

Yemaya

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ICSF's NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

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From the Editor

Greetings from ICSF! This is also a good opportunity to wish all of you the very best for 2001.

In this issue of Yemaya we have, as before, write-ups from several countries. It is significant that an important theme in many of them is the need to protect and manage resources, and the role of women in this. Margaret Nakato from Uganda writes that their women's group wants to protect the resources in Lake Victoria by 'taking on the motherly role of nurturing'. To reduce the pressure on the lake, their group is emphasizing sustainable fishing practices and is trying to diversify into other activities to reduce the pressure on the lake.

From Sri Lanka, we read of other women who are at the forefront of efforts to form a committee for the management of the lake on which depends their livelihood. Members of the Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association (PIFWA), Malaysia write of their efforts to regenerate mangroves.

The message from the compilation of issues put together by women fishworkers from several countries around the world is no different. This was in preparation for the Constituent Assembly of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) held from 2 to 6 October 2000 in Loctudy, France. The document emphasizes the need to reclaim priority access right to resources for coastal communities as well as the need to

promote co-management of fisheries for the sustainable use of resources. It brings together the dimensions of both the rights and responsibilities of coastal communities.

What is also significant is that this document emphasizes the importance of a *community approach* to fisheries management, that takes on board the concerns and roles of both men and women of fishing communities. We also carry a resolution signed by women of several countries, stating their will to work together towards common objectives. This resolution was signed after the meeting at Loctudy ended in the formation of not one, but two forums representing small-scale fishworkers.

We also carry letters from our readers. There is, as well, information about a video film, made from an ethnographic perspective, that focuses on the efforts of a women's group in Chile to take up mollusc culture.

In this issue we have included, where available, the e-mail addresses of the people who have written for Yemaya, for those of you who may wish to correspond directly with each other. We will bring out the next issue of Yemaya in March 2001. Do send us your write-ups by February 2001. We also look forward to responses to the letters we carry in this issue.



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Asia/ Malaysia

Learning from each other

Fishworkers from Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association (PIFWA), Malaysia learned a lot from a recent workshop organized in the Trang province of Thailand

By P Balan, Adviser to PIFWA

Members of Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association (PIFWA), Malaysia, have just come back from a workshop *In the Hands of the Fishers* organized by Yadfon Association in Trang, Thailand with the support of Mangrove Action Project (MAP). The workshop was held from 6 to 9 November 2000 with the participation of fishworkers from Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. Six fishworkers from PIFWA attended the workshop.

The workshop objectives were:

- to allow fisherfolk from the region to share ideas and experiences about efforts to stop destructive fishing methods that threaten the livelihood of inshore fishing communities;
- to share experience in the form of case studies of co-management or community-based coastal resources management;
- to present ideas for alternative sustainable livelihoods that could be adapted by groups or individuals to suit the needs of a fishing community;
- to form a network amongst groups in the region to exchange knowledge, skills and support for sustainable management of coastal resources.

Clearly, where women's involvement is concerned, we have learned a lot from the workshop. For example, during our field visit to the villages of Ban Laem Makhm and Ban Toh Ban, we were shown how women's groups have been empowered through the setting up of handicraft centers for generating extra income. The income from the handicraft center enables women to earn a living from a renewable resource, within the fishing village thus keeping the social fabric of the family and society intact.

We were also informed of the many uses of the *nipah* palm, a plant found in abundance even in our own area, Penang. The *nipah* palm is a wetland plant that can be harvested for its leaves, bark and roots. We foresee a possibility of using the *nipah* palm as a way to help improve the living standard of the women of fishing communities in Penang and we are currently active in pursuing this matter.

The exposure we received from the successful organization of women of fishing communities in Trang, Thailand has motivated us to implement a similar programme here in Penang. We will keep you informed of our latest activities.



For the World Fisheries Day, we organized a mangrove replanting activity in Sungai Chenaam, Seberang Perai Selatan and Penang. Part of the mangrove has already been cleared to make way for shrimp farming by agencies of the State and the private sector. Since healthy mangroves are crucial to a healthy stock of marine resources, and, therefore, to the livelihood of fishworkers, the replanting activity was well-received and supported not only by the men but also the women of the fishing village.

(P Balan can be contacted at pifwa@hotmail.com)

Asia/ India

Life and Debt

A woman fish vendor from Kerala, India, describes her life and the problems she has had to deal with

Excerpts of an interview with Selvaraji by Indu MG of ICSF's Documentation Centre

My name is Selvaraji from Vizhinjam. We are here for the last 18 years. My husband is a fisherman. I have four children: two boys and two girls.

