

Yemaya

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ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

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From the Editor

Greetings! We are a bit delayed with the fourth issue, but you may agree that there is good reason for this.

With this regular issue, we carry a Special Issue on Atlantic Canada. This has been compiled by women fishworkers and their supporters from the Atlantic Canadian region. It is one of the outcomes of the *Workshop on Gender, Globalization and Fisheries* held in May 2000 in Newfoundland, Canada.

What comes through again is that issues that confront women of fishing communities, whether in the North or South, are common. How else can you explain that women fish-plant workers in New Brunswick, Canada are still struggling for pay equity in the year 2000? How else can you explain the fact that women fishers and fish-plant workers in Canada are still not well-represented within fishworker organizations and have little say in decision-making? How else can you explain the continuing lack of recognition of women's roles in the fishery by the government and its agencies?

We get more of the same message from the articles in this regular issue. The article from Netherlands, for example, describes the process by which women fishworkers are coming together for the first time, despite being part of the fisheries in important ways.

For those of us working with women in fisheries issues, the message is

clear. There is a need to come together, whether from the South or the North, and work together on such issues that are common to us.

A workshop organized by ICSF in Brazil in June, provided one such opportunity for fishworkers and their supporters in Latin America to come together to reflect on gender issues in fisheries and to work out a concrete plan of action. We carry a report of this meeting in this issue.

In the last issue we had carried an interview with a woman working with fishworkers in Pernambuco, a north-eastern state of Brazil. Continuing this, in this issue, we carry excerpts from an interview with another courageous woman fishworker, also from the same region. Among other things, it also tells us of the struggles of her group to protect the rich mangrove habitat that gives them their livelihood.

From the other side of the world, from India, we hear of another fishing community with similar preoccupations. That struggle too is for livelihood.

In addition to several other articles, two of our readers have sent in letters, both seeking to establish a dialogue and discussion. We hope you bite the bait!

Please send us your own stories and responses for the next issue. Kindly ensure that these reach us before the end of October 2000.

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FROM LATIN AMERICA/ Brazil

Proud to be a fishworker

Women should keep their heads high and not let go of their struggle

Excerpts from an interview with Joana Rodrigues Mousinho, President of the fishermen's *colonia* of Itapissuma in Pernambuco, Brazil, by M. G. Indu of ICSF's Documentation Centre at Chennai

I was born in the city of Itapissuma. I belong to a family of fishermen and I started fishing at the age of eight. The womens' group I work with began in 1975 with the help of the church. This group started very small, but we all realized we had to defend our rights as fishworkers.

We did not have licenses to fish like the men and that was basically our main issue. Today we women fishworkers have licenses. This was the first place in the whole of Brazil where women were given fishing licenses and recognized as fishworkers, just like the men.



I was elected as President of the *colonia*. In the beginning it was very difficult because most of the men believed that the position of a woman was behind the stove or behind the sink washing clothes. Now I am very happy with my work in the *colonia* of fishermen, I am well accepted and many people support me. I fish shrimps, oysters, different types of shellfish and I am very proud to be a fishworker.

I do what I can to defend the rights of the fishworkers and the shellfish gatherers. The *colonia* now has about 2,225 members—1000 men and 1225 women. They are registered in the national welfare system. Today we have 810 women fishworkers who have retired and receive retirement benefits. Women fishworkers also get maternity allowance and an unemployment allowance during the off-season for shrimp. We also have social security in case of accident or death and I believe that us women have great advantages in the fisheries sector.

And it is mostly the women who pay the *colonia* dues for themselves and also for their husbands who often do not give their payments on time.

It is not easy to administrate this *colonia* with more than 2000 registered fishworkers, and also other fishermen who are not registered but still have the same problems. It has not been easy administering this group, and to also be a fishworker, a mother and grandmother.

I was earlier the President of the Federation of Fishermen of the state of Pernambuco. I was elected but I did not like it. I was the first woman to be elected to this position. It was very complicated. All the presidents of *colonias* were only men. They were even upset with me when I went to a meeting in Brasilia with the Ministry of Environment. They thought that I was not supposed to go and that I wouldn't be capable of doing the job.

