



**28** Years in Support of  
Small-scale Fishworkers

# Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

## From the Editor

The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in June this year marks an important event in the history of small-scale fisheries. This is a significant, even if long overdue, step forward in recognising the rights of the millions of fishers, especially women, who constitute half of the employment in the sector, and whose work unrecognised and undervalued. The challenge today is to ensure that the SSF Guidelines are adapted to the local context, and States made to enact appropriate legislation and policy changes. The challenge is also to educate and empower women in fisheries on the benefits of the SSF Guidelines, and therefore the need to organise around bringing pressure on States.

It is important however to discuss the changing structure of the fisheries, including the small-scale sector. Globally today, the youth of traditional fishing communities are abandoning the employment of their forebears to seek more lucrative jobs elsewhere. The average age of the fishing population in fishing communities is increasing, with older members forced to carry on the fishing and related employment, as the example of oyster shucking in Japan from the lead article in this issue highlights. Will legislation in such situations be able to effectively address the needs of an ageing working population in fishing?

The lead article also highlights the migration of labour in fishing with young Chinese women being employed as seasonal migrants in Japan's fishing communities. While the migration, in this case, is facilitated through a government bilateral programme, the migrant workers have less regulatory protection and work longer hours with higher work intensity. The use of such migrant labour has already introduced disparities in some instances, with smaller enterprises shutting down, and elderly Japanese women losing employment. Even as women in the community question the sustainability of work dependent on migrant labour, there are other larger issues of concern. Within globalisation, is there not a danger that a model dependent on unprotected migrant labour to boost local production might become the norm, thus lowering labour standards? The provisions of the SSF Guidelines related to migrant fishers and fishworkers, such as respecting their role in fisheries, facilitating their fair and adequate integration and adopting effective protection, should be incorporated into legislation and policy. However, would the elites in traditional fishing societies, in their new role as employers of migrant workers, be willing to countenance the protection of the rights of the workforce?

Another problem highlighted in this issue, also a consequence of globalization, is related to the global trade in fish. The case of fish trade in The Gambia shows how pro-poor strategies linked to export-oriented trade promotion can adversely affect the poorer and more vulnerable sections of society, in this case, by reducing the access of women fish traders to raw materials for their businesses, and consequently, compromising local food security.

In the context of the ongoing preparations for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to be held in 2015, these are important areas of campaign and education for civil society organisations to address. ■



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# Migrant hands, local profits

Chinese migrant labour changes the dynamics of oyster shucking in a traditional Japanese coastal community

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In Japan, many fishing households practice capture fishing and the farming of fish, shellfish and seaweed. All of them are members of the local Fisheries Cooperative Association (FCA). FCAs play multiple roles for the fishing community. They manage fishing and aquaculture within a few miles from the coast; provide many services to members, including input supplies and accounting; and they help with the marketing of products. FCAs are grouped into prefectural and national level federations.

Oku is a small town located in the Okayama Prefecture on the Seto inland sea. Oyster farming and fisheries are the main economic activities here. Shellfish farming was introduced in this area in 1952 by the local FCA. The objective was to provide an extra income to fisher households during winter, when fishing activity is low. The FCA began by bringing in seeds and got good results. With the introduction of raft-type cultivation in 1962, oyster production increased considerably. Oyster farming further expanded during the 1970s when fish landings were hit by overfishing and environmental degradation in the Seto inland sea. In 1980, the total

production of shucked oysters in Oku was 2,270 tons. The Japanese market required only shucked oysters. Shucking oysters—that is, peeling oysters from their shells—is a labour-intensive task. Oyster farming remained an important activity through the years. In 2011, the production of shucked oysters dropped to 1,500 tons, following reduction of the number of rafts to improve oyster quality. Eighty households were then involved in oyster farming. Until recently, the entire production of shucked oysters was marketed through the FCA. However, the low price of oysters and the limits set on the number of rafts forced oyster farmers to search for ways to reduce costs and to improve marketing.

Shucking oysters is a difficult manual task requiring agility and cheap labour. With economic growth, young women and men started to leave fishing communities to find better paid and easier jobs in cities. Women and old fishers now constitute the labour available for shucking oysters within traditional communities. Japanese rural communities are now largely populated by elderly people. Meanwhile, the producers started to develop direct sales and delivery by phone or internet rather than selling through the FCA. Oyster farmers engaging in direct sales saw their office work increase, and wives were now often employed full-time for this task. There was therefore a further shortage of labour for oyster shucking.

