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## FINDING OUT LABOR DIVISION IN COASTAL FISHERY HOUSEHOLDS OF NGHI SON COMMUNE, TỈNH GIA DISTRICT, THANH HÓA PROVINCE

### Introduction

Nghi Son is an island commune in Tĩnh Gia district, Thanh Hóa province with 2 354 households with 6 964 inhabitants, accounting for 3,2% of the district population. Nghi Son Island has got traditional exploitation, fishing and aquaculture. This is also the only place of Thanh Hóa to develop specialty fish farming by floating rafts. At present, there are 1 002 households directly involved in production activities related fishery. However, nowadays Nghi Son Island is a busy industrial complex with many projects such as cement factory, Nghi Son thermal power plant, Nghi Son deep water port and ecotourism resorts. This has created the Nghi Son island commune with many changes in its economic structure and labor structure. Particularly, the shift in the division of labor in fisher households has changed the social relationship in which relationships between family members, in particular gender relations<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. The basic concepts

Fishermen: according to the Vietnamese dictionary, “fishermen are people who catch fish”. The “fisherman households are specialized fishing”<sup>2</sup>. Nowadays, the concept of fishermen is expanded due to the change in occupational structure. Fishermen are understood to be the households of those who are practically engaged in fishing,

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<sup>1</sup> Socio-economic situation in 2014, socio-economic development in 2015 in Nghi Son commune, Tĩnh Gia district, Thanh Hóa province, Thanh Hóa 2015; *Future, Sociology and the Problems of Social Change*, Social Science Publishing House 1997.

<sup>2</sup> *Vietnamese Dictionary*, ed. Institute of Linguistics, Danang Publishing House 2013, p. 234.

aquaculture and seafood processing and those who participate in the service, buying and selling directly related to exploit, catch seafood.

Gender role: it is the set of behaviors that the society expects of men and women in relation to the sexual characteristics and abilities that the society regards as belonging to men or to women (boys or girls) in a particular society or culture. Both women and men participate in all three roles:

- role of production: the role of production involves the work done by both men and women for either public money or in kind. It includes the production of goods of value for exchange and the production of both homemade and used goods but also of potential value;
- the role of reproductive labor: it includes activities to maintain the race, reproduce labor. This role is not merely a reproduction of biological resources but it is also the care, maintenance and development of the workforce for the present and the future, such as raising children and nurturing family members, housework etc.;
- community role: expressed in community-based engagement activities to maintain and develop community resources and to meet community needs and objectives<sup>3</sup>.

Labor division: according to the sociological concept initiated by Auguste Comte, the division of labor is the specialization of labor tasks in order to perform the function of stabilizing and developing society, strengthen the bond between the individuals and the social order. Gender division of labor is a factor shaping gender roles in the family and society. It is noteworthy that gender division of labor does not simply rely on differences in biological characteristics between males and females but is always tied to the habits of thinking and attitudes about male and female roles in society<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Research methodology

Research uses a number of methods such as interviewing, observation and document analysis in which the main method is structured interview (questionnaire survey). Research conducted to survey 250 households out of 1 002 households directly involved in production activities related to fishery. The main focus is on the division of labor in fisher households. The information obtained from the questionnaire are synthesized, cleaned, coded and processed by SPSS software according to statistical statistics taking into account statistical significance. The results of the analysis are explained according to the specific issues of the study.

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<sup>3</sup> Le Thi Quy, *Gender Sociology of Gender*, Vietnam Education Publishing House 2010, p. 43–122.

<sup>4</sup> Nguyen The Tram, *Solutions to Resolve Employment Problems of Coastal Fishermen in the Central Region*, Ministry Level Science Project, Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, Da Nang Sub-Institute 2005, p. 17.

### 3. Content and research results

#### 3.1. Division of labor in production and economic development of the family

In the past, the basic occupational characteristics of coastal fishermen often used manpower; they were responsible for direct implementation of such activities as fishing and exploiting. Fishermen often went for a long time, harsh natural conditions, needed to use a lot of labor force so few of the women in the study area engaged in marine activities<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 1. Income of household members**

unit: %	husband	wife	both	offspring	other	gross
male	51,5	11,2	35,4	1,3	0,6	100
female	54,0	10,8	29,0	2,3	3,9	100

Source: author's survey in 2016.

Both sexes claimed that the husband – householder – has the highest earning in the household (51,5% and 54%). The main source of income among fisher households largely depends on the results of the men's harassment in exploiting, fishing and some occupations involving women: processing, cultivating and trading seafood.

The key role of male coastal household fishers is not only reflected in incomes and employment but also in making decision in important areas of the household economy, particularly in the field of organization of production labor.