At the present there are at least three women Presidents of *colonias* in Pernambuco. There are also women who hold positions such as Secretary and Treasurer so that is an advancement for women. So in this sense women have taken a very big step towards improving their rights and that of fishermen in general in the movement.

Women fishworkers collect crabs, mussels and other shellfish and take these to the beach to sell. They also make and repair fishing nets, and sometimes help to repair boats. They participate in the meetings of the community, besides the ones of the *colonia*, and they also take care of the house, the children and the fishermen, besides doing the other chores of the house like cooking, cleaning, gathering firewood and washing the clothes. They may also wash the clothes for other people to get extra income.

Sometimes women bring in more income than their

fishermen husbands. The women actually go out and capture the fish and they themselves are the ones who go and sell it. On the contrary the men go to fish on boats which are not theirs using tools which are not theirs and they have to then share with the owner of the boat and the net. They then take very little home. This is not in all the cases, just in some. But in theory, if every fisherman had his own boat and his own net, he will bring in more income.

Women do not do any fishing in the open sea. Our area is the estuarine mangrove area. We mostly work inside the estuary and the problem we have is the destruction of the mangrove habitat, as a result of shrimp aquaculture projects.

Since most of the women are single mothers and get their daily meals from the mangroves, this destruction is affecting directly the women. So the women know that they have to struggle and go after these issues because that is what their livelihood depends on.

Another big problem that we have is the use of explosives for fishing where all the fish are blown up inside the water, eliminating every single species in our area. Today we do not have as many fish as we used to probably due to this pollution and the use of explosives.

Another threat that we are confronting is that our small community of about 20,000 inhabitants has been trampled by tourism. We have the Santa Monica channel which is so beautiful and there are many mangroves. This attracts many tourists who come in jetskis and high speed boats. These often get entangled in our nets and destroy them. We had an accident where one of these high speed boats hit a fisherman and killed both him and his 14-year old son, except that the owner of this boat was not prosecuted because he is a very rich and powerful man. So the case has been unresolved.

However, because of this we do not hang our heads low and not fight for our rights. On the contrary now we have the help of other persons who enforce our struggle for fishermen's rights in this area.

I have a grand child who is five years old. Before coming here the TV network "Rela Global" interviewed me about the mangroves and my grandchild told me that he had seen me on TV. He was very excited. I told him he should not be excited about

being on a TV because this is a struggle and you only achieve things when you struggle for them and you have to start when you are little to fight for things that you will achieve later.

What I would like to tell the other women is that they should keep their heads high, they should not let go of their struggle and should be strong and fight for their rights that they have as fishworkers, just like any fisherman!

FROM LATIN AMERICA/ Brazil

Gender Focus

Participants at a recent workshop in Brazil discussed the need to valorize the work of women within the fisheries sector

by Chandrika Sharma, Programme Associate at ICSF's Chennai Office

A six-day workshop on *Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America* was organized recently, in June 2000, in the coastal fishing village of Prainha do Canto Verde, in the state of Ceara, Brazil. The workshop was organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) as part of its Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme.

The objectives were as follows:

- To develop an understanding of trends in fisheries development and their implications for coastal fishing communities in the Latin American context;
- To make visible women's roles in fisheries and in fishing communities in Latin America and to reflect on strategies to strengthen their meaningful participation;
- To facilitate greater networking between organizations representing, and working with, artisanal fishworkers in the Latin American context.

The group of 36 persons that came together was diverse and rich in experience. There were participants from five countries in the Latin American region, i.e. Chile, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico, and from India, France and Belgium.

The group included representatives from the Confederacion Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH), Federacion de Integracion Y

Unificación de Pescadores (FIUPAP) of Peru, Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores (MONAPE) of Brazil and the Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Pesqueras del Ecuador (FENACOPEC), the national fishworker organizations from Chile, Peru, Brazil and Ecuador respectively. It also included representatives from NGOs, research institutes and organizations supporting fishworkers from Brazil, Chile, Peru and Mexico.

Participants included both men and women. This was a conscious decision, since gender was seen as an issue which both men and women of fishworker organizations, NGOs etc. engage with. It is equally significant that all the country delegations felt similarly, and both the male and female leadership of the organizations invited participated in the workshop.

