural barriers and to mitigate emerging risks and reduce opportunity costs.
- Technical and financial support was provided at the regional and national levels to roll out interventions.
- Interventions were undertaken to promote inclusive change at the individual and institutional levels.

## Institutionalization and enabling systems

- The WAVES program design emphasized feedback loops to formal and informal spaces and governance procedures so that efforts to achieve gender equality extended to the institutional system to address systemic inequalities.
- A system of direct communication channels, such as the WAVES focal points working directly with the RECOFTC regional WAVES team, was developed for leveraging influence and encouraging adaptive planning and strategizing.
- The gender leaders mobilized their network in the country to support one another and created communication loops between informal networks and formal systems.
- Individual leadership approaches were used to influence institutional shifts within the gender leaders' organizations through policy changes, mandates, budgets and other means.

- The gender leaders were connected to a larger audience and network outside of their institutions and forestry circle for collective advocacy and amplification.

Of the 36 selected gender leaders from the seven countries where RECOFTC works, 31 are women and five are men.

## About the evaluation: Purpose and framework

When the program was more than two years into its operation, a regional evaluation was conducted in 2021 by independent consultant Dinya Devi Gurung, in close collaboration with the then-WAVES program manager, Kalpana Giri, the WAVES country focal points and the gender leaders.

The overarching objective of the evaluation was to review and identify the results and learnings effected by the WAVES program thus far. The consultant interviewed gender leaders, partners and stakeholders from all seven countries.

The approach of the evaluation was based on the principles and practices of participatory learning.<sup>2</sup> The gender leaders were guided through a process of self-reflection and assessment through several facilitated workshops and individual discussions.

### Framework for evaluating individual and institutional change

The framework for individual and institutional change,<sup>3</sup> which was also used to design the WAVES program, was adapted for the evaluation. The framework focused on changes that took place at two distinct but interrelated levels:

**Individual change:** The individual performance and behaviour change of the gender leaders were assessed based on their understanding of gender and leadership concepts and how they were able to apply these concepts to their personal and professional lives. The evaluation also considered informal changes, such as increased confidence and capacities of leaders on gender integration into the efforts they have led towards influencing internal policies and programs.

**Institutional change:** The evaluation examined how WAVES effected changes in each of the gender leaders' institution of employment or affiliation in terms of its programs, policies, structures and work culture. It considered both informal changes, such as each institution's networks, peers, norms and values, and formal changes, such as introduction of policies and programs to support gender equality.

### Evaluation process

The evaluation process was guided by a framework designed by the RECOFTC WAVES team with the consultant and the gender leaders. The framework was used as a guide to examine the WAVES results at the country and regional levels. The following describes the evaluation process.

## **Design and framework for evaluation**

- The design and framework were developed by RECOFTC in consultation with the consultant and gender leaders.
- A workshop was organized to create a common understanding of the evaluation framework among the consultant, the gender leaders and the WAVES RECOFTC team.
- The evaluation framework was then used to facilitate the country and regional evaluations.
- The evaluation was designed at two levels: First, country workshops and meetings aimed to draw out evidence and learnings from across the countries. Second, learnings from the national evaluations were condensed for a regional perspective and shared at a regional evaluation workshop in March 2021.

## **Project documentation**

The evaluation drew on all project documentation:

- WAVES concept report
- WAVES framework
- Country reports
- Meeting minutes
- Case studies
- Documents related to participatory action research, gender and leadership

## **Meetings and workshops conducted for the evaluation**

As noted, the evaluation approached the WAVES work at three levels:

- Country evaluation workshops. The country-level evaluations were conducted within a span of two months, from February through March. The evaluation at each country level was pursued with a mixed approach of face-to-face meetings, virtual workshops, interviews and group discussion. Three onsite (physical) workshops were achieved, one each in Nepal, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. One virtual workshop was conducted in Indonesia. Interviews and discussions were conducted in Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar. The gender leaders shared their progress, learnings and achievements with examples and evidence during these events. The country-level workshops and meetings were used to assess the achievements, results, gaps and possibilities that gender leaders had observed through their engagement with WAVES to date. The information derived through the country evaluation process was then synthesized and consolidated to draw out the results and learnings at the regional level.
- Regional workshop. A three-day regional workshop in March gave the gender leaders and their stakeholders the opportunity to present and discuss their results, learnings, challenges, opportunities and recommendations with all stakeholders, including partner and donor agencies.