Oyster farmers of Oku, as in the rest of the Hiroshima production area, found the solution in employing immigrants. From early 2000, young immigrant women from China began to replace the old traditional labour done mainly by old Japanese women. Most of the land-based work in oyster farming is now performed by young Chinese women arriving in Japan under industrial training and technical programmes run by the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO). The official objective of this project is to offer opportunities to young immigrants from developing countries to acquire the skills and techniques of a developed country. Immigrant women are authorized to stay in Japan for a period of three years, and they have to return home during the low season.

KUMI SOEJIMA



Migrant labourers are shucking oysters in Oku farms.  
Both Japanese women and migrant women entirely engage in shucking shells

In their search for added value, some of the farmers decided to process oysters to access the *delicatessen* (specially prepared food) markets. Smoked oysters in olive oil and cooked oysters are some of the products. Women's participation is very important in the development of these new value-added activities. All members of the family become involved in these profitable businesses. Farmers without young family members generally do not undertake such initiatives because of lack of family labour. With migrant workers, this situation can change.

The arrival of young immigrant women in Japanese coastal communities gave oyster farming a second lease of life. Chinese labour not only increased the speed of operations, but also provided better quality products with less damaged oysters, and at a lower cost. Another aspect is the labour regulation. The work for local women is regulated by the fishers' cooperative laws, and employees are allowed to work only from 5 am to 3 pm. Chinese women, however, are not subject to local regulations. This new situation brought a lot of changes in the organization of this activity. The maximum number of rafts per

enterprise has now been revised upward from 15 to 20 to allow for the growth of businesses. Earlier, disparities between oyster enterprises were never important in Japan, but the use of immigrant labour and development of direct sales and processing have contributed to increasing such disparities. Enterprises without the necessary resources or skills became less and less viable economically and tended to close.

Another impact is the loss of work opportunities for elderly Japanese women. This affects both their main source of income—as most of them do not receive a pension—and their sense of purpose in life. On the other hand, wives of farmers acquire new business opportunities as new products and markets develop.

The question, however, is: what is the future of this industry in Japan if it has to rely on immigrant labour? Wives of fishers and oysters farmers have created women's groups in order to maintain and regulate life within the community, and to attract young Japanese people to the fisheries sector. They have started a debate on oyster shucking and its dependence on immigrant labour. ❏

**The arrival of young immigrant women in Japanese coastal communities gave oyster farming a second lease of life.**

**J**eannette is part of a fishing family in Tárcoles, a fishing community on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Her father has been a fisherman all his life, and her mother collects bivalves and other fisheries products for a living. She has six brothers.

Today, Jeannette is the manager of the ConsorcioPorlaMar R.L, a community-based tourism initiative that works with Costa Ricans to help them learn and value small-

including students, during which she explains to them the importance of small-scale fishing for the wellbeing of not only local communities but the country as a whole. She talks about how small-scale fishing provides food for families, work for men, youth and women, and fish for the entire nation. Jeanette's words ring true because she a fisher herself. But she also makes it a point to emphasize that small-scale fishing communities have certain basic needs that cannot be ignored—those of education, health and human rights.

Says Jeanette: "I love fishing at all times, no matter if the sea is calm or strong. When I go out fishing, what counts is how much fish I catch, and how much I enjoy doing this work."

How has she coped with the demands of a fishing life? "For a fishing woman, fishing is a hard life," says Jeanette, "but I have been able to give my daughter a good education with the resources that I make through fishing. When I am in the boat and night falls, I hear the sound of the sea as it hits the boat, and the breeze of the night relaxes me. I love sleeping out at sea".

Jeanette is passionate about nurturing the artisanal fisheries: "Artisanal fishing is important for our food security; it also gives us a way forward in life economically". ❏

**PROFILE**

***"I love fishing at all times"***  
**—Jeannette Naranjo**

**A Costa Rican fisherwoman is today the manager of a community-based tourism initiative**

By **Vivienne Solis Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org), Member, ICSF

scale fishing activity. This local enterprise promotes responsible artisanal fisheries as a dignified way of life that contributes to biological and cultural conservation of coastal and marine resources, and benefits local families in Tárcoles.