During the workshop it was clear that in all of the countries represented at the workshop, the pressure on coastal fishing communities and on their livelihoods is increasing. This is also a consequence of globalization and of the neo-liberal policies being adopted by states in the region.

The picture that emerged about the work of women within the fisheries and within fishing communities was revealing. It was clear, of course, that this differs by culture and region and between rural and urban areas, and that, it is not possible to generalize. The common factor, however, is that the work of women is rarely seen as 'productive'. It has low social value and is normally seen as an extension of the 'domestic' space. Little value is attached to the domestic and community tasks performed by women.

This despite the enormous diversity of tasks performed by women, both within the fisheries (in harvest and in pre- and post harvest activities), and within the family and community.

Why then does the work of women continue to be invisible? It was in this context that the workshop saw several interesting and thought-provoking discussions on gender issues. There were many debates on what the concept of gender actually was/meant, and how this conceptual understanding could be translated into practical initiatives. There were, as can be expected, several different positions.

The discussion was certainly not conclusive. However, overall the following broad consensus emerged:

- The work and roles of women within the fisheries and within fishing communities has historically been, and continues to be, important, though often invisible and undervalued;
- There is a need to valorize the work and labour of women, and to recognize this as an important part of the productive chain within family enterprises. This may involve redefining what is seen as fisheries;
- However, these efforts need to take place within an overall context of strengthening and affirming the way of life and cultural identity of coastal communities, and on fostering mutual respect between men and women. There is a need to be wary of triggering a divisive conflict within the community;
- Women's participation in fishworker organizations should not only be seen to support issues important to men. There are issues that are specific to women that need to be addressed. The role of women should not be seen as complementary but as an issue in its own right.

In general, there was a commitment and receptiveness among the participants of the need to be sensitive to gender issues within their own contexts and organizations.

However, as one of the participants pointed out with some bitterness, the issue may remain a merely verbal concern, with little actual implementation. According to her, some colleagues talk of gender, but when they come to power, they do not create the space for women fishworkers within the organization. The projects they pursue have nothing to do with women. Practice, not talk, is important, she stressed.

In the same vein, another participant stressed that increasing the participation of women should also mean creating the spaces within organizations to discuss issues that are of concern to women, in which women are the subjects. Women should not be seen merely as agents supporting the agenda of their men.

Participants agreed to work together on gender issues. A set of proposals for follow-up actions within a definite time-frame was finalized. They also proposed the creation of a group, with representatives from each of the countries present, to see through the implementation of the proposals.

FROM AFRICA/ Cameroon**Adapting to change**

Women fishworkers in Kribi undertake a diversity of tasks within the fisheries

by Florence Palla, an environmentalist-researcher and a member of DEC (Defence of the Environment in Cameroon)

Kribi is a thriving artisanal fishing community in Cameroon, still socially organized on an ancestral model, where artisanal fishing is seen more as a traditional activity requiring courage than an economic activity. It's a whole culture!

However, the fisheries have seen major changes over the last 15 to 20 years. Motorization of pirogues is common now, given the increasing distance to be covered to reach the resource.

To give some idea, while earlier, women used to fish for shorter periods twice a day, they now fish only once a day, since they need to travel a longer distance and have to compete with the men for the same resource. The situation is similar in the case of the *Londji* fishermen. Whereas earlier they used to make daily trips for a distance of two to three kms to fish, they now spend two to three days at sea, covering distances of more than 20 kms. They have to compete with trawlers targeting the same species on the same grounds. *Mboua manga* fishermen now travel 80 kms, compared to the four kms they were used to covering earlier during daily trips.

In this changing scenario, women continue to play a vital role in fisheries as the 'intermediaries' between fishermen and consumers. In Kribi, few women are fishing because, in general, catching fish is considered a man's job. The fishing techniques used by women are traps or gates to catch shrimps, small-mesh nets (for small fish) and pots (for small lobsters).

