

Yemaya

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ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

AUGUST 2001

From the Editor

Dear Friends,

Greetings from ICSF!

In this issue of *Yemaya* we bring you articles from Africa, Latin America and Canada on ongoing organizational processes related to women in the fisheries sector. The articles indicate how women fishworkers are organizing politically, as processors and traders and as members of fishing communities concerned about the economic, cultural and social sustainability of their communities.

We carry a report of the *Workshop on Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa* and the *West African Fair for Artisanally Processed Fish* held in Dakar, Senegal between 30 May and 3 June 2001. These events served to draw the attention of policy-makers and the general public to the economic, social and cultural importance of artisanal fish processing and trading activities in the West African region. We carry too the statement from the workshop. Women processors and traders at the workshop committed themselves to working together to create their own networks at different levels.

We have two articles from Latin America—from Chile and Peru—in this issue. Both of them describe processes that have been initiated to create spaces for women of fishing communities within the fishworker

organizations of these countries. These efforts are still at their initial stages and consolidating women's spaces within these organizations in a meaningful way will indeed be a challenge.

From Canada we have a report of a meeting to mark the first anniversary of the *Workshop on Gender, Globalization and Fisheries* held in Newfoundland, Canada in May 2000 (See special issue of *Yemaya*, August 2000). That the network of women fishworkers and researchers from Canada formed at the workshop continues to be active is indeed positive. Donna Lewis writes: "The energy and enthusiasm witnessed last May has not diminished. I am proud to be a part of this project and to witness the inspiration it provides to the smaller, more remote communities, mine included, in our country."

For the first time we have reproduced an article from another newsletter, *Coastal Community News*, brought out by the Coastal Community Network, Nova Scotia, Canada, not least because the article captures well the frustration many women fishworkers and their supporters face when trying to put gender on the fisheries agenda.

We look forward to your comments, suggestions and contributions to future issues of *Yemaya*. The next issue of *Yemaya* will be in December 2001, and please try and send us your write-ups. by mid-November.



Inside Pages

Senegal ...2,3,5,5
Chile.....6
Peru8
Canada.....9,11

From Africa/ Senegal

Talking shop

A report of the Workshop on Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa

The *Workshop on Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa* was held from 30 May to 1 June 2001, followed by the *West African Processed Fish Fair* on 2 and 3 June 2001.

These events were organized by ICSF in collaboration with the Collectif National des Pecheurs Artisanaux du Senegal (CNPS) and the Centre de Recherches pour le Developpement des Technologies Intermediaires de Pêche (CREDETIP). They were supported by the FAO-DFID Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Project (SFLP). The objectives were as follows:

To enable artisanal fish processors and traders to:

- identify common problems in relation to fish processing and trade at the regional level;
- make their problem visible to, and to influence, policy-makers and the general public;
- exchange fish processing technologies and establish better trade networks;
- learn about support services (information, credit and technology resources) available within the region.

A total of 64 participants from 13 countries in the West African region, that is Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mauritania, participated in the workshop. Participants included representatives of artisanal fishworker, fish processor and trader organizations, and of governmental and non-governmental organizations working with, and providing support to, artisanal fishing communities in the region.

Also participating in these events were representatives from the SFLP, the DFID, UK, the FAO Regional Office for Africa as well as fisheries departments officials from countries of the region. Also represented were organizations working with fishworkers from Mozambique and France.

The workshop provided the space for women fish processors and traders, together with their supporters, to discuss some of the issues affecting their livelihoods, in a focused way. According to the delegates from Mauritania, artisanal fish processing was a relatively new activity in their country. They highlighted the lack of road infrastructure in Mauritania that made it difficult to transport fish products. They also drew attention to the massive presence of foreign trawlers along Mauritania's coasts, and the negative impact on fish resources.

The delegates from Senegal, among other things, spoke of the need to sensitize decision-makers to respond better to the expectations of women traders. They pointed to several problems faced by women processors and traders in Senegal, including lack of infrastructure and equipment for fish processing and product storage; declining access to land for processing sites at beaches, with the development of tourism; administrative obstacles due to numerous local taxes and harassment by the police; and competition faced by the domestic artisanal sector from foreign fleets, following the fisheries access agreements signed between Senegal and the European Union.

