



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

# Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

## From the Editor

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which replaced the Millennium Development Goals, set new targets for sustainable development by the year 2030. Among the SDGs, SDG 14, which specifically calls for the sustainable use of marine resources, is the focus of the upcoming United Nations Ocean Conference, scheduled to take place in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017. This conference is extremely relevant for the fisheries sector, given the large number of powerful stakeholders currently seeking control over marine and fisheries resources. In the context, it is important to emphasise that there are several factors that are crucial in determining the sustainable development of these resources. A major factor is the role of women in fisheries.

Studies of small-scale fisheries across the globe show how women contribute to the sustainability of the fisheries sector. They also show that where women have greater agency, they contribute to improving value addition and productivity in the sector. In the context, SDG 5 that emphasizes gender equality and empowerment of women and children is very important, not only for equity and for the rights of women, but also from the perspective of sustainable economic growth in small-scale fisheries.

Two articles in this issue of Yemaya, by Meryl Williams and Kyoko Kusakabe, focus attention on the relevance of SDG 5 to small-scale fisheries. Both talk about how modernisation in fisheries can lead to increasing inequalities within the sector and act to further increase discrimination against women. Williams highlights how positive discrimination for women in employment might not be beneficial if this is in low paying and exploitative jobs. She points to the various forms of violence within the fish value chain, which need to be specifically addressed if discrimination against women has to end. It is indeed unconscionable that despite growing awareness of the role that women's unpaid labour plays in sustaining the small-scale fisheries sector, it is still ignored in policy decisions. Kusakabe refers to the income instability in the sector and the role played by women in bringing stability and sustaining fisher families. This role is critical and will only intensify with the increasing pressure of modernization, environmental degradation and climate change on the viability of the small-scale fisheries sector. Nikita Gopal's article raises another important point of how discrimination can also be between different classes of women in the same sector. Thus, among women employed in fish processing in Kerala in India, migrant women are paid less, and have fewer rights than the local women.

The stereotype of the fisheries sector is that it is male dominated, and therefore will not allow women to exercise leadership. While this might hold generally, examples like that of the Mercado del Mar, the second largest fishing market in Mexico, show that a different paradigm might be possible. As the article by Carmen Pedroza shows, where women are able to provide effective leadership, and there is a proven record of this leadership, their authority meets little resistance. Women's leadership however needs to be supported and cultivated in ways such as networks like the Fijian Women in Fisheries Network, covered in this issue of Yemaya, are attempting to do.

Patriarchal attitudes might be hard to challenge, but are not unchangeable. The challenge is to take forward the agenda of gender equality as encapsulated in the SDG 5 within the small-scale fisheries sector. **M**

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# Gender equal fisheries

**What are the challenges in the path of achieving gender equality in fisheries and what should our priorities be? This article tries to identify these in the context of SDG 5, the Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality**

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**G**lobal, United Nations-led initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have the potential to highlight and give direction to human development needs by mobilizing people and resources towards common ends. But to translate these aspirations into real change in a place, a sector and for a particular group of people will require more specific mobilization than that envisaged in the rather general actions and indicators now emerging.

How are fisheries and aquaculture organisations responding to the call of the 17 SDGs? In 2016, when Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) biennial Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting addressed the SDGs for fisheries and aquaculture, they focused most attention on SDG 14—*conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*, and mentioned several other SDGs. SDG 5—*achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*—was referred to only once, and that too, in the context of the Voluntary Guidelines on Small-Scale Fisheries in which gender principles are included. Is this an early sign that SDG 5 is not penetrating far into fisheries thinking and hence action?

Despite this unpromising start, the nine targets of SDG 5, related to gender equality, provide some ideas upon which fisheries gender reform could be built. To become more meaningful, however, several targets require deeper diagnosis before courses of action can be developed and fisheries-relevant indicators agreed upon. The current drafts of official SDG 5 indicators are at a level of aggregation and generality that have little direct interpretation in any particular sector. This article will look at these targets one by one.

Target 5.1: *End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere*. This target echoes the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which barely penetrated fisheries thinking. Many gender studies in fisheries and aquaculture conclude that social norms severely constrain women's inclusion and progress and recommend that gender transformative change is needed. Few studies and campaigns challenge macro-

economic choices, often made at the national level, such as modernizing fisheries and increasing production and trade, although these may stymie any attempts to end discrimination against women, even when activists are striving for gender transformative change. To end discrimination, a very broad view must be taken of the context within which discrimination is generated and how progress may be measured. Even positive discrimination may not help women, such as when they are preferred for low-cost labour in factories and service industries, but their labour is exploited. In this situation, the women's labour-force indicator would be high, but the benefits of that labour for the women would be poor.

Target 5.2: *Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation*. Although critical, this target is rarely addressed in fisheries and aquaculture activism and research. Often, even talking about women in the context of mainstream fisheries is considered bold enough. Introducing sensitive issues on violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation is avoided except in the coffee breaks or one-to-one conversations outside the official presentations and reports. Trafficking in male fisheries labour is receiving some public attention and it starting to find its way into policy, for example, through certification schemes. The time is overdue to bring out into the open fish supply chain issues on violence against women and to take action.