I was a housewife but for the past three years I have been going to the harbour after the situation at home became worse. I buy fish and sell it at the local market. From what I earn I run the house. When only my

husband earns, it is not enough to educate our children and other needs.

I normally leave home at 5.00 am, buy the fish, wash it and pack it with ice, and reach the market by 8.00 am itself. Then I wait till 10.30 am when the customers start to arrive. If all the fish is sold, I reach home by 12.00 noon. If not I return at about 2.00 pm. I bring home the unsold fish packed with ice.

When the landings are poor, I have to go to the harbour really early—at 2.00 am—to buy the fish, wash it and pack it with ice. I return home by 5.00 am and do the housework. There is no time to sleep again. I have to sweep and wash vessels and do the other work. I go back to the harbour by 9.00 am to wait for the *tempo* (small vehicle used to carry goods) to take us to the market.

When there is a lot of fish I have to dry and salt it. Until it is sold and the money recovered there will not be any peace of mind. Till it is sold, the money is in the water.

To buy fish worth Rs1,000 (Rs45=US\$1) at the auction, I have to pay Rs20 as auction fees. Rs10 goes to the church and Rs5 per basket to pay those who load it into the *tempos*. One piece of ice costs Rs25. That is already Rs60. For Rs2,000 worth of fish it is Rs120. After that we have to get the baskets transported to the markets. Whether it is 3, 4, or 7 of us, it is Rs40 by *tempo*. We share this fare. After that when we reach the market we have to give a market fee of Rs5 per basket—it is the same whether the basket is full or half. If we do not pay, they start to abuse us.

Thus I have to spend about Rs150 as external expenses. So if I want to make some margin, I have to sell the fish bought for Rs2,000 for Rs2,500. Only then I can make about Rs300 at the end of the day and repay my debt. Otherwise I will get into more debts.

Although I am doing fish vending for three years, it is not my money. It is a loan from the *blade* (moneylender). I have been in debt for almost two years now. What happened was that I had with me Rs5,000 that belonged to someone else. While travelling in a bus I somehow lost this money. For the next four days I did not eat anything, not knowing how to return the money. It was then that someone told me about the moneylender. I took a loan of Rs5,000. I got only Rs4,500, since they cut the interest of 10 per cent and give us only the rest of the amount.

Then I borrowed Rs500 from another woman to return the Rs5,000. I had to repay the loan by giving Rs70 each day for about 80 days. But this was difficult. So to repay I took another Rs5,000 loan. Thus it became Rs10,000. Last week the moneylender came asking for this money. I told him I could not repay immediately, but I will repay it slowly. So when my husband got Rs400 one day, all of it went as repayment. Now I have to repay the rest.

Now I am thinking that once I clear all the loans, I should not go after the moneylenders. I have suffered so much because of their loans. There are days when I do earn money from selling fish. If I did not have to repay the loan I would have been able to save some money. Now I realize that whatever loans I took from them was of no use to me; it made me more poor.

Initially when I started selling fish, I had some savings. Once when my husband and son fell sick, all that money was spent. It is only after that, that I started going after the moneylenders. If I had not taken the loan, by now I would have had a saving of Rs5000. But today I am not even able to thatch this house.

My mother was a fish vendor. That is the reason why I am in this line. There are losses, there are profits. Losses and debts should not deter one. As long as you have life in you, you can repay your debts—that is the thought that makes me go ahead.

In any case, from my own experience as well from that of other women fish vendors, I can say that women benefit by getting into vending. Even if they earn a pittance, they supplement the income brought in by men. That is a gain. Another thing is that some women do not have their men with them. In Vizhinjam itself there are many women who became widows at a very young age. So they go to sell fish to bring up their children with the profits made from this.

Also, before I started selling fish I had to listen to all that my husbands said. When I talk to other women vendors, they also tell similar stories. So, when we think, we realize that it was because we did not have any earnings that we had to listen to the men. So today, in fact I work harder than my husband and I am able to make him understand the worth of my work. I have the confidence to do that now. Only when we women share about our lives, we realize the similar threads running through them. Most women in this area are fish vendors. There is nobody in this world who can beat a fish vending women!!!!

