



ICSF

27 Years in Support of Small-scale Fishworkers

# Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

## From the Editor

Behind each boat there is a woman, a family and a community—this apt motto of AKTEA, the European Network of Women’s Organizations in Fisheries and Aquaculture, a network promoting the role of women in European fisheries, was quoted by Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, on the occasion of International Women’s Day on 8 March 2013, to draw attention to how supporting women in fisheries means providing support to both families and communities.

The critical role that women play in fisheries has been in the spotlight in recent years. For example, according to the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) 2012 report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), information provided from 86 countries indicated that, in 2008, women made up at least 50 per cent of the workforce in inland fisheries, while as much as 60 per cent of seafood is marketed by women in Asia and west Africa. Moreover, case studies indicated that women may comprise up to 30 per cent of all those employed in fisheries, including in primary and secondary activities. The report stresses that the figures provided are only estimates, given that no comprehensive data, on a sex-disaggregated basis, is available. This lack of data is consistent with the bias observed in other sectors of the economy—women’s roles and significant contributions, particularly in the informal economy, continue to be underestimated, undervalued and largely invisible.

The consequences of this ‘invisibility’ are evident, if unacceptable. Studies and field experience indicate that women engaged in fisheries, particularly small-scale fisheries, face various forms of discrimination, compounded by the discrimination faced by the small-scale fisheries sector in general. Women engaged in small-scale fisheries, for example, are known to suffer from lack of even basic facilities in markets and landing centres. Their access to credit, to sustain their livelihoods in the face of rising competition, is poor, at best. They are exposed to sexual and other forms of harassment on a regular basis. Women engaged in fisheries are often not recognized as workers; not surprisingly, they lack social protection and access to social security. They are poorly represented in organizations, in decision-making processes within the family, in the community and in fisheries governance. Their communities lack access to basic services such as those related to education, healthcare, water, and sanitation. In such difficult circumstances, the burden of giving care and providing food falls mainly on women.

A focus on addressing the systemic and systematic forms of discrimination that women in fisheries face is critical to ensuring that their basic human rights are protected. Such a focus is also critical for achieving food security, poverty eradication, and equitable and sustainable development.

The International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries being developed by FAO offers an important opportunity to provide clear direction for achieving these objectives. It is imperative that concrete proposals to protect women’s rights to a dignified life and livelihood are integrated into each section of the Guidelines (see article on page 9), and that processes of implementation, monitoring and evaluation systematically maintain this focus. Can States rise to the challenge and go beyond paying mere ‘lip service’ to gender issues in fisheries? ❏



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# Compliance is key

**A new campaign to ensure labour compliance in Bangladesh's economically vital shrimp processing industry, promises labour rights to women working in the sector**

By **Md. Nuruzzaman** (nuruzzaman07@gmail.com), National Expert, Better Work and Standards Programme–Better Fisheries Quality (BEST-BFQ), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Bangladesh receives its second-largest foreign-exchange earnings through export of processed shrimp and seafood. In recent times, however, fair wages and labour rights in the industry have been key areas of concern for buyers, consumers and civil society organizations in the United States (US) and the European Union (EU). Both the major export-oriented shrimp and seafood processing sector and readymade garments sector have been under constant threat from foreign buyers for violation of work safety, gross labour non-compliance and other deprivations. The issue of labour compliance has long been overlooked both by the industry and the government departments supposed to regulate the industry.

During the mid-1980s, the contribution from industry to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country was between 16 to 17 per cent, which doubled to about 32 per cent in 2012. However, the institutional support to embrace this industrial growth has not been adequate. Rather, the regulatory bodies have been weakened, exposing a political reluctance on the part of the government to regulate industry. Some estimates place over 50 per cent posts currently unfilled in different departments under the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOL&E). No new

recruitment or promotions have happened in a long time, and the incumbent officers who are still young and skilled tend to quit in search of better opportunities elsewhere.

The shrimp and seafood export earnings have been maintaining more or less a steady average growth of around 10 per cent per year over the last three decades. There are 162 shrimp processing plants in the country, of which 74 have EU approval. It is estimated that there are over 50,000 workers employed in these processing factories, more than 70 per cent of whom are women.

Women workers, constituting the majority of the workforce engaged in the post-harvest shrimp processing industry, have neither been trained adequately on social compliance nor imparted skill training to improve their performance. Unlike men, most of the women in the industry are employed as casual workers, at lower wages, without being absorbed into the permanent workforce even after years of work.

In this context, a new campaign to raise awareness on labour rights is taking place in the country's shrimp processing industry. Rigorous efforts on training and motivation are being taken, using customized training programmes for workers and staff, with systematic monitoring and evaluation by the Fish Inspection and Quality Control (FIQC) Office, Department of Fisheries.

Training courses on labour laws conducted for government officials, executives and mid-level management up to the end of 2011 resulted in a good foundation for the actual implementation of labour rules. A total of 78 officers were trained under a Training of Trainers programme: 29 from MOL&E, 24 from FIQC, 20 from the major shrimp processing factories, and five from two non-governmental organizations. The objective was to prepare a pool of trainers to impart training on labour laws in future.