Related issues are women's rights to decent employment in fish value chains, including health, work safety and labour rights of employment. These are addressed in SDG 8—*promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*.

Target 5.3: *Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation*. These issues are not addressed in fish supply chains, being held even more private than the issues of Target 5.2. Commonly, the prevalence of such practices is not understood, and action left to broader societal campaigns rather than targeted sectoral efforts. In the absence of information, we do not know whether this is the appropriate approach or not.

Target 5.4: *Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate*. Unpaid work, including unpaid productive work, is a major factor in fish supply chains, yet little attention has been focused on individual and household

economics that could guide policy. As a result, there would be significant challenges involved; for example, with defining the “household” or “individual unit”; distinguishing work from non-work, and incorporating the flexibility that is needed for such non-conventional but important areas of economic analysis. This target needs much more consideration and feminist economic analysis before action can be recommended.

Target 5.5: *Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.* Indicators tend to focus on the percentage of women in managerial/senior positions, but these overlook important intermediate stages of action, such as encouraging active gender champions in different spheres of decision making, building women’s skills, setting targets, and promulgating policies and institutional changes to change the social settings, such as markets, rather than relying on women to change. The considerations of Target 5.1 are also highly relevant to achieving equal opportunities.

Target 5.6: *Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.* In some regions, fishing communities and people in fish supply chains hold the unfortunate record of having the highest HIV/AIDS rates of all occupations. Lack of reproductive education and access to reproductive health services, fish trade behaviour such as ‘sex-for-fish,’ women’s variable agency, and the migratory and itinerant nature of fishers and fish value chain workers all contribute to the high HIV/AIDS rates. Nevertheless, fishworkers’ reproductive

health problems are only part of census data collection in a few locations, and there is a lack of deeper understanding.

Target 5.a: *Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.* This is a critical target but one that receives relatively little attention in fisheries, where certain rights are more difficult to define. In the case of women, often doubly disadvantaged in the landscape of resource rights, case based evidence suggests that women’s rights are most likely to advance if women speak up and advocate for formal recognition, as in the case of the Costa Rican fishers of invertebrates; or if they perceive and create their own options, as, for example, the women working in the overtly masculine tuna port of General Santos City, Philippines, did, rather than accept formal behavioural prescriptions.. To address this target, fish value chains need major formal and informal reforms.

Target 5.b: *Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular, information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.* This is relevant to women in fisheries, for example, in markets and trading. Empowerment, however, needs to be more comprehensively defined than merely in terms of equal access to information and communication technology. Here again, the considerations outlined for Target 5.1 apply.

Target 5.c: *Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.* This is generally interpreted in terms of women’s representation in elected office, although the target seems to be much broader.

**The nine targets of SDG 5, related to gender equality, provide some ideas upon which fisheries gender reform could be built.**



## Milestones

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### The Entebbe Declaration

On 8 March 2017, more than 60 women fishmongers and fish processors from the artisanal sector, representing organizations from Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, Djibouti, Uganda, Mali, Togo, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, the Republic of Guinea, Chad and Morocco, and other African states, gathered in Entebbe, Uganda, under the auspices of the African Confederation of the Professional Artisanal Fishing Organizations (CAOPA), to observe International Women’s Day. On this occasion, a document titled ‘The Entebbe Declaration’ was released.

Acknowledging that artisanal fisheries employs about 90 per cent of the total numbers in capture fisheries, and recognizing women’s crucial contributions at every stage of the artisanal value chain, the Entebbe Declaration asserts that “women in African artisanal fisheries must claim full participation and equal

representation and leading positions within the artisanal fisheries professional organisations, as well as equal participation in decision making processes for policies that affect ... their communities’, livelihoods.”

In view of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), the Entebbe Declaration “calls upon African states, in preparation for the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2022, to develop, in a participatory, transparent and gender-sensitive manner, a National, and where appropriate, Regional Plan of Action for the implementation of the Guidelines.”

To view the full text of the Declaration, visit [www.caopa-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/statement-entebbe-WFD-2017.pdf](http://www.caopa-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/statement-entebbe-WFD-2017.pdf).

The silence of much fisheries legislation on gender matters suggests that gender champions and advocates have a major challenge to get gender equality into sound policies and enforceable legislation.