It is part of Jeanette's daily responsibilities to organize artisanal fishing trips for visitors,

# Trading away food security

A recent UNCTAD study poses critical questions on the benefits of poverty alleviation schemes in The Gambia

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The UNCTAD study of 2014, titled “The fisheries sector in The Gambia: trade, value and social inclusion, with a special focus on women”, is an important contribution to understanding the impact of government-supported development programmes for poverty reduction. This study was prepared by an UNCTAD team led by Simonetta Zarrilli, Chief of the Trade, Gender and Development Section at UNCTAD and Stefano Inama, Chief of UNCTAD’s Technical Co-operation and Enhanced Integrated Framework Section, along with Momodou Cham and Irene Musselli. The report extensively drew on information and material gathered in The Gambia from government officers, fisheries experts, representatives of women’s organizations and cooperative credit unions, fish exporters and many others.

The Gambia is one of the 49 countries that are officially recognized by the United Nations as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), based on economic vulnerability and human asset indicators. It has a population of about 1.36 million. 48.4 percent of the population lives below the poverty line of USD 1.25 per day.

Artisanal fisheries in The Gambia consists of relatively extensive, low-capital fishing practices.

In spite of the small-scale nature of its operation, the artisanal sector provides 90 percent of the total national fish consumption, and is the main source of raw material for the industrial sector. Artisanal fisheries also supply about 80 percent of throughput (the production) in the industrial fisheries processing plants.

The fisheries sector is an important source of revenue and foreign exchange for the country. At the same time, it is also an important contributor of food and livelihood security, particularly for the poor. Fisheries and related activities of processing and marketing provide income to the poor as fish-related activities represent the main source of income for coastal fishing communities, and are an important supplementary activity for rural, inland communities. The livelihoods of over 200,000 people in The Gambia are directly or indirectly dependent on fisheries and related activities. For women in particular, fish processing and marketing is an important occupation. An estimated 80 percent of fish processors and half the small fish traders in the country are women.

There are important differences in the operation of men and women as fish processors and traders. Women processors and traders predominantly operate in the domestic market. They are essentially small-scale operators, marketing with low profit margins. They typically buy small quantities of fresh fish on a daily basis from large-scale fish traders at fish landing sites, and transport them for retail to various nearby urban markets. Men, on the other hand, dominate large-scale fish processing and marketing, with higher profits. They also dominate the fish export market. Their products are sold in the inland and sub-regional markets where the profit margins are higher. Some large-scale specialist fish dealers export their fish to other countries like Ghana, Senegal and Guinea Conakry. Processing factories also procure fresh fish supplies from them for export to the European Union. This is the context in which the study critically examines the use of fish-export policies in The Gambia as a pro-poor strategy. It brings out for discussion critical gender dimensions that should be taken into account by development planners.

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Women fish processors in The Gambia. Eighty percent of fish processors and half the small fish traders in the country are women

The first issue of concern is that if the pro-poor strategy does not specifically address women's constraints to carry out trade and access new markets, it may actually end up negatively affecting women in the sector. The benefits of efficiency improvement would then be cornered by men, who are already into large-scale operations, and thereby further increase differences within the sector. Further, if the strategy has a specific export orientation, it would be likely to address issues for those in the sector already engaged in fish export. The promotion of an export-led development strategy in fishing could therefore potentially end up harming the traditional role of women in the sector.

Second, given that women operate primarily in the domestic markets, reduction in their operations could imply increased food insecurity. This is important, given that the sector is the third largest provider of food after agriculture and livestock. It plays a significant role from a nutritional standpoint, and is the main source of animal protein for most Gambians.

At the same time, the resultant growth of an export-oriented fish processing industry would generate additional employment for low-skilled women in downstream operations. However, while it would give women access to low-paying jobs in the export fish processing sector, it would further marginalise traditional women fish processors and traders.

The study therefore discusses how an export-led growth strategy that does not take into account the specific issues of women in traditional fishing could actually increase social and economic differences in the fishing society. It can lead to the selective upgrading and segregation of the export-oriented segment in fisheries. It can result in further disempowerment of women. It can therefore also lead to further impoverishment of families of women employed in traditional fishing. The strategy might thereby lead to further concentration of wealth, and a sharper focus on greater value-added exports, with progressive decline of access to fish among the poor domestic consumers.

The study therefore recommends that development planners should give specific focus to constraints of women in their planning process. The recommendations include keeping in mind the needs of women in the sector while implementing projects aimed

at expanding facilities at fisheries landing sites, and improving domestic fish markets. It suggests concrete measures including quotas for women in procurement and marketing of fish. It specifically recommends consideration for women by ensuring that investment is not geared to only promotion of exports, but also for the domestic markets where women can benefit from the improvements. It suggests, in the context, investment in domestic market-oriented facilities for ice plant and cold storage facilities; fish handling and processing equipment and improvement in fish packaging techniques in the domestic chain; and dedicated, well-equipped domestic fish markets.