The training and awareness programme has, since July 2012, shifted emphasis to training workers in factories on their rights and obligations. The programme is jointly organized by the Department of Fisheries and MOL&E under a project titled "Strengthening of Compliance Level of Labour Laws across the Shrimp Value Chain in Bangladesh". With technical assistance from the Better Work and Standards Programme–Better Fisheries Quality (BEST-BFQ) of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the training courses are funded by the EU and the Norwegian Development Agency (NORAD). Shrimp processing factories hosting the courses are chosen on

MD. NURUZZAMAN



Participants from the shrimp processing industry at the labour laws training programme organized by BEST-BFQ project, Bangladesh

the basis of number of workers, processing and export performance, and management motivation.

Both contract and permanent workers are taken in but the aim is to ensure that the majority of participants are women workers. Office staff and junior executives are also included to enable their participation in fair labour management. Group work and individual participation are key elements of the course. The participant workers are asked to deliberate on, and discuss, the question: "What are your problems at work?" They are urged to also suggest possible solutions. The workers then present the results of their group work to the trainers and factory officials.

The participants are taught the basic provisions of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006. The sessions cover areas related to Appointment Letter; Identity Cards; Wage Rules; Working Hours; Overtime; Leave Rules; Maternity Benefits; Baby Care; Occupational Safety; Compensation for Accidents; and Duties and Responsibilities of Workers. The mode of training involves lectures and discussions. The main learning points are reiterated several times to enable all participants to understand and remember them. At the closing session, the class is divided into two groups, each being asked to prepare 10 to 15 questions for the other. For every correct answer, 10 points are given. This gives participants a chance to reinforce their understanding.

A total of 46 batches of factory-based labour law training have been held in the regions of Khulna and Chittagong, covering

1,410 workers and staff from shrimp processing factories, during the period July 2012 to February 2013.

Labour training at factory level for the shrimp processing industry has been well accepted by the industry stakeholders. An External Evaluation Mission, commissioned by UNIDO Headquarters, which carried out a field evaluation during the period 18 March to 4 April 2012, recommended that labour training be continued both at factory and residence or slum to benefit all workers.

The UNIDO initiative has encountered several positive responses. Twelve factories have appointed Compliance Officers for the first time in the Khulna region. These factories have prepared their own Annual Training Plan on labour laws. Similarly, in the Chittagong region, eight factories have appointed Compliance Officers, two of whom are women. MOL&E has also increased training and inspection activities across the shrimp processing industry after the UNIDO project. The Industrial Relations Institute (IRI) and the Labour Welfare Centre under the Department of Labour now offer five-day training on Labour Laws at the factory level in the regions of Chittagong and Khulna.

Certain challenges, however, remain. Contract workers—80 per cent of them women—working under labour contractors, have suffered intense labour law violation. Wages paid to labour contractors, as against work done by casual contract workers, is not subject to audit. Thus, it is unclear how much of the wage is deducted by contractors as commission. However, problems of non-

**Contract workers—80 per cent of them women—working under labour contractors, have suffered intense labour law violation.**

### What's New, Webby?



## Bibliographies : WIF and MPA

The ICSF website now carries updated bibliographies of its two sub-sites: Women in Fisheries and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The Women in Fisheries (WIF) Bibliography ([wif.icsf.net](http://wif.icsf.net)) has been updated with the latest documents in three thematic areas: women's contribution to resource management; the role of women in the sectors of fish processing, trade, and MPAs; and women and community-based management.

Some interesting articles are: "Women's contribution to food security and local economies" by Sarah Harper and colleagues; "Women's participation in decision-making process in the Solomon Islands" by Shankar Aswani and Pam Weiant; "Women's participation in

the management of MPAs in Brazil" by Regina Di Ciommo and Alexandre Schiavetti; "Gendered access to fishing resources" by Barbara Walker and Michael Robinson; "Women's role in the value-chain in fish processing in Nigeria" by Abiodun O. Cheke; and, finally, "Women's role in the global fishery value chain" by Achini De Silva and colleagues.

The MPAs site ([mpa.icsf.net](http://mpa.icsf.net)) has also been updated with documents on the governance of MPAs and on community-based management. The papers cover a wide range of countries, including Indonesia, Portugal, Australia, India, Brazil, China, Colombia, Vietnam, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Cambodia, Chile, and the Philippines. ❏

compliance are less in the Khulna region, where 80 per cent of the industry is situated.