One can really feel the presence of women in the fisheries when pirogues arrive on the landing sites. Women are the main buyers. Despite the fact that they come from different backgrounds (fishmongers, housewives, women fish processors, women working for restaurants, etc), there is a tendency amongst them, more than amongst the men, to come together as a group.

Fish processing is the main activity of the majority of women. This is a way to preserve excess of fish caught and also to guarantee an income to cover the basic needs of the family. Fish is cleaned, then salted and smoked on an oven for one or two days. A lot of care is required to ensure that the fish is smoked just right.

As the smoking operation requires long working hours, many women are not interested. They prefer the fresh-fish trade, including that of selling live shrimp. The latter is a speciality of women from the Lobé falls area who, after catching shrimps in traps, keep them alive in 'fish ponds' made of sheet metal driven into the mud. A big problem, however, is the otters that often come to these ponds to feed. The women have evolved a system to protect their catch against these predatory otters.



One of the biggest problems women fishworkers face is the lack of access to credit, especially for fish processing activities. To give credit, banks require a market study to indicate the viability of the enterprise. However, this is difficult because the market is often local and several women practice the same activity in competition with one another.

Another difficulty relates to fish supply during periods when the resource is scarce and/or the price high. This can seriously bring down the daily or monthly income of the women.

Also, to smoke fish, women need ovens. Kribi has only one oven, donated by FAO. This has been built in the 'village chief quarter'. This makes it difficult for women to engage freely in their processing activity. Moreover, there are no ice-boxes or freezers, so the women have to rent these from ice producers or other traders.

In some areas, like Londji, women do not smoke fish anymore because of the scarcity of the resource. Priority is given to direct trade in fresh fish. This lack of activity for women is badly resented in an area where some families comprise two women and 13 children.

With the main aim of accessing credit, women have organized into two groups (GIEs) in the urban zone of Kribi: Adamacam (Batangas ethnic group) and Mabeto (Mabea ethnic group). Adamacam is a group of women involved in the buying, smoking and selling of fish, while Mabeto is a group of women involved in fishing for shrimp in the area of the Lobé falls.

While the existence of these groups facilitates task-sharing among members, women meet with a lot of difficulties in their relations with men, mainly due to cultural barriers. For example, it is not accepted for women to express themselves in public.

Women getting together to access credit can be beneficial since it diminishes competition among women from the same communities. However, in some cases, women still do not see this side of things. They view the organization only as a way to access credit, which is unfortunate. It is important that women understand that better organization (not only for credit) is in their long-term interest.

FROM ASIA/ Sri Lanka

Whose problem?

Families of fishermen in foreign jails have a difficult time surviving

by Herman Kumara, the National Convenor of National Fisheries Solidarity (NAFSO), Sri Lanka.

We would like to tell you about the situation of women of fishing families, when their fishermen husbands find themselves in foreign jails. Deep-sea multi-day boat operators often get arrested when they cross the borders of foreign countries. Occasionally this is done

on purpose. But most of the time the actual reason may be different. For example, some boats may drift into foreign seas due to engine breakdown. But since they have violated maritime boundaries the charge is the same—violation of the maritime boundaries. The ultimate result is that the crew has to be in a foreign jail for a period ranging from six months to two years.

Our story is about W.M.Lourdes Mourine Fernando, a 37-year old mother of three school-going children, living at Munnakkara, Negombo. Her husband, K.Anthony Joseph Ironius Fernando, has been in an Indian jail for six months already. He is a share labourer in a multi-day boat that belongs to a *mudalali* (investor), also from Negombo. Anthony and his crew left the shore on 30 January this year. They were arrested at the Indian border on 12 February. They are still in an Indian jail, waiting to be released.



Back home, the situation of his family continues to worsen. Mourine has to feed her children and send them to school. Even with an average income this is hard enough, given the present economic situation and rate of inflation. Mourine's mother and mother-in-law helped her to run the family for around one month. Since all families are facing a similar problem, this was not easy. The boat owner gave them Rs.1000 (US\$14) for two months. But for the past four months now there is nothing.

Says the *mudalali*: "We are also helpless. When the boat and crew are under custody we don't have any income. How do we pay back the loans and the interest, while feeding the five families of our boat crews?"