The study further recommends parallel action to allow women favourable access to credit and support services of training, extension activities and marketing. On access to credit, the recommendations suggest affirmative action that could include a target percentage of credit to be disbursed to women, and dedicated lines of credit for women operators. It identifies training needs in three critical areas: (i) technical training in handling, processing and marketing of fish and fish products; (ii) training in use of market information and establishing business contracts; and (iii) record keeping and business planning.

The study finally underscores the importance of niche markets for high-value products that can generate income for women. One suggestion is to promote artisanal aquaculture involving shrimps and oysters. The study even suggests examining export markets for these products to be sourced exclusively from women fishers.

The study brings out the importance of a gender focus in development planning, and shows how, in particular contexts, poverty reduction schemes can actually result in increasing social and economic disparities in society while reducing food security of the poor. However, the recommendations of the study, which seek to further the integration of women in fish processing to niche and value-added markets, and even suggest developing export markets to women, can, while addressing, to some extent, the question of gender inequality, still result in increasing inequalities and harming food security. The study does not fundamentally question the logic of a market-led growth that strives to maximise profits. ❏

**An export-led growth strategy that does not take into account the specific issues of women in traditional fishing could actually increase social and economic differences.**

# Remembering Usha Tamore

**A tribute to the memory of an inspiring and unforgettable woman, who led women fish vendors in Mumbai, India, towards autonomy and strength**

By **Shuddhawati S Peke**  
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In 2013, when I started actively engaging with women fishworkers in Mumbai, India, I got to know Usha *tai*. (The word *tai* means 'elder sister' in Marathi, the local language spoken in Mumbai.) She had brought women fishworkers from her network to the women's wing of Maharashtra Macchimar Kriti Samittee (MMKS). In the year that I worked with her, I got a glimpse of her life as both a woman fish vendor and a woman leader who fought for women vendors' rights. I also got to know her as a fighter in her personal battle against ovarian cancer.

Usha *tai* was a strong person. She had separated from her husband for personal reasons, and brought up two sons on her own. She remained a working single mother until the very last days of her life. She succumbed to cancer on 13 July 2014 at the age of 51.

Usha *tai* was a fish vendor in Pickle market of Mahim in Mumbai. She started working as a fish vendor with her mother from the age of 13. She was a bright child but poverty denied her the opportunity to pursue a school education. After marriage, she decided to stay on in Mumbai instead of

going to her husband's village. In 1975, the land traditionally used by women vendors to sell fish was privatised for the purpose of setting up a hospital. Fisherwomen who were unaware of this fact came out in large numbers to protest their displacement from their traditional market site. As a result of their protest, a small market was built by the city corporation behind the hospital that came up. This, however, was not enough to cater to the needs of the women vendors. A few years later, the government threatened them with further displacement. This was when Usha *tai* came to the forefront of the vendors' battle against the local government authorities and politicians. The struggle was successful in preventing their displacement.

Recognising her capabilities, the leadership of a local fishworkers' union called upon Usha *tai* and a few other women leaders from Mumbai to register a district-level women's fisheries cooperative in 2005. Usha *tai* was made the secretary of the newly-formed cooperative. The cooperative under her leadership grew to have more than 5000 women members. However, she was disillusioned by the functioning of the cooperative and the direction it took. She felt that though the cooperative was a women's cooperative, the real leadership and control was in male hands. She refused to be a subservient and started looking for alternatives.

A few years ago, Usha *tai* came in contact with MMKS and happened to attend an

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Usha Tai in a discussion with representatives of fishworkers organization at a meeting organized by ICSF

ICSF workshop to discuss a study of women vendors in Mumbai. These meetings inspired her to help start a women's trade union. She drew upon the extensive ties she had built over her years as secretary of the cooperative to form the union. What followed was a series of meetings with women in *koliwad*s (urban fishing villages). Usha *tai* was nominated secretary of this proposed women's union.

Under the leadership of Usha *tai* and another stalwart, Ujwala *tai*, women vendors in Mumbai started placing their demands before the municipal authorities. Mumbai's Fisheries Department until then had focused solely on the demands of male fishers. Through this struggle, the Department was, for the first time, made aware of the woes of women vendors. The Fisheries Department was forced to call a meeting with women fish vendors from Mumbai, listen to their issues and promise to cater to their needs. This was the first success of the organized women vendors.