BEST-BFQ is trying to help the shrimp industry through technical assistance to improve its compliance level and hence to increase Bangladesh's competitiveness in the international seafood market. The

industry is also trying to respond positively through better compliance. It is expected that this new participatory drive will offer a way forward in establishing better social compliance across the economically important shrimp processing industry in Bangladesh. ■



## PROFILE

# Marta Machazec Serrutt

**In Panamá, the persistent efforts of a courageous woman go a long way in bolstering the dignity of fishworkers, their incomes and conditions of work**

By **Náina Pierri** (pierrinai@gmail.com), Member, ICSF, and translated by **Vivienne Solis Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org), Member, ICSF

traits of this ethnic mix are clearly visible in Marta, who, as her surname reveals, also has some Polish ancestry. Marta's multi-ethnic identity seems to have filled her with the courage and dreams of her ancestors who travelled across the oceans in search of a better life.

Marta is the daughter and granddaughter of artisanal fishermen. As a child, she would go fishing with her father in a rowing boat, and, as a teenager, with her brother, without parental permission. They fished with lines and harpoons, diving without oxygen equipment. She experienced the passion and anguish of the fishery profession, seeing the difficulties her father went through to sell the fish they caught, and the little money he received in exchange.

Marta went to the capital to study pedagogy, but soon came back to her town. She married, had a son, and now works as teacher in a primary school. But Marta came back with another big dream. Worried by the situation of the artisanal fishers, in 1999, she took the initiative to form a fishers' association. She looked for the legal documents and elaborated a project that she presented to the Japanese embassy. Through the embassy, she obtained 10 motorized boats for the association members who did not own boats, and also some money to construct a landing centre.

The association collected capital through sale of 'actions' or membership rights for US\$100, bought mainly by the associates. To avoid the concentration of power and safeguard collective interests, no associate could buy more than three actions or sell the actions to third parties. Today, the association has 39 actionist associates, and, between them, they divide the profit obtained. But the beneficiaries are not only these 39 people; the association has 156 actionist and non-actionist associates who sell their produce to the association at prices better than those offered by the trading intermediaries. They also receive credit for buying equipment, ice and food at subsidized prices when they go to sea. The fish is sold fresh locally, and whatever is left over is sold in the nearby localities, and in restaurants and supermarkets.

Twenty-five of the 156 members are women, 15 of whom are also actionists. These women also process fish to make nuggets and hamburgers that are sold by the association locally. They are planning to increase production, and to obtain a sanitary certification.

The association also runs two conservation projects: one for the regeneration of mangroves; the other to repopulate marine wildlife and repair the damaged natural reefs with artificial reefs made of bamboo, lime and cement.

Although Marta has been the main person guiding the association, she has been its president for the last two years only. For 10 years before that, she was treasurer, while the positions of president and secretary were occupied by men. It was felt that in those roles women would not be able to command respect. As president today, Marta knows that she is being granted belated recognition but she is also aware that the role has come to her because there was no other capable man available. As she says this, she smiles, looking afar with the pain of knowing that she is discriminated against as a woman, but also with the patient tolerance that comes from her profound love of fisherfolk. Marta is indeed a humble and great leader of the fishers of her community, and has been able to unite them and give them dignity through her work. ■

# Listening to the ocean's voice

The livelihoods and resource management practices of the *ama* community in Japan's Noto peninsula are under pressure of modernization

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Winter doesn't come softly to the western coastline of Noto peninsula, Japan. Referred to as *sotoura*, the western part of the peninsula's corrugated black volcanic rock coastline braces as the waves hit with a high velocity, sending ocean spray metres high into the air and crushing sounds echoing through the traditional cedar plank houses of the coastal communities.

But as many a northern fisher will say, the tough virility of the winter's ocean is a sign of resource benefits later to arrive at fishers' shores. At least, this is what the *ama* (literally, 'sea women') free divers on the peninsula believe. Winter is a time to watch, wait and respect the strength of the ocean. The ocean limits human access, to allow for marine life to interact, free from human intervention and, in some cases, rejuvenate life within. Even with the advancements in fishing technology that have allowed *ama* husbands to venture out into the depths of the ocean beyond their traditional harvesting borders, both the fishermen and female *ama* wait for the ocean's openings and closings as their ancestors did. Thus, although technology has changed others' connections with the ocean, for the *ama* community on this peninsula, the ocean's

voice continues to dictate the rhythms of human activities.

Winter for the *ama* on the peninsula is the time to harvest *iwanori* (rock seaweed) and *namako* (sea cucumber). As the last shades of winter fade slowly into spring, on land, the *ama*, still dressed in their thick winter wetsuits, rent harvesting rights from neighbouring town fisher co-operatives to hand-harvest non-cultured wild oysters in the coastal waters.

Not all *ama* harvest the winter waters. Some lack the physical strength to tackle the harsh winter sea. For others, a new family duty brought on by technological advancements in fisheries and fishing port infrastructure take them away from their traditional *ama* harvesting activities as they join their husbands on their global positioning system (GPS)-equipped fishing boats. Income potentials decide this as winter is more profitable on the husbands' boats and summer in the traditional *ama* harvesting waters. In the past, it was said that the annual income of an *ama* household was decided by the *ude* (literally, 'arm') or harvesting capacity of the *ama*. Many of the younger-generation *ama*, caught between carrying on the traditional life as *ama* and wanting a nine-to-five job indoors on land, find minimum-wage part-time jobs during the winter and return to the ocean in the summer.