**Table 2. Decision maker in production organization**

unit: %	husband	wife	both	offspring	other	gross
procurement of production facilities (vessels, rafts, marine devices)	71,4	11,5	15,2	0,2	1,7	100
capital loan	59,2	7,2	26,5	2,2	4,9	100
way and organization of production	69,4	9,6	19,3	0,5	1,2	100

Source: author's survey in 2016.

The above data shows that 71,4% of husbands make decision to purchase means of production, 59,2% to borrow money, 69,4% to determine the direction and organize production. This result is perfectly consistent with gender function theory given by Emile Durkheim (1857–1917), a French sociologist, one of the typical representations of this theory with the view that men are assigned professional functions (tools, occupations) to create material goods and women have the function of expression (culture, emotions)<sup>6</sup>. Thus, the husband, with the householder position, plays a decisive role in the organization of household production in the study area.

<sup>5</sup> Quy Lam, Kim Phuong, *The Status Role of Vietnamese Women – Historical Recognition of Women and Women's Rights*, Social Labor Publishing House 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Gender Sociology and Development*, ed. Le Ngoc Hung, Nguyen My Loc, Hanoi National University Press 2000, p. 23.

However, nowadays, in the new living conditions, wives, women in Nghi Son commune play a large role in building the economic life of the household. Research results in Nghi Son Commune show that 50 out of 250 women surveyed are directly involved in the sea fishing with their husbands (20%).

“In the past my husband went to catch seafood alone, no one help to drop the net, pull the net and had to hire, while I was idle at home, I were worry about my husband a lot. From the day I was in the boat with my husband out to sea sharing the burden, hard in the sea fishing, to catch the fish I am very happy. Family economic are better, our children have good condition for studying” (PVS, female, 38 years).

During the days when husbands go to catch seafood, in the countryside, women often do other jobs to increase their income, such as: making dried fish, fish sauce, buying and selling fish or doing seasonal jobs in Nghi Son economic zone. Thus, it is clear that women also contribute to income generation, they build and stabilize family economics with their husbands. It is fact that the economic position of women in the families of fishermen is increasingly enhanced.

The role of women in production is also expressed through decision-making and business activities. Selecting a business item is an important part of the production process. If the husband plays a decisive role in the purchase of production facilities, loans, directions and production methods, the wife plays a decisive role in the management of revenue and expenditure (see table 3).

**Table 3. Decision makers and implementation in business, trading**

unit: %	husband	wife	both	offspring	other	gross
<b>decision makers</b>						
type of business items	23,4	53,3	16,6	0,7	5,9	100
place of purchase, sale, purchase price, selling price	15,6	50,0	33,3	0,0	1,1	100
<b>the person who perform the steps</b>						
management of collection, payment	32,3	41,6	24,0	0,3	1,7	100
transportation, loading and unloading	57,3	13,6	22,5	5,3	1,2	100
direct service or sales	21,0	50,0	21,5	6,1	1,4	100

Source: author's survey in 2016.

Data in table 3 shows that the transport and loading and unloading of seafood is mainly man-made (57,3%) because of the heavy and laborious work that is suitable for man. Meanwhile, women usually sell (50%). Women who have experience in business understand the tastes of customers, know well which business is the most profitable, thus they decide the business product (53,3), the purchase price (50%) and also are the manager of revenue, expenditure, payment (41,6%). Now not only men make decision over business and production but also women. It is clear that direct participation in the areas above has raised the position of women in Nghi Son commune on a par with men and now

women play an important role in their decision-making and implementation family economic functions.

### 3.2 In reproductive operations

Reproduction is activities that create race and reproduce labor. They include childbearing, parenting, caring for family members and doing household works, washing and cleaning the house. The research results show that in the fishermen in Nghi Son commune woman are responsible for caring, parenting, shopping for school supplies, contacting school teachers, arranging leisure time as well as managing and keeping finances for living expenses.

**Table 4. Homemaker, health care and child education**

unit: %	husband	wife	both	offspring	other	gross
<b>caring the health for family members</b>						
male	5,5	43,1	38,4	1,3	11,7	100
female	2,8	54,7	29	2,3	11,2	100
<b>teaching children</b>						
male	15,9	31,4	35,5	4,4	12,7	100
female	12,9	39,4	29	5,1	13,6	100
<b>housework</b>						
male	7,3	59,5	18,5	7,6	7	100
female	5,8	68,9	11,4	8,6	5,1	100

Source: author's survey in 2016.

Data in table 4 shows that both sexes consider that women are mainly responsible for caring of their children (43,1% and 54,7%). However, there is a share of husbands in teaching their children; the proportion of couples participating in teaching children is high (35,5% and 29%). A fisherman: “My life is on the sea so much, now I just expect my children to study well, so the couple are very interested” (PVS, male, 43 years).

Women not only play a major role in the teaching and caring the health for their family but they also mainly do the housework. Both sexes admitted that most housework (59,5% and 68,9%) were the work of housewives. Husbands are less engaged in housework (7,3% and 5,8%).