Usha *tai* was also at the forefront of

many other meetings with the government authorities along with the MMKS leadership. Amidst all this, she was also fighting cancer, struggling to earn her livelihood from fish vending, supporting her children, fighting against the wrongdoings in her cooperative and also working towards founding a new women's union. She managed all this with a smile on her face. The harsh effects of chemotherapy, including loss of hair, did not deter her.

Usha *tai*'s views on family and children were very different from those of most other women from her socioeconomic conditions. She was determined to educate her children, and got her daughter-in-law enrolled in college for graduation. She was the happiest person when she was around her granddaughter for whom she had big plans. She kept exhorting other women fish vendors to take control of their lives. She was, and continues to be, an inspiration to many women vendors in Mumbai. ❏



## Milestones

By **Ramya Rajagopalan**  
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### A historic development

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) was adopted at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), in June 2014. The adoption of the SSF Guidelines marks an important event in the history of small-scale fisheries, especially for women. The SSF Guidelines' section on guiding principles, clearly states that gender equality and equity are fundamental prerequisites for development and that the role of women in small-scale fisheries, as well as equal rights and opportunities, should be promoted.

Section 8 on Gender Equality emphasizes gender mainstreaming as a crucial fisheries development strategy: "All parties should recognize that achieving gender equality requires concerted efforts by all and that gender mainstreaming should be an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies. These strategies to achieve gender equality require different approaches in different cultural contexts and should challenge practices that are discriminatory against women".

The SSF Guidelines document urges States to comply with their international obligations, stating that "States should comply with their obligations under international human rights law and implement the relevant instruments to which they are party, including, *inter alia*, CEDAW, and should bear in mind the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action".

States are urged to secure women's equal participation in decision-making processes for

policies directed towards small-scale fisheries. States are further urged to adopt specific measures to address discrimination against women, while creating spaces for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), in particular those of women fishworkers, to participate in monitoring their implementation. Women should be encouraged, the document states, to participate in fisheries organizations, and relevant organizational development support should be provided.

Other obligations of States, it is stated, include ensuring that small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their communities have secure, equitable, and socially and culturally appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources (marine and inland) and small-scale fishing areas and adjacent land, with a special attention paid to women with respect to tenure rights.

The SSF Guidelines document encourages States to establish policies and legislation to realize gender equality and, as appropriate, adapt legislation, policies and measures that are not compatible with gender equality, taking into account social, economic and cultural aspects. According to the guidelines, States should be at the forefront of implementing actions for achieving gender equality by "recruiting both men and women as extension staff and ensuring that both men and women have equal access to extension and technical services, including legal support, related to fisheries".

The document also urges all parties to encourage the development of better technologies of importance and appropriate to women's work in small-scale fisheries. ❏

# Sea, people and life

**The annual meeting of a forum of entrepreneurial fisherwomen's groups throws up important questions regarding the survival and future of Japan's fishing communities**

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In Japan, women's groups in the fisheries began to emerge after the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The Conference encouraged the Japanese authorities to support the development of women entrepreneurship in the country's various economic sectors. By the year 1998, 1,158 women's groups in fisheries had been formed under the umbrella of the Fisheries Cooperative Association (FCA), the main organization representing the coastal fisheries sector in Japan. The members of these women's groups were the wives of fishers who supported the fisheries enterprise by developing other economic activities that could add to the family income. The decrease in fish production and the increase of fishing-related expenditure were among the main reasons for expanding the economic options available to fisheries enterprises and households. For the newly-formed women's groups, the most important activities were the processing and marketing of fish products. Other important activities included the selling of fresh fish, running restaurants, organizing the delivery of at-home meals services, and so on.

One of the main challenges that the women's groups initially faced concerned marketing. A successful marketing strategy demands that the development of new products be accompanied by the establishment of markets. But since this was not the case here,

each of the new women's groups faced the same problem: a range of new products with no market to absorb them. Each group tried to promote its products locally within the community. The groups began to seek the help of researchers working at the community level. Most of the researchers they contacted happened to be women working on issues concerning the participation of fisherwomen in the fisheries and in coastal communities. The researchers initially responded to the fisherwomen's groups individually, but soon merged their efforts and tried to evolve a common response to the collective problems of women's groups. This was the impetus behind the establishment, in 2003, of the Japanese forum Umi Hito Kurashi, which roughly translates as "Sea, People, Life".