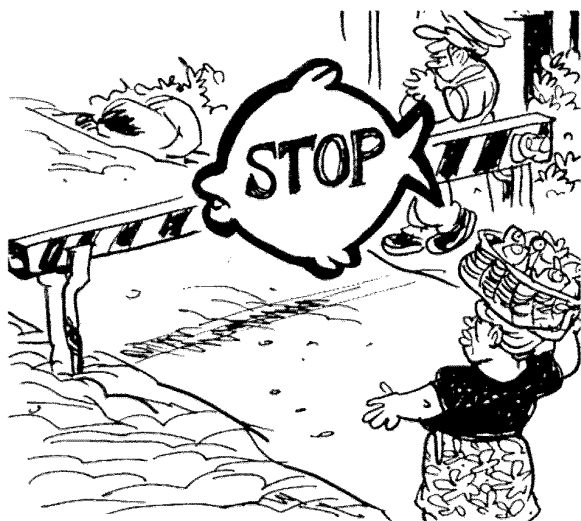
The delegate from Sierra Leone spoke of the negative impact that political and social instability in her country had had on social and economic life, and on artisanal fish processing and trading activities. She expressed the hope that the current period of peace would last.

The delegate from Guinea Conakry drew attention to several problems faced by women processors and traders in her area, including inadequate supplies of firewood; high customs duties; high cost of product transportation; and political instability that made it difficult to access several markets in the region.

A delegate from Nigeria spoke with great passion about high post-harvest losses in the riverine fisheries of her area due to extreme paucity of financial means and inadequate equipment for processing and storage.

Participants from Cote d'Ivoire drew attention to the progressive depletion of fish resources and the difficulties in procuring fish for processing. While processors with access to capital were able to purchase fish from the harbour, most women could not afford this. The efforts of women processors to ensure

supplies by advancing money to fishermen were not always successful, as the tendency was for fishermen to sell the fish elsewhere if they got a better price. Women also pointed to problems due to customs duties and local taxes: many processors prefer to stay in the village and sell to wholesalers at low prices rather than negotiate the various checkpoints encountered on the way to the market.



Participants from Ghana, Togo and Benin spoke of the depletion of fish resources, largely a consequence of trawling activities in inshore areas, and the impact on the artisanal capture and processing sector.

They also pointed to the high cost of procuring fish to process and the fact that even though many of them pre-financed fishing trips, there was no guaranteed access to fish caught. They also referred to difficulties in obtaining credit.

Participants discussed ways that their problems could be dealt with. It was noteworthy that discussions focused not only what governments or other organizations could do to support their work, but also what they needed to do themselves. They spelt out their own responsibilities in this process.

It was evident at the workshop that, given the right support and policy environment, these dynamic women can develop stronger linkages with each other, giving a boost not only to intra-regional trade, but also to regional food security, diversified and sustainable livelihoods in the artisanal fisheries sector and to regional integration.

We need support not charity

Several policymakers participated in the session on the third day of the workshop. Dr. N'Diaga Gueye, Director of Fisheries, Senegal, while congratulating the organizers and participants of the workshop, dwelt at length on the future of the fish processing sector. Making a case for the modernization of the sector, he said that one cannot have one foot in the middle ages and another in the third millennium. He stressed that the children of women fish processors must not feel that they are condemned to live in the same conditions as their parents and must be sent to school. "If I had the money to invest, I would not put it into dryers or drying areas, but I would set up schools for the children", he commented.

In response, Ms. Thérèse Senghor, a fish processor and a member of the women's wing of CNPS, Senegal stressed that women fish processors were not unaware of the importance of schooling for their children. Underlining the need to support the work of women fish processors and traders, she said it was, in fact, their work as fish processors that enabled them to earn money for schooling their children in a dignified way and not through charity.

Africa/ Senegal

Support our Trade

Statement from the Workshop on Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa

Fish is important for food security in the West African region and artisanal fish processors and traders contribute in important ways to a better distribution of fish within the region.

Fish processing and trading at the artisanal level are of great social, cultural and economic significance in the region.

Fish processing and trading activities provide employment and income to hundreds of thousands of people, especially women, and are crucial to sustaining livelihoods within fishing communities in the region.

Recognizing this, we, the representatives of fishworker organizations and NGOs from 12 countries of the West African region—Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone,

Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Nigeria—participating in the above workshop, commit to work together to sustain and promote artisanal fish processing and trading activities within the region.