As seasons change, so do the number of active *ama*. They increase from fewer than 40 in the winter to approximately 300 in the summer. Ages of *ama* ranged from the mid-20s to 94 during the summer season of 2012. All are either the direct descendants of the nomadic sea gypsies who, according to ethno-historical theories, originated from the Korean island of Jeju, the birthplace of their *haenyo* ancestors, the Korean matriarchs of the ocean, or have married into households with *ama* hereditary rights.

Carrying on the seasonal migratory traditions of their nomadic ancestors, from July to the end of September, the *ama* migrate from their homes in Amamachi (literally, 'ama town') on the peninsula to Hegura Island, a small island 50 km away. Technological advancement and social change have impacted this traditional season of abalone and turban

ANNE MCDONALD



*Ama* harvest *iwanori* (rock seaweed) and *namako* (sea cucumber) in winter. They are the direct descendants of the nomadic sea gypsies from the Korean island of Jeju

**Although technology has changed many peoples' connections with the ocean, for the *ama*, the ocean's voice continues to dictate the rhythms of human activities.**

shell harvesting. Many younger *ama* with children in school on the mainland peninsula choose not to live on the island unlike their elders. These *ama* are referred to as *kayoi ama* (literally, 'commuter *ama*') because they travel the 50 km to the island waters and back daily in boats; with six to 10 *ama* and their *oyakata* (literally, 'boss', 'chief')—the *ama* husband who is also the boat owner and navigator, and considered to be the protector of the *ama* on the boat. Those who live on the island during these months harvest as their mothers and *ama* ancestors did. The *ama* ancestors first seasonally settled on Hegura Island, Nanatsujima, and seven other small islands in the area during the Tokugawa feudal era when they were granted sole harvesting and residential rights by the Lord of the Kaga domain.

Whether for mainland peninsula commuter *ama* or Hegura Island seasonal resident *ama*, the rules of harvesting are the same for all. Harvesting grounds, harvesting seasons, daily allowable harvest times, harvesting methods and gear are all discussed and decided by the collective as a whole. If, for example, the seas between the mainland peninsula and the island are too rough for the commuter *ama* to venture across but the waters around Hegura Island are calm, all are forbidden to harvest that day—a rule that was apparently debated at much length when technology changed the seasonal movement of *ama*. The discussion on allowing the use of scuba diving tanks continued for three years until the collective voice decided against it—the rejection of technological innovation having centred on opinions about the potential negative impacts that technological adoption could have on marine resources and on their heritage and cultural identity as free divers who rely on their individual physical capacities to harvest resources from the sea.

Voluntarily imposed no-take zones and allowable catch sizes, among other resource management practices, are also discussed and decided by the collective as a whole. Disagreement and dissent during discussions are allowed and understood as necessary in reaching a final collective agreement, but once the majority vote is reached, the collective decision must be adhered to by all.

Collective decisionmaking is not unique to the *ama* of Noto peninsula. As many familiar with Japanese fishing communities would know, community-based co-management is the norm. Approximately 1,600 fishery management organizations (FMOs) are the

co-managers of coastal resources along the Japanese archipelago, spanning 3,000 km from the northern boreal waters of Hokkaido to the sub-tropical waters of Okinawa. Current discussions among the *ama* community are exploring the differences between their own resource management perspectives and approaches and norms among mainly patriarchal fishing communities elsewhere in Japan.

Although generalities about gender differences can sometimes lend themselves to misleading assumptions and conclusions about both sexes, at a meeting held in February 2013, among female *ama* communities from across Japan, some voiced observations that when men were allowed *ama* rights in traditionally female *ama* communities as a result of declining female *ama* numbers, resource management became more challenging. Men have greater physical capacity to harvest and are less inclined to reduce harvesting times in order to balance harvesting outcomes with the requirements of resource sustainability. Some female *ama* went as far as to comment that male *ama* (pronounced the same as female *ama* but written literally as sea-men) had short-term visions and approaches to resource use and management; female *ama*, on the other hand, are more conscious of their cultural heritage and the traditions of centuries they carry with them every time they enter the ocean as *ama* free divers. This, in turn, some claim, contributes to their heightened consciousness about the need to manage resources within a historical cultural context.

The *ama* add that our ancestors left us with enough resources to carry on their traditions and it is our cultural obligation to ensure the sustainability of future generations. "If we tie a noose around the life of the ocean, we ultimately tie a noose around the future of *ama*", an *ama* who recently turned 60 commented.