Determined to feed and educate the family, Mourine finally decided to find a job. She took up a job ironing the washed clothes from a laundry. They paid her Rs. 100 per day with meals, a meagre income on which it is difficult to survive. In the meantime, there has been no good news about her husband. Nobody to help them.

“They are not organized. They do not want to get organized. Fisher people do not think about their future, and they do not care when we try to form a union. So there is no one to fight when they are in a difficult situation”. This is what one of our trade unionists had to say about this situation. “But we will do our best to get the fisher people released.”

“These fisher people have gone to rob fish resources in foreign waters. So we do not want to intervene in this problem. Please do not come to me with this problem.” This is what our fisheries minister had to say when the family members of the crew and the boat owners went to meet him. When they tried to meet the minister a second time, the main entrance to the fisheries ministry was closed to them.

So what do we do? There is no assistance to the families or any attempt to secure the release of the arrested fishermen. 135 fisher people of more than 25 boats are facing this situation.

Mourine, together with 300 other people, has started an agitation against the policy makers. “You people promoted the deep-sea fisheries industry. You provided high technology and continue to provide such technology that is not appropriate to our fishing grounds. So our people run behind the fish stocks and end up crossing the borders and getting caught. The promoters of the deep-sea fishery should settle this problem.” NAFSO is demanding that the fisheries minister help secure the release of innocent fishermen in foreign jails.

The World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) was requested to intervene. “There is free flow of capital under globalization. But there is no such space for human labour. People need passports and visas. While investors have access to passports and visas to over-exploit our resources, poor fisher people who come for mere survival do not have such facilities. How should fisher people know the boundaries in the sea? Is there any demarcation?” asks

Thomas Kocherry, the co-ordinator of the WFF, who joined the peoples’ struggle in Sri Lanka.

Although the number of women facing a situation similar to that of Mourine is increasing, this is not their problem alone. This is a problem of all resource users in our oceans. There should be a collective effort to settle the problem and policy makers should take the initiative. But this will be a long and time-consuming procedure.

But Mourine and others like her need immediate action and prompt settlement if they are to survive. Mourine has been at the forefront among other women, organising prayer services, and joining agitations in front of the ministry seeking the release of fisher people in foreign jails. Their demands are very clear:

- Release all fishermen in foreign jails.
- Prepare an agreement for use of resources reasonably in the Indian Ocean.

FROM ASIA/ India

Not amusing

Fishing communities staying next to one of India’s largest amusement parks have much to complain about

Compiled from information provided by Sushila Cordozo of Stree Shakti Sadan, Mumbai, also a member of the National Fishworkers’ Forum (NFF).

In recent months, about 50,000 people from the traditional fishing communities of Gorai, Culvem and Manori in Mumbai have been trying to focus the attention of the authorities, the media and the general public, on developments in their neighbourhood. Developments that are affecting not only their livelihood, but also the ecological integrity of the sensitive and rich ecosystem that gives them this livelihood. At the forefront of this struggle have been the women of these communities.

Six years ago, India’s first and largest amusement park, Essel World, spread over an area of 64 acres, came up near their communities. Owned by a powerful industrial group, this park has been a big success and attracts upto 10,000 visitors per day.

How have the local communities been affected by this park? In several ways, they are quick to point out. Visitors to the park are taken by ferries owned by the park, across the creek. These have, in the past, damaged the nets and boats of fishermen fishing in this creek. The daily requirement of approximately 20,00,000 litres of fresh water, drawn from underground sources, is diminishing ground water levels and leading to salinity ingress. The enormous amount of waste generated by visitors to the park is dumped untreated into the nearby sea, affecting coastal fish resources.

Moreover, while this “state of the art” park has access to all facilities, the fishing communities close to it, though also part of the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation, are still deprived of basic amenities: piped potable water, proper roads, sanitation or drainage facilities, uninterrupted supply of electricity, adequate



Plans to expand the operations of this park are now underway. An additional area of about 700 acres of land was allotted for the purpose by the erstwhile government of the state (province) of Maharashtra in May 1997. What is significant is that the land allotted is actually mangrove area. The vital functions performed by these remaining mangrove areas in an over-populated and polluted city like Mumbai need not be elaborated. This allotment is also in clear violation of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 1991, which seeks to protect coastal resources, as well as fragile natural resources along creeks and natural channels.