In conclusion, five prospective ideas emerge from this short review of the relevance of SDG 5 to the fisheries sector. The first is that removing discrimination will require critical diagnoses of the true sources that lead to discrimination, including the consideration of national economic approaches and rights regimes, as well as social norms, coupled with a major programme aimed at incorporating gender equality provisions in fisheries legislation

and policy. The second is that the time is ripe for openly addressing exploitation of and violence against women in the fisheries sector. The third is that the economics of individuals and households, flexibly defined, need to be examined to expose the intertwined issues of paid, unpaid, care and domestic work in fisheries. Fourth, measuring women's leadership should not be restricted just to counting women leaders but should also take into account the presence of gender champions and the means for encouraging women's greater personal and collective agency. Fifth, in fisheries, sexual and reproductive health matters need greater attention. ❏

## PROFILE

### An independent life! For Metty, a fisherwoman from Kerala, India, fishing has been a mainstay for over four decades

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Metty

**M**etty is a 59-year-old fisherwoman. She lives in Pallithode, on the Ernakulam-Alappuzha border of the South Indian state of Kerala. Her late husband was a marine fisherman who passed away seven years ago. She has three married sons, none of whom fish. They pick up construction work, driving assignments and other odd jobs. One of Metty's daughters-in-law works in a nearby peeling shed. Her other daughters-in-law take care of the domestic work at home.

Metty has been fishing for 45 years. She is part of a group of ten to fifteen men and women who go fishing in the tributaries

women in the group are also employed by the owners during the fish harvest season to catch and sort the fish. When they help harvest fish from the *kettu*, they receive a third of the catch as their share.

Once the harvest is over, Metty and others again have free access to the *kettu* and can fish there till the next season starts. During this time, they are entitled to all of the catch. This activity is regulated by the ebb and flow of water in the *kettu*. Usually the depth of the water can range from two to five feet. Metty changes into her work clothes and enters the slushy waters of the *kettu*. Initially, she starts to scoop with her net and then shifts to using her hands and legs. Moving the legs in the slush, she disturbs the fish, and once she senses their movement, she grabs the fish with her hands. The fish is slopped into aluminium pots that float on the surface of the water, loosely tethered to her waist. Such aluminium pots, being more durable, have replaced the earthen pots and bamboo baskets used earlier.

The income from fishing is highly variable. As Metty says, "On some days I get Rs 500 (USD) worth fish in ten minutes. On others, I may spend the whole day fishing and not get anything."

The younger generation is not interested in continuing with this activity. Says Metty, "They don't like to step into the slushy waters to catch fish." Metty however cannot imagine a single day without fishing, a livelihood she first took up at the age of 14. She attributes her fitness to this daily physical labour. Metty usually finishes her fishing by 8 am, and by 9, she is off to the market to sell her catch. She returns home about an hour later, and the rest of the time is hers to spend as she pleases, for instance, with her grandchildren.

Metty is an economically independent and strong woman. She is the sole decision maker regarding what to do with her income. When she cannot fish, she takes loans from private moneylenders and has always been able to repay it from her fishing income. ❏

# Gender equality in and through fisheries

**This article identifies key priorities and challenges that lie in the path of achieving gender equality targets, particularly in the high-poverty and increasingly resource-scarce context of Southeast Asian fisheries.**

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Fishing is often classified as men's occupation, and women are believed to have little role to play. However, in reality, women comprise almost 47 per cent of the 120 million people engaged in capture fisheries. Though women play a large role in fish trade and fish processing, these roles have been relatively invisible until recently when researchers started paying attention to the fishing industry's value chain. When trade and processing began to be included in the analysis, women's substantial contribution to the fishing industry became visible. There is now more and more evidence that women's participation in fisheries is important.

Traditionally, women's roles in the fisheries industry have been complementary to men's roles; however, due to the gender blindness of decision makers and policy makers round the world, women's work has been unacknowledged in policy and institutions. All grassroots and outreach support structures are largely targeted at men. This invisibility of women's roles has a real impact on women, and on fisheries. For example, after the tsunami of 2005, support for fishing villages was focused on boats, and fishing activities done by women were ignored. In many countries, fishing cooperatives have only

men as members, since only those who fish on boats are considered to be fishers.

Women's presence in fisheries cooperatives is very low due to concepts of family and household as well. For example, in fishery cooperatives in Japan, the one-household-one-member rule is in place. Since men are considered heads of households, they are the ones who become regular decision making members, and hence it is extremely rare for women to be regular members of cooperatives. As fisheries resources dwindle, women's role in aquaculture, conservation, processing and trade is now becoming more and more important. It is therefore imperative that policy and support structures engage with women in the fisheries industry if they want to make an impact on the industry.

Due to this invisibility of women, Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5)—“achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”—takes on a special relevance in the fisheries sector. SDG 5 is one of the 17 SDGs, and, although other SDGs also refer to gender equality, this is the only one that is solely dedicated to gender equality. It is both an independent gender equality goal as well as a prerequisite for other SDGs. It not only carries ahead the targets of Millennium Development Goal 3, but has expanded to encompass wider dimensions of relevance to women's empowerment. Targets of SDG 5 include issues around discrimination against women and girls, violence against women, child marriage and female genital mutilation, unpaid care work, women's participation in leadership, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's rights to economic resources, and access to technology.

Even though all SDG targets are relevant to the fisheries sector to some extent, those that are especially relevant are: equal rights to economic resources (Target 5. A); recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work (Target 5.4.); women's effective participation (Target 5.5); eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls (Target 5.2), and enhance use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women (Target 5. B). In this article, I would like to focus on women's rights to economic resources and the need for the recognition of women's unpaid work.