Life is dynamic, change is inevitable and what is maintained as a constant is not always easy to predict. Social change, technological innovation and climate change—all variables of differing impact and influence—will continue to colour the *ama* harvesting seasons. Amidst the changes that reach their shores, just how the *ama* of Noto peninsula will maintain their cultural heritage as female free divers is difficult to say. Be assured, however, that future decisions, as in the past, will not be made in silence; there will be active discussions among all, as is in keeping with the *ama* traditions. ❏

# A dialogue begins

**An important dialogue between Mumbai's women fish vendors, State officials and researchers on livelihood security is kickstarted by an ICSF study**

By **Shuddhawati Peke**  
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**D**uring 2-3 December 2012, women fish vendors, fishworker union representatives, government officials, researchers and others met at a workshop to discuss ICSF's study on women fish vendors in Mumbai, India. Women of fishing communities in Mumbai have traditionally dominated fish vending in the city, and fish markets developed in locations where they customarily sold fish. Nevertheless, over the years, women fish vendors have been facing problems in pursuing their livelihoods. The workshop sought to outline strategies to secure their livelihoods in the changing urban landscape of Mumbai.

Participants on the first day of the two-day workshop held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) included grassroots organizations like the Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samittee (MMKS), a trade union, the National Hawkers Federation (NHF), YUVA (a non-governmental organization), women fish vendors, fishworker leaders, and researchers.

The workshop commenced with Ujjwala Patil, the organizer from MMKS, sharing her experiences of working with women vendors in the city and describing the challenges that they face. The ICSF researcher, Shuddhawati Peke, then presented the findings of the study on "Women Fish Vendors in Mumbai". The study had specifically focused on vendors in government-run and private markets, street vendors and door-to-door vendors. Some of

the themes running through her discussions with fish vendors, she said, were the lack of basic infrastructure such as clean water and sanitation. Street vendors are exposed to the ever-present threat of eviction. Door-to-door or peripatetic vendors, she said, were especially concerned about access to customers since the growing number of gated communities bar the entry of hawkers. The contentious plan to redevelop markets through private developers, under the private-public partnership (PPP) model, was also brought up.

Peke's presentation highlighted the demand by vendors that funds for redevelopment should come from government agencies such as the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) rather than from private developers, whose main interest was to establish their hold over high-value commercial space in whatever manner possible, including by displacing fish vendors from their traditional market spaces. Vendors' demands for better facilities, access to fish, and social security measures were also highlighted.

Raju Bhise of YUVA, who has experience of organizing the urban poor, spoke of the need to recognize fishing communities as indigenous communities in the city, given that they are the original inhabitants of Mumbai. He also spoke of the need to protect their spaces. Bhise emphasized the need for fishing communities to engage with the process around Mumbai's Development Plan (DP), currently underway, to ensure that their settlements, markets, vending spaces and so on are reflected in it, and that provisions are made for the establishment of new markets and other space-related requirements of fishing communities.

Post-lunch, members of the NHF shared their experiences from various States in India. They talked of the initiative of creating hawkers' zones in the city of Bhubaneswar, Odisha, and of incorporating the participation of hawkers in the process. From Mumbai, several women fish vendors spoke of the travails of vending in markets. Usha Tamore of the Mumbai District Women's Co-operative Limited highlighted how traders tamper with the scales, short-changing vendors in the process. There was agreement that such problems need to be solved through careful monitoring by women vendors' associations.

Responding to the problem raised by women fish vendors regarding migrants from other States taking over their spaces, Pankaj Bhawe from the fishing community said that

SHUDDHAWATI PEKE



The participants outlined strategies to secure the livelihoods of women fish vendors in the changing urban landscape of Mumbai

**The workshop highlighted the shortcomings of the State in protecting the livelihood needs of women fish vendors and the need for the women to be proactive.**

instead of blaming the migrants for muscling in on what was traditionally fisherwomen's business, it is important to learn from them. The migrants work in groups to buy fish, reducing costs, and are thus more competitive. Bhave suggested that the women should consider doing the same. He also expressed concern over the reluctance of co-operatives in the State to market fish locally, though they supply to exporters. Bhave also suggested that the women fish vendors investigate the possibility of selling value-added fish products along with their traditional merchandise of dry and fresh fish.

At the end of the day, the participants compiled the proposals to be shared with the government officials who would be participating in the second day's programme. Key proposals included the following: the establishment of a State policy for street vendors; the provision of better infrastructure and facilities in markets and landing centres; the prioritization of the public sector model over the public-private partnership model for market redevelopment, which, additionally, should not only involve vendors at all stages but also ensure transparency by making all redevelopment plans and proposals accessible online; the granting of licences to all legitimate vendors through a transparent process; and, finally, the development of new fish markets in keeping with the rapid expansion of the city. The suggestion for a new wholesale market also came up along with the demand

for social security, capacity building, and training for vendors.