Since the allotment, mangroves in the area are being systematically destroyed. An illegal 1500-metre illegal

dam constructed under cover of night in April 1998, stopped the natural flow of tidal water and obstructed the free plying of the small boats used by the community. As a result of the dam construction and the use of chemicals, mangroves in about half the 700-acre area have perished. Despite orders by the Collector the dam has still not been broken to re-establish flow of tidal water. In April-May 2000, there was yet another attempt to construct yet another small dam. However, as a result of opposition by local people and an order from the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, this activity was brought to a halt.

Local villagers have undertaken a series of actions to seek justice. They have come together to form a Joint Action Committee. They are demanding action to protect and regenerate the mangroves. They are demanding a recognition of the right of fishing communities to live in dignity off the resource base they have depended on for generations. They are seeking to question the meaning of what is seen as “development”. For this, they have undertaken a series of protest actions using non-violent means. They have also taken the case to court.

In order to make money the rich are able to displace people, and destroy the environment. The vast majority of people depending on these life resources are the victims. In the process natural capital is destroyed and fishing communities are displaced.

FROM EUROPE

A first step on the road to Damascus

Participation in ACFA can be an opportunity to get information about EU policies and practices

by Beatrice Gorez, co-ordinator of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), based in Belgium, and an observer for NGOs on ACFA

The European Union has a system of consultative committees on sectorial policies, like fisheries. The EU Consultative Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) is a grouping of mainly big fishing industry interests in the EU.

However, two months ago, following negotiations with EU Development and Environment NGOs—amongst

which are ICSF, WWF, Eurostep, Seas at Risk, Greenpeace and CFFA— a representative of small-scale communities is also sitting at the table. And, to the amusement of most of that essentially exclusive male preserve, it is a woman: Danièle Le Sauce, a fisherman's wife from a French small-scale fishing community.

Being part of such an industry-dominated committee is not really a way to influence, in the short term, the EU fishing policy. But it is an opportunity to get important information about EU policies and practices that usually do not reach European or Southern fishing communities, but which affects their livelihood. It is also a way to make a different noise in the harmonious concerto conducted by the EU fishing industry in this Consultative Committee. Expressing public concern about the detrimental impact of the current EU fishing policies on fishing communities of the South and the North is breaking the self-image that EU is promoting *urbi et orbi* of 'an entity fishing in a responsible way'.

The main item on the agenda for Danièle is the promotion of the concept of 'small-scale fishing communities'. This concept is not recognized by EU fishing policy, legislation or administration, which prefers to classify (and divide) people from fishing communities between producer organizations, co-operatives, fishermen, etc., marginalizing women in the process.

At the end of June, the EU Commission (i.e. the administration) organized a meeting with the EU Parliament and the Fisheries Consultative Committee on 'Sustainable Fisheries Management'. Danièle's input related to the role of women from small-scale fishing communities in fisheries resources management. The reaction of the EU Commission was to say: "Please, Madam, stay within the subject". But it did raise some supportive voices from parliamentarians and led to a short debate. Since then, we have learned that a study will be done by the EU on 'the role of women in fisheries'. So, it seems a first step is being taken for changing people's behaviour and mentality. But all our gender indicators are showing that it will be a long, hard and rocky road.

FROM EUROPE/ Netherlands

Vocal, independent, but still invisible

Women ('wives') of fishing families in the Netherlands want to participate in fishermen's organizations, but meet many barriers.

by Cornelia Quist, a member of ICSF and contact person for the Women in Fisheries' Network of the Netherlands

Women ('wives') of fishing families in the Netherlands, are not members of fishermen's organizations, in spite of their work in the fisheries enterprise. One reason is that the membership is based on boat-ownership and it is primarily the men who own the fishing boats. Another reason is that the women feel that the organizations are a real bulwark of the male gender, where they feel out of place. This is one of the outcomes of a survey on the needs and aspirations of wives of fishermen in the Netherlands, implemented by the research department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery (1999). The survey was also the reason to call for a meeting of women of fishing families, where they could give their reactions and discuss their position.