The forum began informally, but as fund-raising efforts grew, it became more geographically widespread. Through a blog and biannual newsletters, it tried to act as an information and resource base for fisherwomen to increase their knowledge about unfamiliar issues. Every year, a face-to-face annual meeting helped consolidate the working of this otherwise loose forum. At each annual meeting, an issue selected by forum members would receive focus. During the nine years of its life, some of the issues that the forum has taken up include processing techniques, marketing, and product quality.

With the establishment of the forum, the fisherwomen began to play a vital role both in the economic life of the fisheries sector as well in their communities. They began to develop and explore new and hitherto unknown capacities such as entrepreneurship and marketing. Some women even began to sell their products at the national level and were able to increase not just their own income considerably, but also that of the women working with them.

ANNIE CASTALDO



Participants at the 10th annual meeting of the Umi Hito Kurashi Forum in September 2013. The Forum highlighted the problem of decrease in young people in fisheries



A significant change that occurred during this period was the decrease in the number of fisherwomen's groups in Japan. While in 1998, there were over a thousand such groups, by 2012, only 364 could be counted across the country. Another equally significant change was that a third of the fisherwomen's groups now no longer operated under the authority of the FCA. Since the FCA was increasingly seen as an obstacle to innovative functioning and the development of new markets, some of the groups began branching off to work independently. The women leading the breakaway groups began reporting being able to work more effectively after freeing themselves from the paternalistic influence of men.

In September 2013, the tenth annual meeting of the forum was held in Tokyo. This meeting was unlike all the previous ones. For the first time, women not only discussed the experiences they had as part of working in their groups, but also spoke about the future of the forum. Should they work towards building a more structured national network, or continue with the forum in its present form—loose and informal? To help answer this question, women were asked to share their vision of how they saw both the forum and their communities evolving over the next ten years. To aid this process of reflection, two women—one, a French oyster farmer, and the other, a European scientist, both of whom are associated with the European network AKTEA—were invited to share their experiences on women's organizations. Both explained that before deciding on the question of establishing a national network, there should be a thorough discussion on why a formal network might be important and what benefits it might offer.

The participants were then divided into three sub-groups with each sub-group discussing a different set of issues—what is a desirable future for fisheries communities and what actions should be taken to move in that direction; how can the diversification of activities be facilitated; what training needs exist and how these may be addressed. Each of the three groups also shared its vision regarding the future of the forum. At the end of the meeting, it was decided that decision making regarding the structure of the forum would be postponed to the following year. It was also decided that all the vision statements that were shared—and there were many!—would be compiled by the facilitators and published in the forum's newsletter. The women also resolved to break the silence surrounding their work and plans, and communicate more regularly with one another. Everyone agreed that it was vital for the rest of society, particularly politicians, to be made aware of all the action that the groups and the forum were taking to ensure the survival of the fisheries and coastal communities.

An important observation made during the meeting concerned a problem that all fishing communities in Japan faces today: the decrease in the number of young people who want to be fishers. The average age of people living in fishing communities in Japan is now 60 years. Elderly people are the main labour force within these communities.

Clearly, the future of the fisheries is untenable unless young people take their place. Some activities like oyster farming are attracting a young, temporary, migrant and largely female workforce (see Page 2). But there is no doubt that the future of Japan's fishing communities rests primarily with the youth. ❏

**With the establishment of the forum, the fisherwomen began to play a vital role both in the economic life of the fisheries sector as well in their communities.**

## What's New, Webby?



By **Ramya Rajagopalan** (ramya.rajagopalan@gmail.com), Programme Associate, ICSSF

## GAF5—Global Symposium

**G**AF5 or the 5th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (<http://genderaquafish.org/gaf5-2014-lucknow-india/themes/>) to be held at Lucknow, India, during 12-15 November, 2014, aims to be a vital platform for examining the progress that has been made towards achieving gender equality in aquaculture and fisheries.

The Symposium will consist of plenary addresses, workshops involving grassroots gender/women's groups representatives, oral and poster presentations, a national session, a film screening, a panel discussion and more. The Symposium builds on the earlier four successful Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries symposia, and on two

Women in Fisheries symposia conducted in conjunction with the Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forums. There are five themes for the symposium including: Women fishers and climate change, including natural disasters; Methods and approaches in gender planning and budgeting; Gender in sustainability management; Global innovations—local solutions towards sustainable livelihoods for women fishers; including promotion of entrepreneurship and business skills of women fishers in small scale fish value chains, besides an open theme.