To achieve this we are aware that participatory action is required at the level of fishing communities and professional organizations, at the level of NGOs that work to support fishing communities, as well as at the national, regional and international levels.

We call upon governments as well as sub-regional, regional and multilateral organizations to support fish processing and trading activities in the following ways.

1. Fish trade

a) Facilitate the speedy implementation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) programmes that aim to promote intra-regional trade, especially those that relate to:

- reducing and simplifying complex customs and trade formalities;
- eliminating taxes imposed on artisanally processed fish products traded within the region;
- minimizing difficulties in trade arising from the use of different currencies within the region and working towards a common currency;

Publicize these measures through the media, through notices put up at checkpoints and at government offices;

b) Reduce the number of customs and police checkpoints and stop the harassment of women traders;

c) Improve transport facilities within the region by: constructing proper roads connecting fishing and fish processing centres to important markets in the region; improving and renovating existing rail routes and building new rail routes; facilitating the availability of cargo vessels for transporting processed fish within the region, both along sea and river routes;

d) Assist associations of women traders to obtain and operate their own vehicles for fish transport;

e) Create and support banks providing micro-credit, and make credit available at low rates of interest to women processors and traders;

f) Facilitate the dissemination of information on

markets, prices, and trade regulations through local radio and other mass media, and improve telecommunication infrastructure in the region;

g) Use market taxes to improve facilities within markets, to provide shelter and access to vending space, to improve sanitation and water supply, and to create storage space for fish products;

h) Create central markets for processed fish within each country.

2. Fish processing

a) Recognize the right of processors from fishing communities to processing sites on beaches through appropriate arrangements such as land titles, to prevent their displacement through activities like tourism;

b) Ensure amenities like storage facilities, water, sanitation and power supply at processing sites, as well as childcare facilities;

c) Provide training in improved methods of fish processing, packaging and storage, to ensure better product quality;

d) Promote appropriate technology for greater fuel efficiency, in ways that reduce the health hazards faced by women processors;

e) Facilitate access to land to be managed by women processors as woodlots for fuel supplies;

f) Facilitate availability of credit at low rates of interest to women processors.

3. Access to fish supplies

a) Given that artisanal fish processing activities in the region are centrally dependent on artisanal capture fisheries and a sustainable resource base, to protect the interests of the artisanal capture sector and improve the fish resource base in the following ways:

- Implement current fisheries legislation, put in place effective monitoring, control and surveillance measures, restrict destructive trawling activities and regulate the indiscriminate use of monofilament nets, ring seines and beach seines, especially in the inshore zone;

- Reduce the number of foreign vessels operating under fisheries access agreements and other arrangements, especially those targeting pelagic species, and ensure that these vessels observe the

terms and conditions of the agreement, and do not engage in piracy and other illegal practices;

- Use mass media to develop awareness among fishing communities about fisheries management measures, and to facilitate training and exchange programmes on these issues.

b) Ensure adequate and appropriate infrastructure at landing sites, including insulated boxes, refrigeration and storage facilities, to reduce wastage and post-harvest losses.

We recognize the need for local and regional level organization, and commit to work together on these issues. We call upon governments, sub-regional, regional and multilateral organizations as well as NGOs to support us in this process.

Africa/ Senegal

Fish Fair

Several possibilities for networking and trade were explored at the West African Fair for Artisanally Processed Fish, held in Senegal on 2 and 3 June 2001.

At the two-day fair that followed the workshop, delegations from the 13 participant countries had the opportunity to display the processed fish products they had brought with them. This was the first time that any of them had participated in a fair of this kind. While some of the stalls displayed only a few of the fish products from the country, the others were decorated with great creativity. The Mauritanian delegation, for example, had worked hard to create a 'Mauritanian' look to their stall, with rugs and tents from their country. A wide range of hygienically-prepared processed fish products were beautifully displayed and there was, as well, a photo exhibition on Mauritanian artisanal fisheries.

Another interesting stall was that of the Beninese, displaying not only fish products, but many other edible and non-edible items from their country, for sale. The enterprising delegation made delicious Beninese food on both days of the fair, attracting a fair number of 'customers'. Stalls were put up also by the FAO Regional Office for Africa, SFLP, West African Association for the Development of Regional Fisheries (WADAF) and Institut de Technologie Alimentaire (ITA), Senegal.