The attendance at the meeting was very good. Women of about 60 percent of the Dutch artisanal fishery ("kotter") sector had responded to the survey, of which about 50 percent had come to the meeting. As the survey had only covered the wives of boat owners, the large majority of participants came from this back-

ground. There were only a few women boat co-owners and also only a few wives of 'mates' (workers).

Practically all the women indicated that they were involved in the fishing enterprise, but mostly in activities on the land, such as administration, book-keeping, contacting the banks, auctions and other business, and last but not least, in cleaning and buying provisions. Only a few women were involved in actual fishing. Women in families with smaller fishing boats clearly worked more hours for the enterprise, compared to those with larger boats.

The survey furthermore revealed that around 60 percent of the women are involved in decision-making regarding investments, finances and labour for the enterprise. The women indicated that their involvement in the fishing enterprise is primarily because they like it and because they are interested. Another reason is—and this counts primarily for the smaller enterprises—that their participation is seen as an important money-saver.

Despite this clear participation of women in the fisheries business, they are practically invisible 'in the books'—they do not receive a salary, neither are they insured—and in the fishermen's organizations.

Also, though the large majority of women indicated their interest in fisheries policies, only a few women had accompanied their husbands to a meeting of the fishermen's organization. This non-participation of women in fishermen's organizations became the major issue discussed during the meeting.

The discussion was far from half-hearted. The women were literally queuing up near the microphone, because all had something to say. I nevertheless observed a clear difference in response by age and by regional culture. Women of the older generation and the more conservative (protestant) cultures indicated that they were satisfied with the way the men ran the organizations and they did not see why women should become members. They were happy with their informal status and felt that they already had sufficient influence by participating in decision-making regarding the finances of the fishing enterprise. They also felt that the organization played an important social role for the men, who already had a poor social life because of their long trips at sea. They felt that the men would feel better if there were no women around.

Women of the younger generations, on the contrary, clearly indicated that they would like to participate in the fishermen's organization and become members. The main reason they gave is that they feel part of the fishing enterprise and, therefore, are very interested in fisheries policies. They also indicated that they want to participate for their personal growth. Some of these younger women have already participated in local meetings. Nevertheless, all women agreed that it was not easy for a woman to enter fishermen's organizations, as they are seen as true male bastions.

Women said that their husbands did not like them participating in meetings of the organization, because they felt that *women are too critical* and this made them feel embarrassed in front of other men. The men also did not like their wives to be one of the few women in the meeting, because they were afraid of gossip.

One woman said that she was the only woman participating in the local fishermen's organization and the men, at first, looked strangely at her. She also realized that she had to know her business well, because one mistake from her side would immediately call for facetious reactions from the men. But after some time, the men had got used to her participation and now respect her. Another woman said that, at first, she had not understood all the technical topics that the men were discussing during the meetings, but that this had encouraged her to read and educate herself. Now she is a full participant in the discussions.

It was discussed how to improve the participation of women in the fishermen's organizations. At first the women directed their questions to the chairperson of the Dutch Fishermen's Union, who had also been invited to this meeting, to ask him why invitations were sent only to the men for meetings. Because of this the women felt they were not welcome to participate. The chairperson answered that there was no conscious policy to invite men only, but that it happens this way because the membership is based on boat-ownership and that the owners are primarily men. But he immediately promised to send the invitation next time to the husband and the wife.

Some male participants suggested that the first step should be to involve women in the local organizations, but this was not shared by some of the women. One woman shared that she always attended the meetings of the national union, because it was there where the most important matters were discussed. She also said that if women would only participate in local organi-

zations, they would not have the chance to occupy influential positions.

Another suggestion was to form a separate women's organization within the national union. This did not find sufficient support, because the women were afraid not to be taken seriously by the union. However, in the end it was agreed to start an informal network to explore possibilities and strategies and a group of women volunteered to be contact persons for such a network.