Asia/ Sri Lanka**The solution is among us....**

Women take the initiative to improve the management of the lake they depend on for their livelihood

By Geetha Luckmini, the Training Officer of National Fisheries Solidarity (NAFSO), Sri Lanka

Parakrama Samudra is one of the major inland reservoirs under the Mahaweli development project at Polonnaruwa district, in Sri Lanka. More than 500 fisher families depend only on this lake for their livelihood. Bandiwewa is one of the seven small lakes of the Prakrama Samudra. In Bandiwewa alone there are 75 fisher families with forty traditional crafts. Their average catch is around 800 to 1000 kg daily. Small-scale fish traders come from Ratnapura and Ampara areas to buy fish from Bandiwewa.

“Fishing is our family business. Earlier, we earned enough to run our family. We managed to save some money for our future and urgent needs, from our daily catch. This was in the past, when the lake was well-managed,” says Vineetha. Vineetha is one of the fisherwoman in the Parakrama Samudra who goes to the lake to catch fish together with her husband.

Earlier, the fisheries co-operative society was able to manage the lake. The fisher people used the legally approved nets of more than 3.5-inch mesh size. Self-regulation by members of the co-op was common. But this has now changed.

Says Vineetha: “The co-operative society does not exist any more. It was destroyed by unnecessary political interference. Politicians intervened to prevent the arrest of some members of the co-operatives engaged in illegal fishing. Fisheries inspectors were threatened when they tried to check illegal practices, and several were transferred for trying to enforce the law. The officials were fed up. Members were frustrated.”

A majority of the members of the co-op, like Vineetha, were for the enforcement of the regulatory measures. Says Vineetha: “Although they are in minority, they are very powerful with political backing. We are utterly helpless. They cut down trees in the water catchment areas. They hunt illegally in the forest. What can we do, when law is with the law-breakers? The nets

they use are between 2 to 2.5 inches while the legally approved size is 3.5 inches. Beach seine nets and monofilament nets are used even though they are banned for use in the lake.”

The income of fisher families has steadily declined as the catch and the size of the fish has declined. Fishing was no longer a sustainable livelihood for fisher families by mid-2000. The fisher people understood the cause of their problems. They realized the necessity of organizing again.

“We discussed the problem and its causes. We knew that the solution is among us,” says Vineetha. “Unless men come forward to solve the problem, we as women have to take action. Because our children approach us when they are hungry. Can mothers feed them with tears? How do we feed them without income? My husband and I start fishing at 7.00 p.m. and come back around 7.00 a.m. If we cannot sell our total catch, I have to dry the fish too.” With all of these activities Vineetha and her husband earn only about Rs 100 to 150 per day. Which is barely enough for a hand to mouth existence.

Vineetha was a committee member of the former coop society, which was responsible for protecting and managing the resources of the lake. She is now also a founder member of the lake management committee organized under NAFSO (National Fisheries Solidarity).



According to Vineetha: “The fish we catch now are very small, almost 10 to 14 fish to a kg. We feel sorry to kill small fish. They are like our babies. Earlier, when the lake was better managed, there were only 2 or 3

fishes to a kg. This is a very clear indicator of the destruction. This is threatening the livelihood of fisher families. It is exploitation, over-exploitation. That is why I am involved in the management practices, although we face many threats from political henchmen. Who else will protect the lake?"

"After we initiated management practices in July this year, we have already begun to experience some success. Even though it is only four months since these efforts began."

Recently, the lake management committee, assisted by NAFSO and the Franciscan nuns, had organized a meeting with policy makers. The Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, the Coordinating Secretary of the Minister of Mahaweli, the Co-operative Commissioner, the Fisheries Extension Officer of Polonnaruwa, the Fisheries Inspector and a number of Government officials attended the meeting. At this particular meeting the voice of fisherwomen was very high. A number of women like Vineetha voiced their concern over the poor management of the lake.

Ultimately four women were selected to the co-ordination committee. Vineetha was one of them from the Bandiwewa community. Says Vineetha, 'We needed a legal body to protect our lake. So we formed our fisheries co-op again, of which I am a member. Now the Fisheries Inspector should work with us, to protect the lake.'

"I'm not very educated. I'm not much involved in these management and organizing activities. But from our family Vineetha is involved. Our fishing village has realized the importance of their work. I'm proud to have such an active woman as my wife. She is a blessing to my family, my son and daughter. She is an asset to the whole fishing village and to the Parakrama Samudra." These are the words of Vineetha's proud husband.

Women like Vineetha are involved in feeding their families, as well as in protecting and managing the resources of the lake, through the newly formed lake management committee and co-operative society. Women must be involved in decision-making processes, since they are genuinely involved in the sustainable use of resources, the protection of livelihoods and ultimately of humankind.