- Meetings. Two meetings were arranged between the consultant and RECOFTC WAVES team to discuss and provide feedback on the draft reports. In addition, several rounds of in-depth discussions with the RECOFTC's WAVES manager, the seven WAVES country teams and the RECOFTC communication and learning experts were organized to gain a better understanding of the context and to validate the findings.

### **Limitations of the evaluation**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation had to be conducted virtually. This made it difficult to discern behaviour changes and expansion of informal spaces, especially through the remote interviews. The pandemic made it unrealistic to visit the gender leaders' workspaces and conduct face-to-face interviews with them and their colleagues, subordinates, supervisors and partners, which could have provided insights of the gender leaders' leadership practices and their influence on their colleagues' behaviours and institutional norms for gender integration. This also limited the face-to-face interaction with the WAVES leaders, except in Nepal, where the consultant is based.

# WAVES in Thailand

## Gender leaders

RECOFTC supports six WAVES gender leaders in Thailand. One leader is from the Forest Conservation Group, which links with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. A second leader is a freelance consultant affiliated with a non-profit organization called Forest for All, who also is a Sub-district Administrative Organization member. The other four women were village leaders.

The gender leaders were carefully selected based on their commitment to gender activities, their scope to create change in policies and practices at the national and local levels and their potential to affect gender transformative shifts in their respective organization. The program's main objective is to promote gender-inclusive participatory approaches in forestry policies and community activities by strengthening local networks and capacity-building for the Citizen's Forests Network.

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position</b>
1.	Jaroonpis Moolsarn	Division of People's Participation Promotion, Department of Environmental Quality Promotion, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (government)	Secretary, Kok Nong Muang Forest Conservation Group
2.	Attjala Roongwong	Forest for All (civil society group)	Freelance consultant
3.	Ratchadaporn Chanasawang	Kaeng Lawa Wetland Conservation Project (civil society)	Village Chief Assistant and field coordinator
4.	Yupin Uppajak	Mangrove Forestry Network (civil society)	Village Chief Assistant and women's group leader
5.	Cham Phetchan	Mangrove Forestry Network (civil society)	Women's group leader and community mangrove forestry network leader
6.	Kritsana Fongdee	Pong Daeng Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Muang District, Tak Province (government)	Women's leader, representative from the village

## Implementation of the WAVES approach

As this section elaborates, RECOFTC provided step-by-step, demand-based inputs and some financial support to each WAVES leader to implement their specific plan to meet the program's objectives. The focus in Thailand was on strengthening community forestry networks to include and better represent women, particularly ethnic and marginalized women.

Within Thailand, the WAVES approach evolved with the following primary inputs.

### **Country-level scoping meetings and orientation workshops**

The RECOFTC WAVES focal point in each country was oriented on the overall WAVES approach and provided them with guiding criteria to help identify prospective partner organizations and gender leaders. One country-level scoping meeting and one-on-one in-depth discussions were conducted with prospective participants to determine their vision for gender equality in forestry work, map out major barriers they faced to integrate gender in their work and to understand their interest to engage with a program like WAVES. After a few months of careful preparation by the RECOFTC country team and through the scoping meeting, the gender leaders were selected. They then attended a training workshop to learn about different gender concepts and analytical tools, how to apply them in a gender situation analysis and how to develop strategies and plans based on the situation analysis.

### **Workshop for community forest women leaders and ethnic group representatives**

A workshop<sup>4</sup> was conducted for the community forest women leaders, representatives of ethnic groups and the gender leaders on the recognition and the value of gender diversity in community forestry and forest resource management in protected areas. There were 37 participants (31 women and six men), nine of whom were from ethnic communities. During the workshop, participants agreed to create a forum to share gender concepts in forest resource management, support the women's Citizen's Forests Network (CF-NET), to conduct a study on women and forest resources and to promote increased women's participation in networks and in forest governance monitoring inside and outside protected areas.