The chairperson of the Dutch Fishermen's Union indeed kept his promise. The first national meeting of the fishermen's organization was well-attended by women. Towards the end of June the 15 contact persons of the Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands had their first meeting in the fishing village of Urk. The women were from all over the country and represented different fishery sectors, but mostly the small-scale fishery (shrimp fishers). The wives of 'mates' (workers) were also represented.



There was a lively discussion again. I pointed out to the women how surprising it was that they were so vocal and independent, but still invisible. The women mostly blamed themselves for this, because they had not taken the initiative to change this situation. Although there were differences of interests, the women were successful in arriving at a common agenda. On top of this is the need for recognition of the role of women in fisheries, both formally and in the society. I can not tell you more, because we first want to further discuss our strategy. In September we shall meet again. I will keep you informed.

LETTERS/ India

Dear readers,

Reading through Yemaya 3 has been extremely interesting. I would like to share some of the concerns that arise in my mind on reading the articles.

The first relates to the Katosi Women's Fishing Group. Margaret Nakato, congratulations on your collective activity and sense of organization. It is also great that you can 'think big' for the group and have a perspective of export and value-addition. I only want to caution you on some of the 'unintended effects' that may arise if you are not sufficiently cautious when realizing these dreams.

From what you say, by the fact that you are fishing with 'limited equipment' and supplying to big freezer boats, you are actually regulating the catches. Smaller catches can mean more employment (of a decentralized form for more women) and greater sustainability of the resource.

If and when the co-operative goes in directly for processing and export, the economies of scale will begin to operate. Within a short period you will find that you will be forcing your members to catch more fish to keep your processing unit going. Therefore, this has to be done with great forethought. What processing techniques and infrastructure do you intend to use and what are the implications of these for employment? How decentralized will it be? How will you ensure fish also for local consumption? Export markets are constantly fluctuating: how will the co-op cope with this?

While it is imperative that women do think big, we should not fall into the trap of the existing logic of centralized and high technology. There would be more cost-effective and appropriate ways of going ahead and I guess you will think more about this and interact with other groups who have explored alternatives before you start.

Cornellie's article on the life of an old fisherwomen in Zontkamp indicates that the modernization of the European fishery and the marginalization of women is not such an old phenomenon. The depletion of the resources has been very rapid only in the last 3-4 decades. How short the human memory is which forces us to think that all this change is inevitable. It puts us off from fighting back and so the so-called 'progressives' always win.

Nalini Nayak
(member of the ICSF)

LETTERS/ Netherlands

Dear readers of Yemaya,

Thank you all for your interesting contributions. I personally feel that Yemaya is a true reflection of what is going on at the grassroots from a fisherwoman's perspective. I hope more fisherwomen will send in their contributions and that, in this they will be helped to communicate their experiences.

As Yemaya offers us a unique chance to share experiences and learn from each other, I would like to pose a question to you. What interests me most, and perhaps it interests you too, is *how women's role in fisheries is changing*. My experience with fishing communities in different places of the world has made it clear to me that everywhere women's roles in the fisheries are in the process of being marginalized.

While in some places (e.g. West Africa) women's roles continue to be vital, in other places their roles have become marginal or even invisible (e.g. Europe). However, I have also observed that where women (can) actively participate in fishworker organizations, this positively impacts on (re-) strengthening their roles.

Therefore, I would like to request the readers to write about: *How the role of women in fisheries in your region or country has changed in history. What factors contributed to the marginalization of her position and what factors contributed to the strengthening of her role?* Of course I do not ask for academic or generalized writing, but for concrete experiences. An example could be to write a life story of an old and a young fisherwoman to see what changes took place in one generation and why. I also would like very much to hear about experiences of women in fishworker organizations, the barriers they met and the benefits they gained.

Looking forwards to your contributions.

With kind regards,

Cornelie Quist
(member of ICSF)

YEMAYA

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Published by

International Collective in
Support of Fishworkers
27 College Road, Chennai 600 006
India

Tel: (91) 44 827 5303

Fax: (91) 44 825 4457

Email: icsf@vsnl.com

Web site: <http://www.icsf.net>

Edited by

Chandrika Sharma

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We would also like names of other people who could be interested in being part of this initiative. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.

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.