Many of the delegations had discussions among themselves to explore possibilities of trade linkages. Could associations of women processors in Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia process fish in ways liked by consumers in Ghana, Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast? How could transport be organized? Which was the best season visits could be made to discuss possibilities? Could processed fish be bartered for palm oil? It was possible to stumble upon several such discussions taking place at the fair.



A woman processor from Guinea Conakry, for example, was heard assuring a processor from Ivory Coast of full support—a place to stay, an oven to smoke fish etc.—if she came to her village in Guinea Conakry to take back processed fish. There were also trade inquiries from outsiders at the fair. The delegation from Guinea Bissau, for example, reported a possible order for one tonne of salted/ smoked barracuda. Much of what took place in terms of such deals may, however, remain shrouded in secrecy.

Africa/ Senegal

The tireless one

A poem prepared for the West African Fair for Artisanally Processed Fish

By Ibrahima Lakil Diakite, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Guinea Conakry

You are the tireless one
Who feeds our people and doesn't count the cost
You are the woman
Who comes home late in the joy-filled evenings;

Listen, woman of the landing site
 Listen, you crafter of our hopes
 Woman from the muddy ground
 Struggling in the bad weather
 Offer me a basket filled with *bonga*¹
 Give me those pelagic fish
 that give sweat flavours
 to the peanut sauce
 and to the palm oil.

Amazon from the jetties
 Your breast is filled with hope
 Like a sailing-boat at sea
 Woman who comes home late in the evening
 and watches all night
 over the smoking grills
 Woman smoker with fiery hair
 Woman of the *poto-potos*²
 You carry within you
 Lakes with the names of Princesses and Queens
 Your body exudes the sweet smell
 Of the fish smoked by your sweat
 Woman smoker,
 I'll write your name in red-letters, make you a knot
 of joy.

Woman,
 How many mouths have you fed
 With the milk from your breasts
 And with the beads of sweat from your brow?
 What joy for the town
 and village folk of this beautiful country.
 What joy for the fishermen
 And for the consumers!

Listen,
*Piroguier*³ hoping for a better tomorrow,
 Do you know how fond this great people are
 Of the *konkoé*⁴ from the improved *banda*⁵?
 Pray for the woman smoker
 Who labours on the jetties
 Watching the horizon
 in search of the fishermen's arrival
 Listen to the *flouf flouf* of the pelagics
 Joy is dawning
 On the ocean of hope.

Listen
 Listen, *piroguier*
 The smoke reddened grills
 The *banda* engulfed in smoke
 is the precious creation
 Of this woman, the author of our life

whose body exhales
 All the perfumes of the earth.

¹ Bonga shad (*Ethmalosa*)

² Coastal marshes

³ Canoe-man

⁴ Sea catfish (*Arius*)

⁵ Oven for smoking fish

Latin America/ Chile

Women Weaving Networks

Women fishworkers in Chile meet to discuss issues of common concern

By Jéssica Alfaro Alvarez, Co-ordinator of the CONAPACH Project on 'Women Weaving Networks'

The First Meeting of Women in Artisanal Fisheries: Northern Zone was held in Antofagasta, Northern Chile from 27 to 29 June 2001. Thirty seven participants from 14 women's groups belonging to all three zones of Chile—northern, central and southern—engaged in fishing, aquaculture, baiting hooks, processing and marketing fish, participated in this meeting. Nine of these groups were from the northern region. The event was organized by women members of the *Sindicato de Buzos Mariscadores* (Syndicate of Shellfish Divers) of the *caleta* Constitución–Isla Santa Maria, a part of the National Network of Women in Artisanal Fisheries of the National Confederation of Artisanal Fishers of Chile (CONAPACH).

Various public service organizations of Region II as well as officials from the central level participated in this meeting. This included officials from Sernapesca, Dirección de Obras Portuarias, (Port Works Management) Sercotec, Sernam and the UECPS (Unidad Coordinadora del Ministerio de Obras Públicas or the Co-ordination Unit of the Ministry of Public Works). They expressed their support towards the ideas put forth at the meeting.