### **Regional launch, training workshops, coaching, mentoring and technical support**

A regional leadership workshop was organized in Bangkok to launch the WAVES program. The workshop provided training on gender concepts, including negotiation, communication and networking. Participants were encouraged to critically analyse their situation and explore solutions and opportunities for developing their individual action plan based on their needs, priorities and context.

After six months of implementing their action plan, the WAVES gender leaders attended another regional training in Bangkok on relational leadership and gender analysis. This Leadership Pathways and Change workshop focused on developing frameworks on domains of change and gender assessments, managing resistance and self-care, training of trainers with facilitation skills, designing training courses and developing delivery skills.



## **Demonstrated actions**

After the first regional training, the gender leaders started implementing their individual action plan. The RECOFTC WAVES focal point in each country worked with the gender leaders to help facilitate their respective action plan. They were also provided some financial support to help execute their individual action plan. The RECOFTC WAVES focal points provided regular support to the gender leaders through technical backstopping and guidance, regular monitoring and addressing their queries and challenges at the personal and institutional levels. These regular exchanges helped the gender leaders and RECOFTC staff analyse and identify their needs and challenges and develop demand-based, tailor-made capacity-building programs. Overall, the WAVES program focused on improving gender knowledge and skills of the Citizen's Forests Network, staff and members of the community forestry networks, the Forest Department, women community leaders and members and women from ethnic groups.

Activities of the action plans implemented by the WAVES gender leaders in Thailand covered:

### **Gender and leadership training**

The gender leaders facilitated a gender and leadership orientation and training for women at the assembly of Citizen's Forests Network to ensure their support for mobilizing the women leaders as resource persons in further community forest extension work.

### **Assessment and studies**

In collaboration with RECOFTC, the gender leaders assessed the impacts of forest policy reforms on poor and women community members. The findings of these assessments were shared with the Citizen's Forests Network members to improve their understanding of the differentiated impacts of Thailand's forest policy reforms. The information gathered, such as the lack of physical spaces for women to meet and organize themselves and the poor access to information about forest policies and resources, helped the WAVES leaders and RECOFTC in tailoring the content of their training for women leaders on developing community forest management plans. RECOFTC then worked with the WAVES gender leaders to integrate gender concerns into the Citizens' Forest Network through research, training and networking.

### **Seminars and workshops**

The gender leaders organized an online seminar on Women's Role and Status of Women and Ethnic Groups in Forest Management and Administration Mechanism in Thailand<sup>5</sup> for 25 participants (19 women and six men) from community forest and ethnic groups. They also conducted a workshop for 32 female participants from the Citizen's Forests Network 14 community forestry groups in Pong Daeng subdistrict. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss implementation of the action plans developed by the gender leaders and seek guidance and support from each other and from the WAVES country team. It was an opportunity to share gender concepts with the participants; assess and analyse the forest management situation from gender perspectives; provide information on forest laws; and jointly develop a community forest management plan for Pong Daeng subdistrict.

Another workshop was conducted in Bangkok<sup>6</sup> on promoting women's roles, ethnic groups and youths in community forestry and protected area management and administration. The workshop was attended by 37 participants (31 women and six men).

A story documentation training workshop was conducted with four of the gender leaders to document their own personal change.<sup>7</sup>

### **Participatory review and learning**

After two years of the WAVES program's implementation, a regional participatory learning, assessment and planning workshop was arranged. The main purpose was to collectively review and assess the achievements and identify the barriers and opportunities that had emerged for future planning. The WAVES gender leaders and their partners collectively reviewed the WAVES process, including the achievements and changes that had occurred in their personal lives and within their institutions.

## **Findings and results**

The evaluation found several positive impacts to date.