The second day of the workshop began with a recap of the previous day's discussions for the benefit of new participants. The officials from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), responsible for the management of markets, said that while they were unable, at this point, to make any promises, they would share the vendors' concerns and demands with other officials at BMC. They also explained that while conditions at some markets were less than ideal, it was not true of all markets. In some cases, since the government plans to redevelop certain markets, temporary repairs have been halted. Officials from the State Fisheries Department also responded to the proposals of the vendors. They highlighted some of the work underway to improve existing harbours and landing centres in the city. They were requested to ensure that the concerns of the women vendors, like sanitation and access to auction halls and storage space, are addressed in this process. It was pointed out, however, that this does not lie in the hands of the Fisheries Department as harbours fall within the purview of the Bombay Port Trust Authority. The need for women vendors' organizations to make their demands known to the other relevant departments was highlighted. The Fisheries Department was also asked to ensure social-security coverage for women fish vendors and to ensure that they are provided with compensation



## Milestones

By **Ramya Rajagopalan**  
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### Landmark Agreement : Prevent and Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls

The 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that met from 4 to 15 March 2013 adopted an agreement to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. The outcome document included strong agreements to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and ensure women's reproductive rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services—an area of particular contention. It reaffirmed previous international agreements on women's rights, such as those made in Cairo in 1994.

Welcoming the CSW agreement, the organization UN Women stated: "Violence against women is a universal problem that requires, and has now received, a universal response. Violence occurs in multiple forms in all countries and settings; it harms women and their families and communities, impedes development, and costs countries billions of dollars annually in healthcare costs and lost productivity."

The CSW document condemns the pervasive violence against women and girls, and calls for

increased attention and accelerated action for prevention and response. There is an important focus on prevention and on addressing gender inequalities in the political, economic and social spheres. The document calls for multi-sectoral services for survivors of violence, including health, psychological and social support. It draws attention to the need for services to protect the right to sexual and reproductive health. Punishment of perpetrators is also highlighted as a critical measure to end impunity, as is the need to improve the evidence base and availability of data to inform an effective response.

Civil society groups across the world had lobbied hard to counter attempts by religious orthodoxies to block the declaration, asserting that "customs, tradition or religious considerations must not be tolerated to justify discrimination and violence against women and girls"

The agreement is one more step for realizing the rights and dignity of women and girls. ❏



for the oil spill that took place in 2011, due to which women vendors, for no fault of their own, had to suffer huge losses.

Usha Tamore intervened to raise the issue of eviction of vendors from a market near Pikale Hospital, pointing out that the vendors were being evicted for redevelopment though the market was not under BMC. She added that the women would welcome the redevelopment if the money came from other government bodies such as the NFDB and if the women were given a say over

what happens with the extra space created. The women were invited for further discussions on the issues raised with BMC and the Fisheries Department.

While the workshop highlighted the shortcomings of the State in protecting the livelihood needs of women fish vendors, it also brought to light the need for the women to be proactive. Currently, the women are not an organized or cohesive group, making it difficult to ensure that their voices are heard. ❏

## REPORT

## SSF

# Beyond lip service

**Civil society organizations across continents are working to ensure that the SSF Guidelines, comprehensively address the issues of the sector**

By **Chandrika Sharma**  
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Will the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines), currently being developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), move beyond paying lip service to gender issues in fisheries? Will they ensure that clear direction is provided on how gender issues, and, particularly, how the interests of women, can be addressed systematically in all aspects of fisheries? These are some of the issues being raised by civil society organizations (CSOs) even as the Technical Consultation to negotiate the final text of the SSF Guidelines comes up shortly, from 20 to 24 May 2013.

CSOs have fully supported the decision to develop the Guidelines, and have engaged closely and constructively with the process so far. They have organized 20 national-level workshops spanning Asia, Africa and Latin America, and two regional workshops in Africa, as well as consultations among small-scale fishers and fishworkers in the European Union and Canada in the period between September 2011 and December 2012. More than 2,300 people have participated in these consultations and shared their aspirations and proposals in relation to the Guidelines. The proposals that emerged have been compiled into a synthesis document. The entire process has been intensive, bottom-up and highly participatory. It has been co-ordinated by the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF),

and the International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Drawing on this consultative process, CSOs have consistently emphasized that the Guidelines should overtly promote a human rights-based approach to fisheries, and that they should focus primarily on vulnerable and marginalized groups within small-scale fisheries, including women, towards achieving food security and poverty eradication. They have also stressed that the Guidelines should be binding (not voluntary), especially as they are consistent with, and draw on, relevant provisions in existing international law. Moreover, the Guidelines should be global in scope, that is, they should apply to small-scale fisheries in all countries and regions at all stages of economic development.

CSOs have also outlined a strong gender agenda to ensure that the Guidelines steer away from the mainstream approach of equating fisheries with fishing, with a focus on fishermen. They have stressed that the Guidelines should apply to the full range of activities along the fisheries value chain, including the pre- and post-harvest sector, and all fishing and harvesting activities, whether in an aquatic environment or on land, whether undertaken by men or women, whether in the formal or informal sector, and whether taken up on an occasional or part-time basis and/or for subsistence.

CSOs have proposed that gender equality be included as a separate principle in the Guidelines, recognizing the need to ensure the equal rights of women and men to the enjoyment of all human rights, while acknowledging that women face specific forms of discrimination and that specific measures are needed aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality, especially by ensuring that the work of women in small-scale fisheries, including their reproductive work, is recognized, valued and supported.