This meeting was part of the project "Women weaving networks for the sustainable future of our *caletas*", being executed by CONAPACH with financial support from the *Fondo de las Américas*. Earlier this year, in January, women from the artisanal fisheries sector in Chile had organized themselves into a National

Network and selected co-ordinators for each zone. The members of the Network have since been meeting regularly, every two months, to discuss strategies to strengthen, broaden and consolidate this movement. They have worked out zonal plans to identify new women's groups, deepen ties with those already in contact with the network, disseminate information on work being carried out by the network as well as identify sources to fund the initiatives of the movement and grassroots groups.

This meeting in Antofagasta was a product of these zonal-level projects. It was the largest event that the National Network of Women has ever organized and marks a milestone for the co-ordinators of the northern zone and for the CONAPACH Women's Network. It was an important step towards valorizing the role of women in artisanal fisheries.

Women discussed their expectations from the workshop and how these could be integrated into the work plan of the network. They elaborated on the concept of 'sustainable development' and formulated guidelines for 'community, economic and environmental development'.

They gave practical suggestions for achieving concrete results in their respective *caletas*. They suggested creating permanent channels of communication between their organizations. There was a strong sentiment in favour of holding more such meetings in future as a concrete step towards increasing communication between groups, leading to a strengthening of the movement. They stressed the significance of the Network of Women, the need to strengthen it and to elect more representatives to ensure better co-ordination.

Gender issues were approached within the context of legitimizing *caletas*, and recognizing that these comprised groups of both men and women. The need for women to develop their self-potential and power was stressed, and to ensure this it was proposed that new opportunities for sharing and analyzing experiences and learning from the experiences of others, be created.

The women also drew the attention of authorities to illegal fishing by the industrial sector in the 5-mile zone reserved for artisanal fishing. It was evident that even if women from the northern zone, in general, are not closely integrated into the activities of *sindicatos*, they are well informed about at least two major issues: the

5-mile zone and the fisheries law. Their interest in protecting resources, in respecting the closed seasons and in getting better prices, demonstrated their appreciation of problems arising from overexploitation of marine resources.



Women also identified possible areas of intervention. For economic development they highlighted the need to support productive projects to improve quality of life, based on a responsible use of resources through controlling, for example, the size of fish caught. They also stressed the need for feasibility studies and training programmes on organizational aspects. Possible projects proposed related to cookery, tourism, processing and marketing shellfish, and making diving suits, among others.

In the field of community development they highlighted the need for better organization into groups and for establishing alliances with other community-based as well as environmental organizations. They also proposed efforts towards influencing public opinion about problems faced by their communities, through the the media.

Women stressed the need to address various problems they faced in their *caletas*. These included: poor accessibility of *caletas*; lack of transport, affecting especially school-going children who need to travel to their schools; lack of proper sewage and drinking water facilities; and poor access to health services. They stressed the necessity for providing decompression chambers for divers exposed to pressure-related problems and a high accident rate. They also stressed that in *caletas* where there are no medical facilities,

men and women need to be trained to provide first-aid to victims of accidents. The women expressed concern about the significant number of children who drop out of school or repeat academic years and highlighted the need for nursery and other schools.

Women proposed two broad areas for environmental action. First, they stressed the importance of promoting citizen's participation through the efforts of neighbourhood groups, schools and unions, and with the involvement of CONAPACH, Servicio País, and the authorities, towards finding solutions to their problems. They emphasized the need to keep the community informed through the use of various media.

They also proposed other alternatives for environmental improvement including recycling of organic and inorganic waste, developing green belts, controlling pollution (waste water, heavy metals, dregs etc), effectively enforcing the closed season and protecting resources (size and quality), and promoting environmental awareness.

In conclusion, this meeting of women in artisanal fisheries in the northern zone was perhaps a landmark in developing new perspectives in the artisanal fisheries sector, in general, and in efforts towards increasing the visibility of women, in particular. Through our efforts all over the country it has been possible to observe the situation of women in the sector. Although it is a fact that women are the most marginalized in terms of direct participation in artisanal fisheries in the northern zone, what is noteworthy is that they do understand the role they play in the development of the sector. This assures us that it is possible for development initiatives for women in the sector to succeed.

We think it important to support women through strengthening their incipient organizations and supporting their plans for socio-economic development. This must be done based on an integrated plan. In the past, although the intention has always been there on the part of the authorities to elevate the role of the female 'actor', the efforts have, for the most part, been disjointed and based on isolated activities rather than on an integrated approach to development. The women from the northern sector of the country require support in their activities, along with their partners—husbands, fathers, companions etc.