(Geetha Luckmini can be contacted at: nafso1@slt.lk)

Europe/ France

A community approach...

Issues identified by women fishworkers from different parts of the world were compiled into a working document, for discussions during the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) meeting in Loctudy, France. This document was compiled by Danielle Le Sauze, President, of the French Branch of the WFF, and presented to the Constituent Assembly of the WFF. We carry excerpts from this document...

The Constitutional Assembly of the WFF, due to take place in Brittany from 2 to 6 October 2000 will formally establish the World Forum. We feel that it is vital that women are able to participate fully in this event, and to ensure that issues of concern to them are addressed and taken into account.

As part of our preliminary reflections we tried to integrate the views of as many women's movements as possible in the fisheries sector from around the world, to have as wide a participation as possible and a sharing of diverse experiences.

The demand for parity (one man/ one woman) in the delegations coming to Loctudy was made to enable the Forum to develop an alternative approach, based not only on economics but on the integration of social, family, community and cultural aspects.

Current systems and practices of fisheries management give little importance to the special concerns of women. We now have the opportunity to challenge this and to highlight the importance of communities in the North and South, and of the people (men and women) who depend on and support each other to defend their interests. It is, therefore, crucial that we adopt a *community approach* that recognizes the importance of both men and women, and promotes the involvement of communities in the negotiating processes with the political and economic powers.

The role of women and their modes of organizing are highly diverse across countries. However, in all cases, gaining recognition for the important role that they play would contribute to putting less aggressive and sustainable fisheries policies in place. It falls to us to ensure that our sector is not weakened by dividing it, putting men on one side and women on the other, in a context where increasingly small-scale fishers from the

North and South are having to abandon their way of life due to the impact of government policies which favour industrial fisheries interests.

Through the World Forum coastal communities first and foremost intend to reclaim priority access rights to resources for coastal communities.

Following a process of discussion, we have classified the key issues put forward by women under seven main headings: citizenship, professional and political participation, representation; participation in sustainable development and sustainable use of resources; working conditions and valorization of skills; access to credit; destructive tourism, protection of the coastal environment; access to health, access to education; developing and sustaining organizations of women.

Europe/ France

Women agree to work together...

This is a copy of the resolution signed by several women delegates to the WFF meeting in Loctudy, France, on 6 October 2000, after the creation of two forums: the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) which brings together fishworker organizations mainly from Asia, Africa and Oceania, and the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) which groups organizations from the Americas and from Europe.

According to the objectives of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) established in New Delhi in India in 1997, the WFF will: Recognise, protect and enhance the role of women in the fishing economy and in the sustenance of the community.' (Objective No 3).

This objective resulted in the parity of delegations from the 32 participant countries. Women from different countries contributed an additional dimension to the debates this week, a community dimension, by putting forward such issues as:

- citizenship, representation and the participation of women in professional organizations;
- sustainable development of resources;
- improving working conditions and valorization of skills;
- improving access to credit;
- improving access to education and health;
- sustaining organizations;

Given the richness of the debate and the contacts made during the week, the women from coastal communities around the world agree to work together with the objective of *protecting their way of life, defending and improving the situation in coastal fishing communities through ensuring the sustainable social, cultural, environmental and economic development of coastal communities.*



This resolution was signed by women representatives from India, USA, Guinea Conakry, Panama, Bangladesh, Senegal and France among others.

Europe/ France

A debate on Parity

This is a report of a discussion between women delegates to the meeting of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) and Humberto Mella, the former President of Conapach (the national fishworker organization from Chile) and a member of the Coordination Committee of WFF. This discussion took place on Monday, 2 October 2000.

The meeting started with Danièle Le Sauze, the President of the French Branch of the WFF, reporting on the acceptance of, and respect for, the principle of parity between men and women in the delegations from member countries to the WFF. The dialogue that followed is as below:

Humberto Mella (CONAPACH, Chile): I have worked on the role of women in the fishery with Luisa Pineda, a woman fishworker, at the request of CONAPACH. For me, parity is not a good means for

integrating women at the international level. Recognition of women will take place rather through working together, which does not place them behind men, nor in front of them, but at their side. Applying the principle of 50 per cent men, 50 per cent women in the name of parity amounts to doubting the capacity of women who lead many communities throughout the world.

If women are present here today, it is because they are leaders in their communities. Raising the issue of parity is running the risk of initiating competition between men and women, which will make the recognition of women by men more difficult. This example can be linked to that of equality between countries of the North and countries of the South. It has been very difficult to come to an agreement because we have cultural differences, so that we do not see things in the same way. We need to find a shared vision in order to arrive at a solution that relates to men, women and children.