This is in part due to the conditions and living conditions of fisher families. Firstly, the characteristics of the sea fishing is very hard, men spend so much time in the sea so they are often away from home and less likely to directly participate in family work and child care. Secondly, the wife and family members have sympathy and think that after the hard work and long trips to the sea the husbands need rest and time to prepare for the next trip.

Thus, the work in the family – such as health care, teaching children, housework – are largely undertaken by women. This is an unpaid work but it takes a lot of women’s time and energy. Therefore, women also have less time to rest and care for themselves. In fact, part of the dedication of women has not been properly appreciated by the family and society and the silent contributions are either forgotten or “not seen”. Therefore, in order to achieve equality between men and women not only in the paid sector but also in the unpaid sector it is necessary to renovate the way of thinking and perception of this type of work.

### 3.3. In community activities

Community work is something that involves collective action, such as: holidays, festivals, funerals, weddings. It may also be public works, family activities or neighborhoods. In the past of the Vietnamese people, the “family and community tasks” were only undertaken by a man – the husband in family. However, the results of the investigation are as follows in table 5.

**Table 5. Participants in community social activities**

unit: %	husband	wife	both	offspring	other	gross
visit relatives	18,7	17,8	56,6	2,1	4,8	100
funerals, marriages	19,7	18,8	55,4	1,6	4,5	100
ancestor worship	32,6	20	38	1,4	8,1	100
engage in social work	29,3	25,2	35,4	2,8	7,3	100

Source: author’s survey in 2016.

Male still plays a major role in ancestor worship (32,6%), with the majority of men participating in social organizations and community activities (29,3%), such as corporations, groups, production team, farmer association. Male fishermen are not only directly involved in technical training courses on capture fisheries, aquaculture and loans for job creation by local authorities but they also directly decide the big family issues and join the organizations which help them to cooperate and catch up with the information, technology and understanding of the party’s policy, state and local government.

However, it is also possible to see that today community work is not just a male job but women are also directly involved and they have a greater effect on community work (visiting relatives: 18,7% and 17,8%; funerals, marriages: 19,7% and 18,8% social work: 29,3% and 25,2%). This can be explained that men usually go to the sea for a long time so they are less able to directly participate in community work and these jobs must be undertaken by women in the family. “I usually go to sea for a whole month so everything in the house and in the neighborhood when I go away my wife undertake but when I come back, both husband and wife join together” (PVS, male, 39 years).

Women in coastal fisher folk households in Nghi Son commune play an important role not only in family work and in economic development but also in family income. Their role is enhanced within the family and in society. The recent economic restructuring and division of labor in Nghi Son has confirmed and enhanced the role of women in the family. With the targeted programs of poverty reduction, education development strategies and community development policies of the party and the state, women have become more confident and brave to participate in family development and socio-economic development.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study show that the division of labor in the family is a form of labor organization in society which has existed for a long time but it has changed certainly under the influence of modern society. In the present context, men and women in Nghi Son are involved in household production development, as men play a key role in the organization of production, they are the main source of income and determine the production method and investment in the purchase of household goods when women increasingly show their role in engaging in activity produce household economic development and play a leading role in the work of family, community and society. They direct participate in these areas has raised the position of women in Nghi Son commune on a par with men and now women play an important role in the decision-making and implementation of the family economic functions. That represents a significant improvement in gender equality.

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Le Quoc Nguyen  
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**Finding out labor division in coastal fishery households of Nghi Son commune, Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hóa province**

With the aim of focusing on clarifying gender division of labor in fisherfolk households in Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hóa province, the research uses qualitative research and quantitative research methods from data survey on the topic of “Labor division in coastal fishery households of Thanh Hóa province – case study in Nghi Son commune, Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hóa province” in 2016. From this the researchers study household economic development and activities to maintain relationships between family members with the community and society in the study area.

**Keywords:** gender division, division of labor, households, case study.

**Rozpoznanie podziału pracy w rybackich gospodarstwach domowych w gminie Nghi Son, dystrykt Tinh Gia w prowincji Thanh Hóa**

W celu skoncentrowania się na uściśleniu podziału pracy ze względu na płeć w gospodarstwach domowych rybaków w dystrykcie Tinh Gia, w prowincji Thanh Hóa, wykorzystane zostały wyniki badań jakościowych i ilościowych. Badania na temat „Podział pracy w gospodarstwach przybrzeżnych rybołówstwa w prowincji Thanh Hóa – studia przypadków w gminie Nghi Son, dystrykt Tinh Gia w prowincji Thanh Hóa” przeprowadzone zostały w 2016 roku. Naukowcy badają rozwój gospodarczy gospodarstw domowych i działania mające na celu utrzymanie relacji między członkami rodziny a społeczeństwem w zakresie objętym badaniami.

**Słowa kluczowe:** podział płci, podział pracy, gospodarstwa domowe, studium przypadku.