KYOKO KUSAKABE



A fishing village in Tonle Sap, Cambodia: 40-60 per cent of the 1.25 million people who are dependent on fisheries in this Lake area, live below the poverty line

**In order to achieve SDG 5 in the fisheries sector, we need to make sure that women have equal and direct access to, and control over, resources, and that their unpaid work is taken into consideration.**

In many countries, the incidence of poverty is high among fishers. In Cambodia, 40-60 per cent of the 1.25 million people who are dependent on fisheries and live in the Tonle Sap Lake area, live below the poverty line. The poverty level in fishing households in Sri Lanka was estimated at 21 per cent and was considerably higher than the national poverty level of 13 per cent in 2003-04. In India, the Marine Fisheries Census estimated that 60 per cent of the fishing community lives below the poverty line. The 'Blue Revolution' of the 1960s-70s increased mechanization in the harvest of fisheries, and this in turn increased inequalities within fishing households.

This has happened in certain countries. For example, in Costa Rica, women mollusc gatherers were given official recognition and legal rights to gather mollusc, and were provided with social security as shellfish harvesters. Research has also shown that providing credit as well as refrigeration and storage facilities for women fish processors/traders also gives women stronger negotiating power.

Women's access to economic resources and opportunities is closely linked to official and social recognition and support for their unpaid care work. Hence, just providing resources is not sufficient to ensure that women can make maximum use of the opportunities and access to resources. A holistic approach is necessary. For example, a study of Cambodian fish traders found that the women traders who were unable to expand their trade were those who quit the business for several years to attend to childcare or other care work within the household. Because they quit, they had to start small again when they returned to their trade. Meanwhile, women traders who had continued their business were able to accumulate considerable profit as well as business experience, and become well established in the market. Discontinuation of business (for care purposes) disadvantaged women, and the families that depended on their incomes.

Dwindling fish resources are also pushing fishers to diversify their income sources. A recent study showed how fishing villages in Vietnam are increasing their income by engaging in wage labour and migrant labour. Even though both women and men migrate from Vietnam, men often migrate further than women. Women who are raising small children, and do not have any close family who can take over these duties, are unable to migrate. This decision places them in a vulnerable position, making them dependent on the remittances from their husbands.

Income from fishing is not stable, and can fluctuate enormously. Some days the catch

is good, and some days fishers do not get anything. Women play an important role in ensuring that fishing households have a stable income, often by engaging in activities outside fisheries in the low season. They do fish processing, fish trade, and other income generating activities such as raising livestock, as well as wage labour to stabilize this income fluctuation. However, even though such activities support fisheries and fishing households, since the activities themselves might not be directly related to fisheries, they are often ignored in enumerating women's work in the sector. For example, one study in Thailand showed that when men were not able to fish because of strict implementation of fishing regulations in Thailand, women did other jobs to make ends meet.

A similar situation was noted in Cambodia, where fishing is always one of many diversified sources of income for small fishers. In Cambodian inland fisheries villages, both women and men are engaged in various income generating activities including fisheries. This suggests the importance of examining the livelihood of fishing communities not only through their fishing activities, but through a study of the whole fishing livelihood system, including women's unpaid work—both in the fisheries production as well as care work.

In order to achieve SDG 5 in the fisheries sector, we need to make sure that women have equal and direct access to, and control over, resources, and that their unpaid work is taken into consideration in recording their participation as well as in designing support systems. At the same time, we need to recognize that the fisheries sector will also benefit from achieving SDG 5, since women's higher contribution will lead to higher productivity in fisheries, and women will be able to support the dwindling and unstable income from fisheries, offering crucial support in livelihood transition, when necessary. Whether SDGs are able to be effective or not depends on the national indicators that are developed based on the context of each country, and on the funding priorities to realize the goals. We need to document women's contribution, both paid and unpaid, in and around fisheries to increase visibility, and enable their voices to be heard and influence decision making on issues that affect them.

Acknowledgement of women's unpaid work and ensuring access to resources in the fisheries industry will also ensure that there is substantial progress towards the other goals of SDG 5, including those referring to discrimination and violence against women and girls, child marriage, women's participation in leadership, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and women's access to technology. **■**

# Changing tides

**Labour shortage has improved work conditions for women in seafood processing in Kerala, India, although gender equality in employment is still a distant dream**

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Seafood processing factories all over the world are dependent on women's labour. India is no exception. The work in the factories is generally monotonous and full of drudgery. The work environment is not very comfortable, as the workplace temperature and conditions are geared to maintain the quality of the product. Almost all the women are engaged on a contractual basis, with the piece rated daily wages regulated by the number of 'baskets' they process. Men are more likely than are women, to have permanent jobs and higher wages in these factories.