Pauline E Tangiora (Rongomaiwahine Association, New Zealand): I would like to ask you a question: what do you mean by the South?

Humberto Mella: Poor countries.

Pauline E Tangiora: Men need to change their approach to the relationship between men and women in the same way that they must also change their approach to rich countries and poor countries. We must not divide the world into North as rich countries and South as poor countries. I come from a country, New Zealand, which is actually in the South but assimilated into the North. I understand that men do not share the same concepts as women, but at the same time I do not accept that this means men can now oppress women. For example, it is for women to know if they want a presidency or a vice-presidency, and not for a co-ordination committee almost entirely made up of men to make proposals on behalf of women.

Mamayawa Sandouno (Association for Fisheries Development in Guinea Coankry): While we are speaking of parity, I would like to know if Humberto agrees with it or not.

Humberto Mella: For me, parity is more than replicating men and women.

Mamayawa Sandouno: That means that if there are eight decision-making posts, you would accept that six

posts are taken by women and two by men?

Humberto Mella: If you can take them on, I agree. Artisanal fishing societies are matriarchal societies. Everything revolves around the women. When there are children, they turn to their mothers. And every mother of a fisherman is a woman. Parity can create the beginning of competition between men and women in the artisanal fishery.

Mamayawa Sandouno: I am not interested in talking about philosophy because we could spend all night on it. We are no longer talking about the business of the relationships between men and women. We are talking about an equal approach to men and women's roles in decision-making. We are no longer talking about integrating women into a development process designed by men.

Danièle Le Sauze: For parity to work, the principle of 50/50 has to be accepted. If it is not, for whatever reason, it will not work.

Gabriela Cruz Salazar (FENACOPEC, Ecuador): I agree with Humberto. With regard to what has been said, I think that it is for us women to decide if we need to have a presidency or a vice-presidency. We should be talking of equilibrium between men and women at this Forum, not of percentages. The concept of countries of the North and countries of the South should not exist. We are all equal.

Humberto Mella: Tomorrow there will be a workshop discussion. Will this discussion determine the direction the Constitution takes?

Danièle Le Sauce: What will be taken into account: the opinion of the workshops or the opinion of the Co-ordination Committee?

Christina Hunt (Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters): In my group I made the proposal that there should be two co-ordinators of the Forum. The men said no. They want a co-ordinator and a vice co-ordinator. And you know as well as I do, that the vice co-ordinator will be a woman. And then there will always be one who is behind the other. I do not want that. I want a co-presidency, equality between women and men.

Marie Ademar (Family Maritime Association, Martinique): There is a movement underway. I don't

want to take a man's place and I don't want a man to take my place. Parity does not mean that women take the place of men. Humberto talks of the matriarchal society in the artisanal fishery. It is precisely that society which has caused us to fail.

I will give you an image of what I am talking about. If I am a mother, it is in relation to you. If you are a father, it is in relation to me. Together the two of us are strong and there is a natural equilibrium. There is a small child for whom we are Mum and Dad. We both of us give him or her an education. You remain head of the family. You have your place in the home. I remain always the wife and I have my place in the home. In this way the child has the equilibrium of two parents. I may be wrong but it seems to me that Humberto has not understood parity. He is afraid that we will take his place, whereas we are only taking our responsibilities.

Humberto Mella: I am not in competition with any woman or any country. The president of the Artisanal Fishworkers should be a president because he/she has the capacity to be a president. I do not understand the demand for 50/50 representation.

Alba Rosa Perez (Panama): Parity means that we, the women, have the same rights to decide. We are leaders. In Panama, women are leaders of fishworker organisations because the men understand that women have the same abilities as them. Five women are presidents of these organisations and I am the president of the national federation of artisanal fishworkers. Women are capable of holding any position.

Humberto Mella: Thank you for having listened to me. To think differently does not mean imposing one's views. I will respect you as if you were my mother.

Europe/Netherlands

A village built with fish...

In Urk, the well-known fishing village of the Netherlands, a woman talks of her twenty-six years as a worker in the fish processing industry.

By Cornelie Quist, a member of the ICSF and contact person of the Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands.

Our village is built with fish. We are a fishing community in heart and soul. With the largest fishing fleet of

the Netherlands and also the biggest auction, we naturally also have an extensive fish-processing sector. In our village we only process fresh fish for consumption.