### **Promoted intersectionality through inclusive learning spaces**

Community forestry has included community members in the conservation of forests and wetlands. However, marginalized groups, such as poor households and ethnic women and men, are often excluded from decision-making processes and positions despite their primary role in forest management. The gender leader affiliated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment took up this issue and conducted on-the-job training for women leaders. She also mobilized this group to create an informal network that she linked with the Citizen's Forest Network.

Young people are another group not fully recognized as important stakeholders in community forestry and natural resources management. The gender leaders specifically provided gender and leadership training to young people from the Khok Nong Muang Community Forest and Kaeng Lawa wetland conservation areas. They also conducted on-the-job training for them, including facilitation, coordination and data collection.

### **Promoted participatory approaches to influence policies and programs**

With the gender leaders support, consultants from the Citizen's Forest Network used participatory methods to conduct surveys and assessments on the impacts of forest policies on women and local communities. This assessment was different from the usual practice, which does not focus on understanding the needs, interests and priorities of women, particularly poor indigenous women, and does not share the findings with them.

The gender leaders made sure that marginalized women and excluded groups were directly consulted and the results shared with them and with managers, policymakers and decision-makers. The gender leaders also recognized the roles of other stakeholders. For example, they mobilized government agencies, local administration and private sector business representatives through a series of consultations,

coordination and negotiation to work on gender equality issues in Ban Phai District in Khon Kaen Province.

### **Promoted quality interventions, such as training and assessments**

Gender-related training, studies and assessments are usually limited to a few days with no investment in following up, facilitated guidance or monitoring. These assessments usually are tied-up with larger technical assessments or studies, with less attention on participatory social methods and gender expertise. As a result, the outcomes are general and do not address deep-rooted gender and social issues. Although on a small scale, the gender leader was able to demonstrate how gender and social training and assessments should be done within technical sectors (forestry and natural resources management).

Women's networks were developed in 14 villages, according to Kanokporn Deebure, a gender leader linked with the community organization council in Tak Province. These networks gave women leaders and their community members a safe place to learn about forest laws and policies. They also provided forums for women to have discussions, gather information, plan collectively and receive feedback on their plans before submitting them at the subdistrict level.

### **Increased confidence and improved negotiation skills**

Gender leaders said that the WAVES training had improved their gender analysis skills and made them more self-aware and confident in voicing their opinions. The gender leader with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, for example, remarked that the right kind of exposure and training is critical to effectively integrate gender, particularly in recognizing the gender gaps and opportunities. "Now I know why I am the only woman in [the Citizen's Forest Network] and why other women are not considered and included in the Citizen's Forest Network committee. Even women themselves do not think themselves worthy of being on the committee," she said. This refers to the acceptance by women and their institutions of the country's culture of normalizing women's role as followers rather than as leaders or decision-makers.

## **Opportunities for WAVES in Thailand**

Going forward, WAVES in Thailand could consider emphasis in the following areas.

- Young people and women, particularly women from ethnic groups, are usually excluded from participating in natural resource management committees and interventions. These groups also do not proactively make demands and see value in their participation. The learning from the WAVES program, including exposure, long-term training and mentoring, can reverse this situation and provide spaces for these marginalized groups to actively participate and benefit. Creating safe spaces is critical for marginalized ethnic women to comfortably participate and take leadership positions.
- Rural women, particularly ethnic women in Thailand, are reliant on community forests and have an important role in them. They are responsible for gathering non-timber forest products and fuelwood. The current communication and extension networks of both the government and the civil society organizations are not fully equipped

and are unprepared to reach and include these excluded ethnic women. The use of technical languages and technocratic extension approaches are just a few examples of what makes it difficult to integrate them.

- Including social components in university curricula to address deep-rooted social and cultural obstacles that prevent women and marginalized groups from fully participating in and benefiting from the forests is overlooked. The curriculum that gender leaders experienced as part of their natural resources management education and training did not adequately address these underlying societal issues. Yet, this understanding is crucial for effective community forestry management. Further engagement with universities is required to look for links between forestry education and issues in communities.