The labour force in the initial decades of growth of the seafood processing sector in India largely came from the southern state of Kerala. This was the situation even as late as until the late 1990s and early 2000s. The women were recruited by labour contractors, and taken to work in factories in other coastal states. The exploitative conditions of their work have been reported in many studies. The situation started changing towards the end of the last millennium. In many states, local women came into the sector and began seeking employment. This suited the factory management as the additional expense on providing logistic facilities reduced. However in Kerala, with lower participation of local women in this work, the fish processing factories were faced with severe labour shortages. To keep the factories functional, women workers had to be brought in from other states. Initially they were organized through labour contractors, or through friends already working in the state. Most of these women did not have the requisite skills to work in the factories. This led to special job training programmes organized by the factory management. Lack of good skills can lead to loss of production and value. It is pertinent to note that despite the high skill requirements, at no time has adequate recognition been given to the women or to their work in this sector.

The changing dynamics of labour availability in the fish processing sector in Kerala has changed the tide in favour of women workers. Though wages cannot

be called 'high', they have improved. The migrant women are paid, on an average, Rs 5700 (USD 88.8) per month, and the local women, slightly higher wages at Rs 6500 (USD 101.2) per month. Most factories provide accommodation, transportation, and food at subsidized rates, or facilities for cooking, to their workers. The accommodation usually comes with proper toilet facilities (about one toilet for four workers) and certain basic features, including television sets. Factories incur additional investments for training migrant labour, and in order to prevent 'poaching' of trained workers, management usually has to keep the labour force content. These conditions apply to the seafood processing sector in Kerala, and, in the absence of adequate information, whether similar conditions obtain in other parts of India is difficult to say.

The major factor responsible for the improvement of employment conditions for women has been the shortage of labour in the sector. Further, the requirements of certifications and audits in export factories also include adherence to some minimum labour standards, and this again gets reflected in positive changes in working conditions. Women workers are aware of their improved bargaining capacity, and are able to use this to better their situation.

According to a recent study, migrant women from other states accounted for more than 75 per cent of the labour force in export oriented seafood processing factories in the Ernakulam-Alappuzha belt of Kerala. Around 85 per cent of the migrant women were single and the average age was around 21 years. Most of the women did not return to work after marriage.

In contrast, the average age of local women employed in the sector was around 40 years. Younger women were reluctant to seek employment in the sector. The local women workers were still considered very efficient and skilled. They did not work night shifts. In case work required them to stay late or work night shifts, transportation was provided by the factories.

The study showed however that women continued to earn less than men; and migrant women earned less than local women. Men earned an average of Rs 7600 (USD 118.4) per month, or about 17 per cent more than the local women, and 34 per cent more than the migrant women workers. ■

# Managing Mercado del Mar

Women play a key role in the running of Mercado del Mar, one of Mexico's largest fish markets

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Women's participation in post-harvest activities in Mexico dates back to pre-Hispanic times when women engaged in salting, drying and selling fish in rural markets. Currently, while women are involved in all activities along the fish value chain, their roles are mainly in post-harvest and administrative activities. Most studies talk about women's work in low payment employments but not in influential positions. Women's participation in the fishing industry as business leaders is not common.

The Mercado del Mar is the largest wholesale fish market in Mexico, after la Central de Pescados y Mariscos La Nueva Viga in Mexico City. The market is located in Zapopan, a suburb of the city of Guadalajara, which is the second largest city in the country with around 4.5 million inhabitants. The creation of the fish market corresponds to the new design of suburban commerce, where shopping malls developed in the 1960s, and this new model of commerce became common in the 1990s. During this time, Zapopan and Guadalajara's metropolitan area experienced rapid growth. Guadalajara has a rich trading heritage, and continues to play the role of capital and commercial centre in the region.

The Mercado del Mar was established in 1982, and today is one of the largest fish markets in Mexico, particularly for the

amount and variety of shrimp traded. Around 80 per cent of fish from the Pacific Ocean side of Mexico passes through this market. It is possible to find more than 350 fish varieties traded in the market throughout the year. There are no formal statistics on daily sales volume, but fish traders estimate a trade of between 500 to 1000 tons per day.

Guadalajara's trading heritage also explains the strong presence of women fish traders in the management of the Mercado del Mar. The market is organized as an association, headed by a management board, with a president and an administrator, both of whom are women and have vast experience in fish trade. Around a third of the fishing business in the market is owned and run by women. Moreover, an estimated 85 per cent of wholesale and retail establishments in the market are administered by women.

The fish trading businesses are family run, many into their second and even third generation in this trade. Most traders are coastal people. Their parents were fish traders in their native towns, who moved into the city to expand their business. The most common picture is of women managing the trading business, while the suppliers are relatives, including fathers, brothers, uncles, or husbands. The women business leaders either started the family business, developing from small-scale fish trade to the present market based business, or inherited the business from their parents and learned how to manage the trade since they were young.

Dona Rosa, the market's president, started her own fish trade around 40 years ago. She used to manage the business administration with her husband, but after being widowed, had to take the challenge of managing the business on her own. Today she manages a wholesale and retail business in fish, and also a few restaurants in the city of Guadalajara.

Dona Lola, inherited the family fish trade, and had been in the business since she was 18 years old. "My grandmother used to sell dry salted fish every Sunday in my home town, and my father used to export fish. This is how the business started." Now in her 70s, Dona Lola is a respected figure in the trade, and one of the board members in the market administration. She also has different fishing businesses in the city of Guadalajara.