Most of the fish processing plants are small-scale. The very small ones have around 15 workers, while the others have 30 to 40 workers. The few large enterprises have around 250 workers. During the 26 years that I work now in the fish-processing sector, I have mostly worked in the small-scale plants. But presently I work in a large fish processing plant, which has much better working conditions.

The small-scale fish processing sector mainly does the primary level of processing, meaning they clean, strip and debone the fish. The large-scale enterprises, which are the chief buyers of the fish from the small-scale sector, process the fish further as high quality frozen fish in consumer packaging for supermarket chains. They have the capital and infrastructure to buy fresh fish from other domestic and international auctions. The small-scale enterprises are very dependent on the large-scale sector for both the supply and demand of fish and this is the main reason of the vulnerability of the small-scale sector of our village.

Working in the fish processing plants has a low status in the rest of the society, but not in Urk. Practically all the women of our village have worked for at least a couple of years in fish processing. Women here generally have no aspirations for higher education. As soon as they are 15 or 16 years, women begin to work in the fish processing plants as stand-by workers. Their first motivation is to save money for their wedding and to furnish their house. The piece-rate system and the possibility of long working days, give young women, who still have the physical strength for this, an opportunity to earn a lot of money in a short period of time.

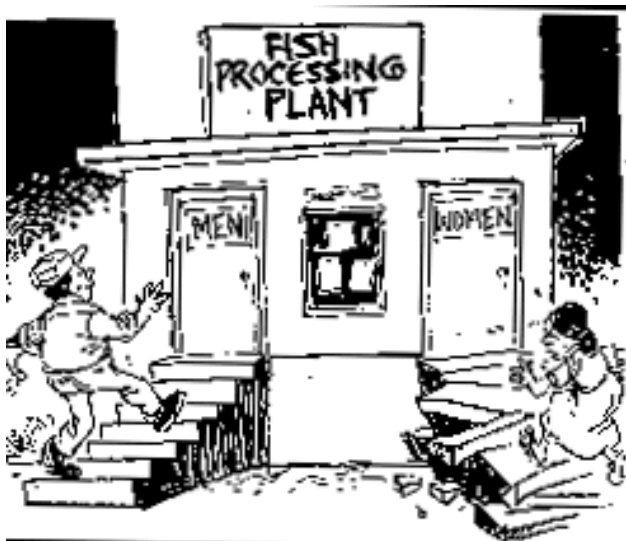
They can only hold on to this stressful working life for three or four years. After that they get all kind of physical complaints. But the young women also do not work any longer than this, as they marry here at a young age and have kids soon thereafter.

Married women also work as stand-by workers, but generally only for a few hours per day. These women primarily work to buy extra things for the household or for some 'pocket money' as they call it. As we all know each other in this village, the fish processing enterprise just calls a few women when there is a good

fish supply and a need for labour, and these women, in a short while, recruit other women.

There are not many women like me, who see their work in the processing industry as a real job and as a major livelihood activity. This is understandable because the working conditions are very hard. When I worked in the small plants, it happened quite often that we were sent home, because there was no fish supply. And in particular I, being unmarried, suffered from this more, because it was always the unmarried women who were sent home first. We also were only given temporary contracts and we had no regular wages.

I know that this situation still has not changed. I also have not seen a real wage increase in the last 15 years. The work is physically very demanding, monotonous and stressful. The absence through sickness is high. There are no chances for any promotion.



No, this is not the same for the men workers. There are also men, who do the same type of work as the women, but we can see that men are more often regular workers with a permanent labour contract. This is because men are considered as the breadwinners. Because they are regular workers, there are better chances for them to get a wage increase, a promotion and to undergo training. All the workers who operate machines are men, all the foremen are men, all the higher positions are occupied by men. This is why we women get no ear from our superiors when we have complaints. These men say that our complaints are 'typical women's moaning'.

In the fish processing plants of Urk, the workers are not, in general, members of the trade union. If you are

a member, the chances are high that you will be boycotted in getting employment. But the trade unions are also not really trying to get a foothold in Urk. I once have tried to get the support of the trade union, when again only unmarried women were sent out of their jobs. But there was no response from the union. The fish processing industry is one of the rare industries in our country with no collective labour agreement.

But in the large processing plants, the working conditions have improved. In the company where I work at present, we have a worker's council since 1998, where we can go with our complaints. But as women we still feel many barriers to open our mouth, as there are still only men in the management.