A fundamental proposal is that the issue of gender and, in particular, the role of women, be mainstreamed and strengthened across all

**The equal rights of women and men should be ensured while also acknowledging that women face specific forms of discrimination requiring specific support.**

sections of the Guidelines, with the section on gender equality and equity retaining only the broad, overriding principles, and, particularly, the reference to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Strengthening attention to gender across sections is important, as women's rights and interests need to be protected in all aspects of small-scale fisheries, whether it be related to resource access and management, social development, decent work, post-harvest fisheries, climate change and disaster, or to policy coherence, research and capacity building, and monitoring and implementation of the Guidelines.

In relation to governance of rights and resource management, several proposals have been made. The right of women to participate in all aspects of the management of marine and inland fisheries and to receive equitable benefits from fisheries needs to be recognized and protected. Specific attention is needed to ensure the equitable participation of women in resource-management bodies and processes. While it is important to recognize customary law and systems of governance and their role in resource management, such laws and systems of governance need to be consistent with human-rights commitments and should protect the rights of women to equitable participation in governance. It is thus recognized that customary systems in many parts of the world discriminate against women and other marginalized groups.

Respecting and recording the legitimate tenure rights of men and women in fishing communities, using socially and culturally appropriate ways to record such rights is important. The rights of fishing communities to land for decent housing and for fishery-related and sociocultural activities, particularly in areas where their access is most threatened

such as in urban and tourism areas and aquaculture sites, need to be secured. Titling policies must provide mechanisms to ensure *de facto* and *de jure* equality for women. Where rights to fisheries resources, land rights and access to infrastructure are redistributed to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources, specific measures must be put in place to ensure that women benefit equitably. Further, recognition and support for fisher's knowledge, culture, traditions and practices to inform the management of resources should be ensured, recognizing the specific knowledge of women fishers and fishworkers in the process.

In terms of social development, CSOs have highlighted the need to enhance access of communities to basic services such as sanitation, health, water, decent housing, food and electricity, with specific steps to address HIV-AIDS. All parties need to take steps for raising awareness on gender issues and women's rights, to encourage men to support women in their diverse roles in the sector, to institute measures that aim to protect against and eliminate sexual violence, including domestic violence. It is critical to create conditions for men and women of fishing communities to fish and carry out fisheries-related activities in an environment free from violence, criminal activities, piracy, theft, sexual abuse, corruption and abuse of authority.

Social-security schemes should make provision for maternity and retirement benefits for women working within both formal and informal employment. Labour rights, including the right to decent work of men and women workers, and of women working as collaborative partners, must be guaranteed.

In terms of decent work and employment, it is suggested that States should address occupational health issues and unfair working conditions of all vessel- and shore-based small-scale fishers and fishworkers by ensuring that the necessary legislation is in place and is implemented, including in accordance with the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Regarding post-harvest fisheries and trade, CSOs have pointed to power relations in the value chain, and especially the role of intermediaries, that undermine the equitable accrual of benefits to small-scale fishers and fishworkers, so that they are effectively price takers and not price setters. Such inequitable power relations are also leading to acute forms of exploitation, such as the sex-for-fish trade. There is need to enhance the capacity of fishers and fishworkers to address such forms of exploitation. Moreover, the right of women engaged in post-harvest activities to have access to the fish that is landed needs to be specifically recognized.

BRIAN O'RIORDAN



Participants at the Senegal SSF Guidelines Workshop. Women's rights and interests need to be protected in all aspects of small-scale fisheries

It is proposed that specific support should be provided to women in the post-harvest sector. Such support should include improving access to transport, credit, infrastructure, market- and harbour-based facilities, particularly storage, water and sanitation, as well as amenities that facilitate the work participation of women, such as crèches, toilets and sanitary facilities, and secure shelters and spaces. It is also suggested that trade policies should prioritize fish for local consumption over fish for export or for reduction to fishmeal.

With regard to regional trade, where small-scale fisheries actors engage in sub-regional and regional trade in fish and fish products from small-scale fisheries (as in many parts of Africa), States should support such trade through fiscal measures to benefit artisanally processed fish products traded within the region, and by improving transport links, establishing provisions for product storage and preservation at border areas, taking steps to eliminate corruption and harassment of small-scale traders at customs and security checkpoints.

It is suggested that States should ensure coherence between laws and policies related to investment, trade, spatial planning, pollution control, conservation and coastal zone management, and the vision and policy framework for small-scale fisheries, and that special attention should be paid to mainstreaming gender issues.

The importance of collecting gender-disaggregated statistics and enumeration of women's work in both inland and marine fisheries, and in all aspects of the fisheries chain, is highlighted. On capacity development, it is suggested that all parties should ensure the creation of legitimate, democratic, representative structures at various decision-making levels, and ensure that the range and diversity of the small-scale fisheries subsector along the entire value chain is appropriately represented. Specific attention must be paid to the need to work towards the equitable participation of women in such structures. Where appropriate, separate spaces and mechanisms that enable women to organize autonomously at various levels on issues of particular relevance to them, may be supported.