This is the first time that an Asian Fisheries Society GAF event will be held in conjunction with the Indian Fisheries Forum, the 10th IFF (<http://10iffaf.in/>). ❏

# A question of identity

**For the first time ever, the Indian State of Tamil Nadu will issue identity cards to women seaweed collectors from the Gulf of Mannar, in recognition of the unique nature of their work**

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**W**omen seaweed collectors from the Gulf of Mannar in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu will soon get State-issued identity cards, which they hope will recognize the unique nature of their work. The recognition will also perhaps enable them to access welfare schemes targeting fishers who go to sea. They also hope that the identity cards would ease their troubles with the forest department.

The Gulf of Mannar, a shallow bay off the east coast of India, is a no-take zone (a national park under India's Wildlife Protection Act of 1972). The protected area consists of a 560-sq km area that includes 21 islands. Seaweeds grow abundantly in the shallow waters around the islands and while collection of seaweed is not banned, entry, let alone collection of resources, is banned in and around the islands. The women therefore run the risk of running afoul of the State forest department.

In 2013, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), with support

from the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project, conducted training programmes for the fishing communities of the Gulf of Mannar with a view to developing a community-led management plan for the marine resources of the Gulf, using an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM). BOBLME is a project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), involving the Bay of Bengal countries (India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand), that aims to have a coordinated regional plan for fisheries and environment management. At the training programmes, the women seaweed collectors had intense discussions to zero in on some potential measures they could implement, as well as several issues on which they wished to ask for the State's support. Towards this, a meeting with State government officials was organized under the aegis of the State Planning Commission.

At the meeting on June 11, 2014, fishing community representatives from the Gulf of Mannar had an opportunity to share their current initiatives and ideas for sustainable use of the area's marine resources. The meeting was attended by officials from the forest and fisheries departments, the State Planning Commission, the planning, development and special initiatives department, and researchers.

The women seaweed collectors spoke of how they have restricted their seaweed

VENUGOPALAN / ICSF



Seaweed collectors in Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu, India. The Government of Tamil Nadu will soon provide identification cards to women seaweed collectors, recognizing this unique group of women fishers

collection to twelve days per month—six days around the new moon period and six days around the full moon time—from an earlier situation of no controls over collection. In 2006, they developed this practice, after discussions with the State forest department and researchers, because they felt the seaweed harvesting was going beyond sustainable limits. The number of collectors had increased and the seaweeds were not getting time to regenerate. The women had also resolved not to use metal scrapers to collect the seaweed as they damaged the coral substrate. Instead, the women switched to using their hands to collect the seaweed. However, to protect their fingers from the sharp corals, they tied rags around them. In addition, they pointed out, they follow a 45-day ban on seaweed collection; this year (2014), the ban period extended to over two months. The women wanted compensation for this period, noting that the men are compensated. The women also requested the State to organize insurance for them as they too go out to sea.

The women also highlighted the fact that the islands are important to the fishers as a place of refuge during inclement weather and to repair boats when out at sea. The women said they were willing to work with the forest and fisheries departments to conserve resources. They (the fishing community) understand the need for conservation measures as they are dependent on the very same resources for their life and livelihood and want, therefore, to ensure that future generations of fishers are not left bereft. The women also refuted the allegation that they destroyed live corals; noting that seaweed grow on dead corals and therefore the women do not go near the live corals. Neither

do the fishing boats break corals as alleged. As one woman asked, if our boat hits corals, the boat would be damaged so why would we deliberately go over corals? Instead, fishers use the deep channels that are free of corals to approach the islands.

During the discussions, the fisheries department noted that it issues identity cards only to fishermen as they go out to sea to fish, and since women focus on post-harvest activities on land, they are not included in this scheme. It argued that welfare schemes are based on families; hence, the women are also covered under the schemes. Responding to the women's demand for compensation for loss of work during the ban period, equivalent to what fishermen were awarded, the department argued that the compensation given to the fishermen was for the family, and not for the fishermen, as individuals. The gender implications of this compensation policy, apparently based on the assumption that men are the traditional head of the family and women are only their dependents, were not, however, discussed.

At the end of the day, it was agreed that the Tamil Nadu State would recognise Gulf of Mannar seaweed collectors as a unique group of women fishers. It would also, for the first time, provide identification cards to women seaweed collectors via the fisheries department. The possibility of providing protective equipment, such as gloves for the women collectors and the use of scissors/cutters to harvest seaweed, would be considered. Finally, it was agreed that the State would also explore the possibility of seaweed collection from deeper waters (6 to 7m), and then provide the women with the required training for diving as well as gear such as oxygen tanks. ❏

**Interview with Carmen, member of the Board of Directors of APROCUS (Asociación de Pescadores La Rosita Cuero y Salado), and of the fishers' group, Los Delfines, in the La Rosita Community on the Caribbean coast of Honduras**

By **Norman Flores** (normanh@gmail.com) and **Vivienne Solis Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org)

**Please tell us something about yourself.**

I am a woman fishworker from the Caribbean coast of Honduras. I live with my family, friends and neighbours as part of a coastal community in the region. I love and enjoy my life here and will never leave my community.