Although the large processing plants have mechanized a great deal of the work, there is still a big need for human labour in the processing of fresh fish. Women are still the major labour source for the menial type of jobs in the sector, certainly here in Urk. But I think that the labour supply for the fish processing industry may become a problem in Urk in the near future. Although our community still has conservative ideas about women, we can also see here that more and more women today have aspirations to obtain better education and better jobs. Besides that, there is more competition from other industries in our region, which offer better working conditions and better wages.

The people of Urk are known for being hard workers and therefore very much in demand. I have heard that in other places there are more migrant workers now entering the fish-processing sector, because Dutch workers are not willing to do these types of jobs. I don't know if this will happen in Urk, because we are still a very closed community.

If the fish processing industry wants to keep its local labour force, it will have to adjust the labour conditions and listen to women's needs. We can see this already happening in the large processing plants. But most probably this will be at the cost of the small-scale sector. (Cornelie Quist can be contacted at: cornelie.quist@wolmail.nl)

Latin America/ Chile

The story of a women's group

A video film describes the experiences of a women's group in Chile in mollusc culture

By Debbie Guerra Maldonado, working at the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales of the Universidad Austral de Chile

De mar y tierra : historia de un grupo de mujeres or *The land and the sea: The story of a women's group* is an ethnographic video that describes the experience of CULTIMAR, a local association of fisher women in the Xth Region of southern Chile. This has been made possible by a working agreement between the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUH), and the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH).

CULTIMAR is based in Caipulli, a village of the Ancud County in the Province of Chiloé, east of the Pudeto River. Here, two hundred people live by seaweed gathering, mollusc culture, agriculture and animal husbandry.

In the early 1980s, this agricultural village found in seaweed exploitation an unexpected resource that soon became its main source of income. The fast expansion of this activity was related to the "pelillo boom" (*Gracilaria spp*), a new international market that had its impact on the entire southern coast of Chile.

CULTIMAR, the production co-operative, was created in 1996. An earlier woman leader of seaweed gatherers suggested the creation of an organization that would unite the wives of members of the Pudeto union. She remembers: "In the year 1996, we created CULTIMAR ... We realized that every woman here was a ribereñas (person who lives near a river), and that they did not find jobs easily."

Earlier, women were trapped in their daily routines with few opportunities for generating an income from their activities. They earned some income from the seaweed, but it was too little. That is how the idea to ask for a concession for cultivating mussel (*Mytilus chilensis*) came about.

The first activity of the newborn organization was to invite people to be members. Announcements were made over the local radio. The women from Caipulli were ready: 36 of them joined the organization of which

five were already union members. Today, eight women have left the organization. This was partly due to the lack of immediate earnings, and partly due to the long distance that some women had to travel on poor roads.

Members of CULTIMAR went through a training program on mussel culture in November 1997, under the working agreement of CIDA/MUN/UACH. Beyond the initial aim of learning about mussel culture, these women found in this program a space for personal growth, for mutual support, and for encounters with other women. This was greatly facilitated by existing kinship ties among the women.

In November 1999 these women received an additional training on oyster culture. Simultaneously, they benefited from a grant for the acquisition of the materials required for installing the cultures. Currently, they are seeding both mussel and oyster.

CULTIMAR has applied for an aquaculture concession from the Subsecretaría de Pesca (the branch of the Secretary of Agriculture that regulates fishing activities in Chile) and from the Chilean Navy. This has, however, been delayed for bureaucratic reasons. The work of the group, however, continues.

The video tells the story of CULTIMAR, including the testimonies of each one of its members. It goes through their story that includes the initial change, the learning process of these women, and the consolidation of their organization. The increasing depletion of resources motivated them to search for new alternatives of production. They found an answer in an organization that provided them with a community space for meeting. For them this has been a liberating and empowering experience.

This 50-minute video has been produced by three students from the Universidad Austral de Chile, two from Journalism and the other from Anthropology. If you are interested on the video, please contact: Gabriela Araya: je_munoz@entelchile.net or Debbie Guerra: dguerra@uach.cl

Letters/ Uganda

We are grateful for the concern of Nalini Nayak, a member of ICSF, regarding our aim of getting into industrial fish processing, and the interest she has shown in cautioning us of the dangers and implications which might befall us if not checked.

The women of Katosi fishing on the Lake Victoria had very high hopes of venturing into the fish processing industry one day after an insight from one of the potential donors. While we were still excited by the idea and planning for the same, there was a ban on fishing in Uganda due to the use of poison in the fishing industry. The poisoned fish was causing illness among the consumers and some deaths were reported. The poison was also killing all the other living things in the water. The activity had to be put to a standstill to stop the use of poison and net the culprits.