## Recommendations

- WAVES gender leaders made strategic and effective entry points to work with community forestry officials and community groups. They mobilized and engaged local governments, civil society and community groups, particularly women and ethnic groups, to promote gender equality. However, they still require technical and financial support to establish and sustain the processes that have been created. To ensure a smooth continuation of the momentum, the RECOFTC WAVES program should support gender leaders until they and their organizations develop their own programs. Strengthening more community leaders and ethnic women can help to create a critical mass of gender leaders with skills to promote relational leadership and gender equality and help continue the processes created, even if there are no such dedicated programs.
- Ethnic and marginalized women found the safe spaces and networks developed by the gender leaders to be very useful. Further institutionalization of these spaces is required to support and expand them going forward.
- The mentoring and coaching received by the gender leaders was described as very helpful and must form an integral part of any future gender integration work within institutions. This support through mentorship should be further strengthened and packaged as a component of the WAVES program. It is also important to include a separate component to discuss psychosocial issues by providing dedicated safe spaces with proper support services.
- The learning and knowledge generated from the WAVES program should be systematically documented and used to influence and educate when designing gender equality programs and seeking adequate investment.

# Endnotes

1. Attjala Roongwong participated in WAVES's program as a gender leader up until 2019 as she is a freelance consultant and had to carry out other commitments.
2. Pretty, J.N., Guijt, I., Thompson, J., and Scoones, I., *Participatory Learning and Action: A trainer's guide*, IIED Participatory Methodology Series. London: Sustainable Agriculture Programme, IIED, 1995; WOCAN, *Training Manual-Gender Integration in Planning*, 2011.
3. Gurung, B., and Menter, H., *Mainstreaming Gender-sensitive Participatory Approaches: The CIAT case study*. In *Scaling Up and Out: Achieving Widespread Impact Through Agricultural Research*, D. Pachico, ed. Cali, Colombia: Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical, 2004; WOCAN, *Framework for Assessing Participatory Action Research Program Activities*, 2010.
4. The workshop was conducted on 9–10 October 2019.
5. The online workshop was conducted on 23 June 2020.
6. The workshop for Promoting Women's Role and Ethnic Groups and Youths in Community Forestry was conducted on 16 and 17 December 2020.
7. The workshop was conducted on 30–31 March 2021.

## Annex: Actions undertaken by gender leaders

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>With whom</b>
1.	Online seminar: Women's Role and Status of Women and Ethnic Groups in Forest Management and Administration Mechanism (23 June 2020)	Total 25 (6 men and 19 women) members of the Citizen's Forest Network
2.	Women's platform: Conducting Pong Daeng Subdistrict Community Forestry Plan and Learning of Community Forestry Act, Muang District, Tak Province (18 July 2020)	Total 32 (all women) community forest leaders and representatives of ethnic groups
3.	Workshop on Promoting Women's Roles, Ethnic Groups and Young Generation in Community Forestry and Protected Area Management and Administration, in Bangkok (16–17 December 2020)	Total 37 (6 men and 31 women) community forest women leaders and representatives of ethnic groups
4.	Interviewing 4 gender leaders on their stories of change and support 2 leaders to attend the regional WAVES workshop, in Bangkok (30–31 March 2021)	Total 2 women gender leaders and RECOFTC
5.	Online workshop on Policy Recommendation Development for Promoting Women's and Ethnic Groups' Participation in Community Management Mobilization (27 September 2021)	Total 33 (30 women and 3 men) community forest women leaders, Citizen's Forest Network regional coordinators and civil society organizations



At RECOFTC, we believe in a future where people live equitably and sustainably in and beside healthy, resilient forests. We take a long-term, landscape-based and inclusive approach to supporting local communities to secure their land and resource rights, stop deforestation, find alternative livelihoods and foster gender equity. We are the only non-profit organization of our kind in Asia and the Pacific. We have more than 30 years of experience working with people and forests, and have built trusting relationships with partners at all levels. Our influence and partnerships extend from multilateral institutions to governments, private sector and local communities. Our innovations, knowledge and initiatives enable countries to foster good forest governance, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

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