It is clear to women that the issue of their integration into the sector is generally glossed over by the predominantly male organizations. We believe that we

are now at a juncture where there is a strong possibility for success on an issue which is highly complex. During this meeting women suggested several development projects, directed towards *sindicatos* and the various public services of Region II. We are inviting these bodies to form a working platform that could help us in defining strategies and concrete opportunities for the integration of women.

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Latin America/ Peru

We don't wish to compete ...

Based on a report prepared by Ms. Cecilia Vidal Baldera and Mr. Jose Cachique Diaz. Cecilia Vidal is National Secretary of Women, FIUPAP and President of the Women's Committee of caleta Huarmey-Ancash and Jose Cachique Diaz is Executive Director of the FIUPAP newsletter El Mundo de la Pesca Artesanal and the FIUPAP Coordinator for Amazonía.

In Peru there has been gradual but firm progress—women are now included in the social organizations of artisanal fishworkers. At the Vth Congress of the Federación de Integración y Unificación de los Pescadores Artesanales del Perú (FIUPAP) held at Talara in May this year, Cecilia Vidal Baldara was elected as National Secretary of Women. The re-elected General Secretary of FIUPAP, Claudio Nizama Silva, expressed his conviction that women must actively participate in all activities, be they related to fishing, trade or organization.

At this meeting, Cecilia Vidal stressed that women in *caletas* tend to be perceived as passive objects rather than as social actors in development programmes initiated by the Government. Their participation in local and regional spaces is minimal, if not completely lacking.

She highlighted the following aspects:

- Artisanal fisheries are culturally diverse and the relationship between men and women also show the same diversity. Therefore, it is not possible to make generalizations. Gender is a cultural construct and must be approached with the specific characteristics of artisanal fishing communities in mind.
- It is important to recognize that women have had to fight harder to make their interests more visible, socially, politically and economically.



- The family is the nucleus of artisanal fishing communities. It is necessary to recognize that the men have, on occasions, used and abused their power over women. It is necessary to arrive at an analysis that permits a better understanding of gender relations.
- Women have always been a part of artisanal fisheries, but that does not necessarily mean that their role is recognized. They play multiple roles and carry out diverse activities: they collect shellfish, culture species, market the yield, process fish, besides taking care of the children and other household chores.
- Women have participated occasionally in capture activities alongside the men, spurred by economic necessity, a result of depleting fish resources.
- Within the fisheries sector, women also play managerial and decision-making roles and have a presence in public spaces.
- Women's participation in fisheries must be viewed in a wider perspective: not only in terms of their right to work but also in terms of a greater social recognition of their participation in domestic work, and their right to health and education services. It is particularly important to address the issue of children's education, especially during times of economic crisis.
- When we talk of changing certain aspects to improve gender relations, we are actually talking of a new type of society where respect is a very important value.

In conclusion, Cecilia stressed that:

We don't wish to compete with males; what we do want is to work alongside our men, supporting

them, for the welfare of our families, our communities and our country as a whole.

We, as women, have the difficult task ahead of organizing ourselves. We believe that we must take on shared and complementary responsibilities. Liberty for us lies in the strong familial bond that leads us to seek the best for our children and to share our daily lives with happiness and understanding.

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North America/ Canada

And so we Meet Again

A report of a meeting to mark the first anniversary of the Workshop on Gender, Globalization and Fisheries held in May 2000

By Donna Lewis, a shellfisher from Brooklyn, Prince Edward Island, Canada. Donna is an articulate advocate and spokesperson for the rights of artisanal fishers.

May 5 2001 marked the first anniversary of the *Workshop on Gender, Globalization and Fisheries* held in Newfoundland, Canada in which women from 18 countries had participated. To sustain the momentum of the partnerships that had been formed within Canada, the Women's Committee of Fish, Food and Allied Workers (FFAW/ CAW) Union, with support from the Status of Women Canada, hosted a meeting to "review issues raised last May, introduce new issues and concerns and prioritize issues that participants wish to work on". Twenty women from Atlantic Canada—fish harvesters, plant workers and researchers—participated.