While in this situation the women of Katosi and the whole community were hit and suffered immensely. Our fishing community depends on the lake to catch fish and then sells the fish to buy food, medical care and all other necessities. So there was no fish so no money and no food in families. The women were most hit, as they have to cater for the feeding of the family and general maintenance especially in sickness of the children. In our association it was usually discussed in our fortnightly meetings.

It was during this period when trying to find a solution to the catastrophe which had befallen us that we even looked into our idea of venturing into fish processing. Already the fish processing factories were not getting enough fish. Agents of fish processors used to find us on the lake to buy our fish. They were no longer waiting on the landing site due to the high demand. The women who were engaged in the fish processing were all already out of business due to the scarcity of fish (all is bought and taken by factories for processing) and the high prices for the fish available where by in the end the women are not making any profit after processing.

With this in mind, we the women of Katosi, all together in our meeting we have put on hold the idea of processing fish by our organization. We feel there are some issues that need to be addressed first, like the rate at which fish is being harvested in the lake, which if not checked, may lead to the depletion of fish resources in the lake Victoria

We have realized the need to protect the fish resources and the interests of the community and to look not only at the profit nature of the business. Some one has to come out and take over that responsibility, and also to be an example to the community that the fisheries resource if not protected can be depleted.

With that in mind we the women have now come up with a way of diversifying our activities. The land is there and not cultivated. We want to utilize the land by growing food so as to reduce the pressure on the lake and our demands for fish. We want to protect the lake taking on the motherly role of nurturing. Much emphasis is going to be put on using proper fishing gears, stopping destructive fishing and being a living example to the community for the need to protect our fish, which is our source of income.

From the WFF meeting in France I came to learn from P. Balan, Advisor/ Co-ordinator of Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association of Malaysia, of how they are cleaning the ocean, which has helped reduce the jelly fish and improve the quality of aquatic animals in the ocean, and from Peter Parravano President of Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association - USA, of how they use hooks which do not injure the fish so that if the fish caught is not of the right size it will be put back in the water. These ideas benefit the community and the future generation. We feel our association would copy them in our daily work as recently we were engaged in the cleaning of the landing site but now we can take on the lake too.

Margaret Nakato
Katosi Women Fishing & Development Association-
Uganda.
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LETTERS/ England

Dear Friends,

The Assembly of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers at Loctudy in Brittany, France in early October began really well and many friendships were made. Even though an unfortunate split occurred between peoples from the southern and northern hemispheres, those friendships are very important, and I hope they will be lasting. Since then I have received e-mail messages from many of them. Of course they were about fish and the worries and problems everyone, everywhere has, just to make a living. But they were also made even more lively by incidents in everyday life—even some great traditional fish recipes!

This gave me an idea for a possible book—entitled FISHNET—which I think encapsulates several things all at once! Fish...conversations on the net and, because I've heard mostly—but not entirely—from women. I really would like this to work, partly because it would open up the eyes of other people—not just us 'fish' people, but it could be one way of uniting us all across the world, across the oceans—in a way we somehow failed to manage to do in Loctudy. Through the back door, as it were!

I hope this might strike a chord with you, who are reading this now, in this really wonderful global magazine. If it does, and I hope so, please get in touch with me. My e-mail address is jill.jago@virgin.net.

Love to you all and I really do look forward to a flood of e-mails—backwards and forwards across the fishing world.

Jill Jago

(Jill Jago is the former wife of an artisanal skipper/owner in Cornwall England and the mother of two artisanal shell fishermen also in Cornwall. Her involvement with fish extends from campaigning for the survival of fishing communities and fishworkers throughout the UK - to being an excellent filleter and fish cook. She is also an author, and is in the process of writing two books.)

NEWS

A Manual titled *About Fishermen, Fisherwomen, Oceans And Tides: A Gender Perspective In Marine-Coastal Zones*, authored by Lorena Aguilar and Itzá Castañeda of the World Conservation Union (Social Area and Wetlands and Coastal Zones Area Regional Office for Mesoamerica – ORMA Social Policy Program San Jose, Costa Rica 2000) has recently been brought out. According to the authors this manual constitutes a conceptual and methodological proposal that provides tools and recommendations aiming at linking development projects in marine-coastal zones to the topic of gender equity. For more information you could contact Itzá Castañeda at itzac@infosel.net.mx.

YEMAYA

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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.