Opinions among fish traders in the market were divided as to whether succeeding in business represented an extra challenge for women, or if it was only a matter of personality and education, with gender not being so relevant. According to Acela Sosa Torres, the

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Women managing the sales in the Mercado del Mar. The fish trading businesses are family run, many into their second and even third generation in this trade



market administrator, "I think that success or failure is mainly due to each one's training and education, and the way of being, the character, of each person. Successful women are very well organized, hard workers and with a strong character. Also, perhaps their sensitivity to be able to deal with every type of personality is what has brought them here."

In contrast, some other businesswomen felt it was particularly difficult for women to succeed in the trade. In the beginning they had to struggle for respect and to gain a position in the market. Said Xochitl Trujillo, "This being a man's business, in the beginning, women in this market faced many problems. It was difficult for me to gain respect." According to Carmen Ortega, "You have to assert your rights in order to gain respect."

There is a gender division of labour in the market, with the heavy work mostly done by men, and the processing, administrative and selling activities dominated by women. It is however possible to see some women loading tracks or carrying heavy packages. In the retailing section, the owners believe that it is better to have saleswomen, because most of the customers are housewives and are more comfortable being served by women. In the wholesale section, some think that it is better to have a woman in charge of accounting and collecting the bills, because they are more efficient. Arcelia de Anda, a wholesale fish trader explained, "Those in charge of collecting the bills from my clients are women because if we send men, customers do not pay them. But the girls are better treated by them."

Thus, women play multiple roles in the market, as managers, sellers, cleaners, packing the fish, and even loading big packages of fish. This situation of women in multiple roles has become more common in the last ten years.

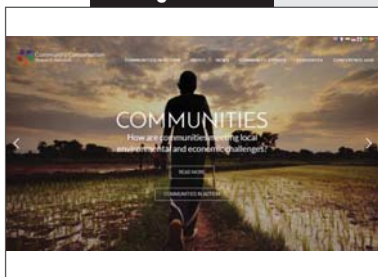
Many women in Mercado del Mar felt that their work and success was key to the new respect and freedom they got. According to Marina Galindo, "When you have gained your position you are equal to the other businessmen". The women pointed to the market president being a woman as having added to their own respect and acceptance in the trade.

Many recognized that working and having their own money empowered them, and gave them a new respect within their homes. "It is different having your own money, and not having to depend on your husband. If you don't have your own money, and he does not want to give you money, you just have to tolerate it and keep your head down."

Some women said that even after having gained a position in the market, they continued to have the sole responsibility to manage their households and take care of children. It was a struggle, to balance business with their home responsibilities. Women had to put in that extra effort, getting up even as early as 3.30 in the morning. But despite the obstacles, these women had constructed successful businesses and achieved a respectful position in the fish trade. They considered their own stories as successful examples of women's empowerment. ❏

**Many women in Mercado del Mar felt that their work and success was key to the new respect and freedom they got.**

## What's New, Webby?



By **Anthony Charles**  
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## Community conservation network

The Community Conservation Research Network (CCRN) is an international initiative focused on understanding and supporting the efforts of local communities around the world to link environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. The CCRN emphasizes the need for government policy to be improved in order to better engage with local communities and indigenous rights-holders, to better utilize community knowledge, and to better support community conservation and livelihood efforts. This recognizes the strong two-way connection between the health of local ecosystems and the well-being of local communities.

The CCRN website ([www.CommunityConservation.net](http://www.CommunityConservation.net)) is a platform for learning about how local communities around the world use environmental conservation to ensure

sustainable livelihoods and healthy local economies. The resources available there include many videos and community stories, guidebooks on governance and social-ecological systems, and a variety of other tools for community based conservation. The newest addition to the CCRN website is the initiative, Communities in Action, which uses an interactive map of the world to place the spotlight on the amazing diversity of community efforts globally that are linking conservation and local livelihoods. This is a participatory resource which encourages communities, and informed individuals or organizations working with communities, to provide their local examples, which then appear on the map.

For more details visit the website [www.CommunityConservation.net](http://www.CommunityConservation.net). ❏

# Women in Fisheries Network

**Through need based training and capacity development, the Fiji based Women in Fisheries Network hopes to aid women's value-added participation in the fisheries sector**

By **Loata Leweniqila**  
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Cordinator,  
Women in Fisheries  
Network, Fiji

Despite women playing a crucial role in the marine environment, particularly so in the fisheries economy, their contribution is poorly acknowledged. Women fishers generally dominate inshore fisheries in many countries of the Pacific region and play important roles in both subsistence and commercial fisheries, but have poor access to training and are not strongly engaged in decision making on fisheries development and management. Since 2016, the Women in Fisheries Network (WIFN), Fiji, turned its attention to many of these issues. One important activity has been research into specific areas identified under a study done on the status of fisheries in Fiji.