Barbara Neis of the Department of Sociology, Memorial University, who had hosted the May 2000 workshop, updated delegates on the status of the book and the documentary film on the workshop—part of the planned outcomes of the gender and globalization project. She also spoke of upcoming projects and priorities for Memorial University and its partners.

This was followed by regional updates by representatives from Prince Edward Island (PEI), Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Representatives from Newfoundland spoke of crab or shellfish asthma—on the rise in plants across the

Atlantic Region. This year 750-900 workers were tested for links between their respiratory problems and their work with shellfish. Other occupational health problems include swelling, hives and breathing difficulties.

Nova Scotia reported progress in establishing Family Resource Centres. These provide support ranging from literacy to educational opportunities for setting-up home-based businesses for women displaced from the fishery. 'Women Outside the System' are a priority—women who do not receive employment insurance or social assistance and are unable to secure funding for upgrading their skills and education. This project is attempting to tie up with local community colleges to make it possible for women to take courses that will facilitate their re-entry into the workforce. A Community University Research Alliance has been established with representatives from coastal communities and universities, to develop a 'tool box' for coastal communities to effect policy change. The Nova Scotia Women's FishNet has submitted a provocative and inspiring Discussion Document to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in response to the request for inputs to the document on Management of Fisheries on Canada's Atlantic Coast.

Representatives from New Brunswick reported a continuing preoccupation with the issue of pay equity. Workshops have been held across the province with fish plant workers to discuss the issue, gain support and lobby for policy and legislative changes. Participation in the workshops has, however, been poor.

Prince Edward Island (PEI) reported on the events on World Fisheries Day. This included news of the Save Our Seas (SOS) and Shores Coalition and their concerns with the proposed development of the petroleum industry.

In PEI the plight of oyster cleaners continues to be a concern and priority. Previously allowed to fish with a Can\$50 permit, oyster cleaners now face a ban and can fish only if they purchase a license costing more than Can\$10,000. An oyster cleaner who had purposely defied the ban last fall, was arrested on the first day of the fishing season. She is still awaiting trial.

Other areas of concern are the methods of investigation and continuing disqualification of individuals from the Employment Insurance Program by Human Resource Development Canada and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. Stories from across the Atlantic

Region reflect the ongoing physical, mental and financial stress on families of low-income fishers and helpers. In Newfoundland there are ongoing cases in court over TAGS (income support programme for those displaced from the cod fishery after its collapse) qualification.



In the workshop last year ethics and industry-driven, practical research was a hot topic. I am pleased to report from PEI that at our Annual Aquaculture Alliance meeting in April 2001, we passed a resolution that we, as Alliance members, distribute and promote the use of Industry Research and Development Priority lists and take an active lead on developing project proposals and partnerships. This view is being accepted and adopted at the provincial level but still meets with resistance at the Federal level.

None of us could have summarized our feelings of frustration over the attitudes of bureaucrats, policy-makers and governments, including Ministers—the lack of consideration and exclusion of coastal communities, small family fishing operations and plant workers who rely on the industry and provide financial support to their communities.

Recognizing the importance of communication to the sustainability of our coastal communities, there was much discussion around a website that was created for this project and its potential value for communities currently connected to the internet. It was agreed that it is an excellent resource and a good place to continue to post regional/ international updates. The possibility of creating a 'chat room' or 'bulletin board' was discussed.

The consensus from this meeting was that communities

are still dying and that the state of family mental health continues to be a cause for concern. The importance of developing social work skills remains paramount. Participants (they continue to amaze me with the depth and breadth of topics discussed—no fluff or flowers here), remain committed to developing a strategy to stay connected, as there is an invaluable wealth of information to be shared, enabling even the smallest of communities to improve their quality of life.

The energy and enthusiasm witnessed last May has not diminished. I am proud to be a part of this project and to witness the inspiration it provides to the smaller, more remote communities, mine included, in our country. The next meeting, which will include a larger number of participants, hopes to facilitate a public forum on community-based management of fisheries. Scheduled for November 2001, it will be hosted by representatives from Nova Scotia.

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North America/ Canada

Are Women Martians?