**What do you see as the most important issues for your struggle?**

I see the principal fight of women fishworkers as towards forming community organizations and engaging in a permanent struggle for their rights. Good communication skills are essential for generating plans and ideas, and engaging with the community. My own efforts in setting up a Centre for Fish Storage within the community were successful only because I was able to communicate ideas well with others in the community.

I benefitted from participating in the meeting organized by ICSF in India in 2014 (the Pondy Workshop on SSF Guidelines). I found the experience very enriching in terms of meeting new people from fishing communities and sharing experiences with other women.

**What have you learnt from your experience in the fisheries sector?**

It is necessary for activists to recognize the many sacrifices that fishers, both men and women, make in their daily lives to strengthen their communities and improve their lives.

**What are your plans for the future?**

Our plans are focused on being able to develop productive and sustainable fishing, and building access to local and regional markets for fish. We need to care for our rich marine resources so that our children can keep using them. ❏

**YEMAYA MAMA**

*Mama gets real!*



## JOURNAL ARTICLE

## Standards for collecting sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis:

A guide for CGIAR researchers

By **Caitlin Kieran** (C.Kieran@cgiar.org), and **Cheryl Doss**, CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets, CGIAR

Given the increased attention to gender issues in research, researchers are often expected to conduct gender analyses, which necessitate collecting relevant data. The present document provides insights on ways to collect such data. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. The CGIAR Gender and Agriculture Research Network recently endorsed these standards, which were developed by Cheryl Doss and Caitlin Kieran, researchers with the CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM). These standards will provide guidance not only for CGIAR researchers collecting sex-disaggregated data but also for the broader research community engaged in gender analysis on agricultural issues.


The authors identify some simple and achievable steps for gathering such data on certain broad research areas. These guidelines raise issues that researchers should consider throughout the research process, such as who should provide information, the unit of analysis, and the research context. In many cases, simple changes in survey design or research methodology can allow for much richer gender analysis. In addition, while ethical issues are a central component of any effort to collect data from human subjects, this document highlights the areas within gender research that require enhanced attention to issues of confidentiality and consent.

The document highlights a common error in attempts to conduct gender analysis, which is to study only women. Such an approach fails to illuminate the relationship between men and women—a key component of understanding gender relations. For example, claims that “less than 2 percent of the world’s land is owned by

women” are meaningless without knowing the comparable percentage of the world’s land owned by men. Gender analysis aims to clarify “differences in the needs, roles, statuses, priorities, capacities, constraints and opportunities of women and men.” It is used to study how the evolving roles and relationships of men and women develop and interact in various contexts and how this affects outcomes. After all, gender norms are not stagnant but result from ongoing negotiation and compromise. Researching this process of change requires longitudinal studies that ideally make use of panel data as well as qualitative methods.

The document clearly states that for gender analysis, it is indispensable to interview both men and women. This does not necessarily mean interviewing twice as many people or that men and women in the same household must be interviewed. For some research questions, it may be preferable to interview one person per household and randomly choose whether it is a man or woman. The key to gender analysis lies in knowing the sex of the people involved in various tasks, such as the owner of the land, the farm manager, the laborer, or the decision maker, and identifying why responsibilities are divided in this manner.

The data collected should also be driven by the context, which would require abandoning a one-size-fits-all approach. Those collecting and analyzing the data need to understand gender roles as well as other dimensions of identity such as religion, race, class, ethnicity, age, caste, remoteness, disability, or sexual orientation. Such an approach would allow researchers to ask questions that are relevant and culturally sensitive, and ensure that the researchers, enumerators, facilitators, and respondents all have the same understanding of the terms included in each question.

The document may be accessed at the following location: [www.pim.cgiar.org/files/2012/05/Standards-for-Collecting-Sex-Disaggregated-Data-for-Gender-Analysis.pdf](http://www.pim.cgiar.org/files/2012/05/Standards-for-Collecting-Sex-Disaggregated-Data-for-Gender-Analysis.pdf) 



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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.

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