Although there has been substantive progress in some areas of fisheries, mostly in relation to the marketing and distribution of products, several challenges remain. Many of these challenges relate to the non-enumeration of women in fisheries because they mainly work in the subsistence sector and the informal sector. The lack of information and data on women's participation in different aspects of the fisheries makes it difficult to assess the economic contribution of women in the numerous fisheries sectors and activities in which they are engaged.

There is little documentation on the various aspects and dynamics of seafood marketing with respect to the involvement of women. Transportation needs and access to markets and market space are still some of the main challenges women face in their selling and distributing activities. Lack of direct access to credit and finances restrict women from participating equally in the fisheries sector. Most community based work suffers from the dearth of women trainers and facilitators. Although women are included, sometimes strategic approaches to gender are not. Most work done to assist women in fisheries has a narrowly defined focus and therefore has little impact.

There is great need for research into participation of all ethnic groups in fisheries and new fisheries legislations and other policies that will affect the fisheries resource use, marketing and distribution mechanisms to enable the full engagement of fisherwomen. Some research undertaken by the WIFN includes looking into the mud crab fishery and *kai* (freshwater mussels), which provide

crucial information that could assist in the sustainable harvest of these species. To commemorate International Women's Day on 8 March 2017, and in recognition of our women fishers, the WIFN hosted a meeting, the Women in Fisheries Forum, which created a space where various stakeholders could discuss the progress and challenges faced by women in the fisheries sector. One of the main targets of the forum was to network and build the capacity and the reach of the network.

The forum brought in stakeholders including representatives from the government, conservation practitioners, civil society organizations and fishing communities to present the latest science, management, development and policy work on women in the fisheries sector. It also created a space for dialogue with women fishers to listen and learn more about their issues, needs and priorities. Issues discussed included how women fishers can be connected to seafood supply chains to enhance their businesses; the value chain analysis of fresh water mussel; the impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston on some fisheries as well as discussions on the organizations and associations that the network could work with.

As the Status of Women in Fisheries in Fiji report had earlier found, gender disparities are evident in most areas of work in Fiji, including the fisheries sector. Women's involvement is mainly in the informal, as opposed to the formal, sector. Studies have shown that with only 109,000 females in the formal labor force, and 121,000 registered as doing 'household work', more than a half of women's work is being defined away as 'economically inactive' because it is in the household (and unpaid) category. Most fishing activities for household consumption done by women are in the subsistence sector; these are therefore not enumerated and fall into the unpaid work category. Studies have also shown that women spend more time than men on work overall, have fewer hours in paid work, and, in general, have less discretionary time than men.

Work on gender issues in Fiji is directed by eight major international agreements on gender equality and the advancement of women. Three of these are the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Pacific Platform for Action, which provide an opportunity for reporting on the state of women in the country. The challenge is whether the provisions from these instruments, such as those relating to non-discrimination by sex, equal access to resources and opportunities, are reflected in fisheries policies or their implementation. In February 2014, the Fiji National Gender

Policy was launched with a mission to promote gender equity, equality, social justice and sustainable development through the promotion of “active and visible gender mainstreaming in all sectors”. The promotion of gender mainstreaming will become a part of government work in the fisheries sector and this will provide opportunities for more gender focused initiatives, which will raise the profile of women’s engagement and role in fisheries. To enable the inclusion of women fishers in discussion at the national level, the WIFN would have to direct more efforts towards engaging with the Department of Women, finding new ways to work on the Fiji National Gender Policy in areas that relate to women in fisheries. Business representatives at the Women in Fisheries Forum, as well as the regional organisation, PIPSO (Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization), which looks after small business enterprises and the involvement of women, helped facilitate the discussion on opportunities and challenges in the private and marketing sector.

A highlight of this forum was a session where women fishers from rural locations in Fiji shared their experiences, challenges and aspirations. This opened the space for discussions on practical issues that women face daily in their fisheries participation. This very informal session titled *talanoa* (talking to each other) was a break from the traditional format of the conference. The session provided a much-needed space for women to sit and discuss issues openly. Although the women were from different parts of the country, the challenges they faced and the concerns they shared were similar. These include the lack of formal support for the work that women fishers do; the participation of women throughout the fisheries supply chain; the economic empowerment opportunities that the women are busy with, added to which are the traditional, gender based obligations and commitments they are expected to fulfil in the communities they come from. These women are still the primary caregivers in their families and are not released from this role when they engage in economic activities, thus having to shoulder a double burden of work. Women are still dominant fishers in the inshore areas, gleaning, collecting and using traditional skills and knowledge to forage for seafood both for home consumption and to sell. As more and more rural areas of Fiji are being infiltrated by the modern market economy, many coastal rural households are becoming dependent on women’s income generating activities to secure their livelihoods. Most women engage in these activities without any proper training or skills, using whatever resources are available to earn income. Because of the informal nature of their engagement in the economic sector of the fisheries, women lose out in many ways: they do not know how to set prices; they lack bargaining power; they have little knowledge of issues related to quality and safe processing techniques; they have little or no access to secure finance to set up small, professional businesses.