Excerpted from an article by Arielia Pahike working with the Nova Scotia Women's FishNet. It has been reproduced from Coastal Community News Volume 6, Issue 6, July/ August 2001, a newsletter brought out by the Coastal Community Network, Nova Scotia, Canada

I recently attended a Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) consultation in Moncton—about fisheries management in Atlantic Canada. I was there with Mary DesRoches, representing the Nova Scotia Women's FishNet. Our presentation covered issues in a DFO discussion document that would affect women in coastal communities and women employed in the fishery. After our presentation and many others, a representative of a New Brunswick draggers' association delivered a heated stream of negative comments. He ended with an outburst of anger that was apparently brought on by our presentation: "And then," he sputtered, while a woman's voice in our headphones politely attempted to simultaneously translate his frustration, "And then, there are some people who think that women - women! - should sit at the decision-making table. Well, if this is the case, we might as well invite the Martians to have a seat as

well!"

Later in the discussion, we were talking about the economic and social viability of the fishery and how the term 'stakeholders' should be defined. Mary and I both said that anyone who is directly or indirectly affected by the fishery, or who has a historical attachment to it, should be involved in policy decisions. We added that this would obviously include women, who are key stakeholders in the sustainability of coastal communities and fishing families, and who have always participated in many aspects of the fishery. We were then told by a member of DFO's Policy Review Committee that he was now aware of our opinions, but that DFO was proposing something different in its discussion document.

At that point, I seriously considered leaving the room to take a quick drive down to the local costume shop for a 'Martian' outfit. I would then return to ask the same question, as a Martian representing Martians, and suggesting that Martians are also stakeholders and so should have a say in fisheries policy. After all, I'd tell the meeting, Martians could have a lot to gain if the fishery continues to be privatized and professionalized. In future, when inter-planetary travel becomes easier, Martians might well want to buy some boats and quota, enroll in some training and safety workshops, and head out to make some money. We might even give the Martians some seed money, if they promised to buy a lot of quota and hire a small percentage of local earthlings for a few months to show them the ropes.

Needless to say, I didn't leave and then return as a Martian. But I do think that within this consultation framework, a Martian might quite rightly have been given the same response Mary and I received: "Thank you for your opinion, but we are not proposing that Martians have a significant role at this point in time." Which leads me to the question: Are women and Martians, in fact, similar? I know that I don't think we are, and I know that most women, and many friends and families of women, don't think we are, but what about the general opinion, the status quo, the majority, the "average Joe"? What about the average politician or bureaucrat?

This question only becomes really interesting when we consider what the answer's consequences are. I suppose that if women are like Martians, we might not need to be treated as humans or be given similar opportunities as men. This could save the government

a lot of money. We, as a nation, could certainly save on Employment Insurance, training, salaries, health care, and education. We could simply ensure that every woman/Martian got paired of with a husband, and as long as he was well looked after, she/it wouldn't starve, and might even have a nice life. On the other hand, if women are humans, we might want jobs and we would probably want to make some decisions about what's best for our families, our communities, and ourselves. We might even get together and brainstorm about how we could influence policies that were unfair to women and fishing families, or that were detrimental to community sustainability. Now and then, you might even see a woman presenting some of these ideas at a policy consultation.

But before I get too far ahead of myself, getting into details about how women in coastal communities are affected by fisheries policies, Employment Insurance regulations, or the accessibility of training programmes, and before I outline any of the ideas or solutions that women have proposed to build community sustainability and social and economic development, we need to ensure that the framework exists for women to be acknowledged as full and equal participants and decision makers in our communities. What is frightfully depressing is that we don't yet seem to be in agreement about the basic fact that needs to be understood before we can go any further—the fact that women are not like Martians.

Perhaps, if we can all agree to this, we'll start to see the need for some changes. In Nova Scotia's coastal communities today, many women are not given the same opportunities as men. Women's work, both paid and unpaid, must be recognized as contributing to the economic stability of our communities. Women's voices must be considered as relevant and important when we are exploring solutions to the many challenges our communities face.

Because it was at a DFO policy consultation that I was forced to question my identity as a human being, I will end by throwing the resulting questions back out for the consideration of our government representatives: Who are you representing? Are you representing equally both men's and women's concerns? What is guiding you to represent an industry as a closed circuit

of "professionals" and corporations rather than as environments, communities, and the people really affected by the fisheries? Also, who are you willing to discuss these questions with, and how will you consider all the different points of view seriously? I hope we can answer some of these most basic questions soon, so we can start working together to discover solutions to some of the more interesting and meaningful challenges facing our coastal communities.

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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.