With regard to implementation, it is proposed that a plan of action stating lines of action with targets and indicators to facilitate monitoring, be developed, with a specific plan of action for implementing the gender-related components of the guidelines. Further, States and other parties should develop a specific set of materials on gender, based on the SSF Guidelines, to secure the effective dissemination of information on gender and women's role in the small-scale sector and to highlight steps that need to be taken to support their work.

The Guidelines can provide both a useful framework for supporting small-scale fisheries and an opportunity for all concerned to acknowledge and address the discrimination that women fishers and fishworkers face. CSOs, drawing on the participatory process they have organized, have pointed to how women-specific language and issues can be integrated in all sections of the Guidelines. It is important to heed these proposals. ❖

**Interview with Marizelha Carlos Lopes ('Nega'), a fisherwoman and a leader of the Movement of Fisherworkers of Bahia, the National Organization of Fisherwomen of Brazil (ANP) and the National Movement of Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Brazil (MPP) (nega.ilha@bol.com.br)**

By **Naina Pierri** (pierrinai@gmail.com), Member, ICSF and **Natalia Azevedo** (natytav@yahoo.com.br), Researcher

**Where are you from and when did you start fishing?**

I am from Bananeiras, a *quilombola* community, which is located on the Ilha de Maré, Salvador, Bahia. I am now 42 years-old. I was seven when I started fishing along with my mother, to increase our income.

**When and why did you start to fight in defence of fishing?**

My reference is always my father, who was a great leader in the community. When I was 17, I took part in the activities held by the local Catholic church, and I also led a youth group at the first assembly of the founding of the rural workers' union. When I was 19, we founded the first association of residents and friends from Bananeiras. I started fighting in defence of fishing after undergoing some training with the Pastoral Council of the Fishermen (CPP).

**In the beginning, what was your experience of working in organizations where most of the fishers were men?**

We suffered a lot of prejudice, discrimination and sexist comments, disparaging our potential and competence.

**How is it now?**

We were many women in this effort and one of us even became president of the fishers' union of our region. We made significant changes there, a real revolution. For instance, we changed the union's statute and put in place a system of collective decisionmaking. In the periodical election of the Directive of the Union, women were elected in the third term.

**How do you feel being one of the main leaders of the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen from Brazil?**

I feel I am one of a group of warriors, who, with great effort, dedication and responsibility, broke down the barriers and prejudices that weighed down this movement. Together, we have a sense of strength and freedom. ❖

**YEMAYA MAMA**

*Can this dream come true?*



DOCUMENTARY

# Chronicles of Oblivion

## A documentary film on women fishworkers of Odisha, India

Produced by Dakshin Foundation, Directed by Priyanjana Dutta, with the support of Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust  
Duration: 25 minutes, Language: English

By Ramya Rajagopalan (icsf@icsf.net), Consultant, ICSF

Odisha translates as the 'land of the people'. There are an estimated 35,304 full-time fishers in the Indian State of Odisha (formerly known as Orissa). Of them, 7,973 are women. Besides these full-time women fishers, there are 12,499 women who work as part-time fishers. The film 'Chronicles of Oblivion' documents the lives of Odisha's women fishworkers in different parts of the State.

Among the women shown in the film are the crab-catchers of the Bhitarkanika wildlife sanctuary. Since the entry of these women into the sanctuary area is completely restricted, they have to constantly fight the

fear of arrest by forest guards or of being attacked by crocodiles and other wild animals. Many feel that it would probably be better for them to learn some other trade. These illiterate women are often also cheated by fish sellers. Their lives typify the challenges that fisherwomen of Odisha face as they pursue their traditional livelihoods in the face of modern day restrictions from the government and the development process.

There is very little support for women fishworkers in government

policies and plans. The focus of existing policies has been on increasing fish production and modernizing the fisheries. They exclude the needs of traditional fishing and of women engaged in these activities. The women, over the years, have developed their own means of livelihood, fishing in creeks and rivers, using small nets to catch crabs and fish. The film tries to show how important it is that these women be included in government planning and decision-making process in the fisheries sector.

But what promise does this State hold for its forgotten people? Women from marine fisher communities have historically been a neglected lot. The stories of women living along diverse landscapes of Odisha's 480-km coastline are of struggles for survival.

The daily lives of fisherwomen hinge on numerous uncertainties. Confronting a situation of depleting fish catch and unsustainable fisheries, women located along biodiversity-rich habitats also have to contend with the fickleness of legal conservation restrictions, which have dealt a severe blow to their livelihoods and ways of life. The film reveals the insidious impact of sea turtle conservation as seen through the eyes of the women fishworkers of Odisha. These women and their families are losing access to their land and other resources and are frequently displaced in the name of conservation or development. Further, these fishers also face problems of identity as they are often regarded by government regulators as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

The stories of Odisha's women fishworkers guide the narrative of this 25-minute-long film, revealing the highly unequal and invisible world that they inhabit.

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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 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.  
  
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