The WIFN, in its strategic plan, aims to engage women in training and capacity building to enhance their practical and value-added engagement in the fisheries sector. The network hopes to assist women by facilitating them in the work they already do in the different sectors of fisheries. ❏

**Interview with Ujjwala Jaykishan Patil** (ujwalapatil@gmail.com), President, MMKS’ Women’s Wing, Mumbai, India

By **Priyanka Mangela** (rajeshmangela26@gmail.com), Managing Director, District Fisheries Cooperative Society, Mumbai

**What major challenges do women fish vendors in Mumbai face?**

Our fish markets have no basic infrastructural facilities like clean and sanitary workspaces, fish storage facilities or toilets for women to use. The fish landing sites in villages lack proper access to auction areas, and facilities for disposal of waste fish. This lack of infrastructure directly affects the livelihoods of women fish vendors.

**How have fish vendors organized to respond to these challenges?**

There are around 25,000 fish vendors in Mumbai. Most of them are members of the women’s wing of the Maharashtra Machchimar Kruti Samiti (MMKS), a cooperative organization representing all fish workers. The MMKS has been continuously representing the demands women fish vendors for better facilities with the fisheries authorities. They have also taken up demands for loans and subsidies to women fishers. The women members are also challenging the predominantly male leadership within the MMKS in order to get their voices heard and have more attention paid to their demands.

**What other specific issues have the women taken up in the recent past?**

The MMKS women’s wing continuously fought for compensation to fishers affected by the oil spill off the Mumbai seashore in 2010. The women fish vendors showed their support by coming to every court hearing in large numbers. The MMKS has demanded the registration of cooperatives of women fish vendors by the state fisheries authorities. It has also demanded a scheme of social security for all fish vendors in Mumbai. A report was prepared by the MMKS, in collaboration with the ICSF, to enumerate and map the existing natural fish markets in Mumbai city and include them in the Development Plan of Mumbai. The women fish vendors obtained formal licences and biometric Identity cards in 2010, with the support of the MMKS. ❏

**YEMAYA MAMA**

*The picture isn’t complete without gender equality!*



DOCUMENT

## Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Women Fishworkers in India

The report is available at <https://www.icsf.net/en/proceedings/article/EN/163-report-on-works.html?limitstart=0>

This review is by **Ahana Lakshmi** (ahanalakshmi@gmail.com), Independent Researcher, Chennai, India



This document is a report of a national workshop on ‘Enhancing capacities of women fishworkers in India for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines’ in Chennai, India, organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust on 21-23 November 2016.

There were 63 participants from the coastal states of India (except Gujarat). They were informed of the situation and role of women in India’s fisheries, as also the relevance of the ‘Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication’ (SSF Guidelines) to women in small-scale fisheries and the opportunities to improve their conditions. Located within a human rights framework, the SSF Guidelines devote an entire section to gender equality, and another to the value chains that acknowledge the role women play. The specific objectives of the three-day capacity building workshop were to reflect on the SSF Guidelines, especially looking at the women in fisheries component from the Indian perspective; to focus on providing information on existing policies, schemes and legal provisions for women, and how they are being currently used by women in the fisheries sector; to draw lessons and learnings from examples of actions that women have initiated in their respective areas; and to develop a holistic framework to life and livelihood in small-scale fisheries, with a critique on the existing fisheries development.

The workshop included presentations on specific topics related to women and SSF, visits to the local fish market and interaction with the women there and group discussions on specific topics. The workshop made certain specific recommendations. These covered,

broadly, recommendations for the small-scale fisheries sector; the need for fisheries platforms; the need for social welfare and the need for marketing support. More specifically, the workshop concluded that a single definition for SSF was very difficult. At least six criteria (area of fishing, distance from shore, depth, gear, craft and propulsion) could be used to determine SSF. The local variations, using a combination of criteria, must be codified, thus providing a contextual definition of SSF. It also concluded that awareness about SSF Guidelines, various rights and access to market resources must be created and information disseminated to all fisherwomen. Regarding the need for fisheries platforms, the workshop recommended that a national platform for fisherwomen must be formed and participation of women at the *gram sabha* (village) level must be increased; criteria for fisherwomen’s cooperatives should be changed to enable their easier formation; women’s groups must be registered; women from each state should form unions which should be federated.

The workshop recommended that social welfare schemes and provisions for fisherwomen must be implemented for which funds must be allocated. Accident insurance must be made available for women as well; anti-harassment committees must be formed at the *panchayat* (village) level to implement the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013; life in the community must be linked to life at sea; fisherwomen must be made aware of relevant laws and schemes; relief during the ban period must be provided for women fishworkers; titles or *pattas* for houses must be provided; drinking water supply in fishing villages must be improved; and small-scale fishing in national parks and sanctuaries should be permitted.

Finally, the workshop recommended that existing markets in the formal and informal sector should be surveyed and mapped; facilities such as restrooms, and water at fish markets should be provided; and fisherwomen should have the right to space for drying fish. ❏



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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.