

Yemaya

No. 8

ICSF's NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

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From the Editor

Dear Friends,

Greetings for the New Year! We hope 2002 brings peace and hope.

This issue of *Yemaya* has a special focus on the European Union as women of fishing communities in countries of the EU tune into the review process of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and its implications for them and for their communities.

We carry the interventions made by women representatives of fishing communities at the Fisheries Committee Meeting of the European Parliament in November 2001.

They note that while the Green Paper on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy stresses that "*the substantial role played by women in the fisheries sector should be recognized and enhanced*", no concrete proposals towards this have been made. What is needed is action, not words, they emphasize.

They point to the disturbing absence of women from decision-making processes and in the consultation process on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). They also express concern about declining support to artisanal fisheries that is threatening the very existence men, women and children of coastal

communities, and of their way of life. In this context they stress the need for renewing the artisanal fleet to sustain the sector in the longer term.

From the Netherlands we carry an analysis of the progress that has been made by the VinVis (women in fisheries) network in the one year it has been in existence.

We also carry the report of a visit by a Brazilian researcher working on women in fisheries issues to CONAPACH, the fishworker organization in Chile. Networking of this kind surely contributes to building links between women in the fisheries sector in Latin America and elsewhere. The article from India reports on a Public Hearing organized recently in Kerala, where women fish processors spoke of the impact of globalization processes on their lives.

It seems to be video time and we carry information about two recent video films that focus on women in the fisheries: *Smoke in the Water: Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa*, and *Rising from the Ashes: A video film on Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries*.

The next issue of *Yemaya* will be brought out in March 2002 and we request you to send us your write-ups and views by 15 February 2002.



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Europe/ Belgium

Information is Strength

Women from fishing communities and women supporters from Spain, France, Holland and Norway met in Brussels from 19 to 22 November 2001 to exchange experiences and to discuss the review process of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

By Brian O’Riordan, Secretary of ICSF’s Brussels office

Without women in fisheries, there will be no fish in the sea. The strap line of ICSF’s Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme underscores the importance of the role and place of women—as wives, workers, business partners, in decision making, in fishworkers’ organizations, as spokespersons etc. And unless their role and place in fisheries are recognized, and the space for women in fishworker organizations is respected, the prospects for coastal fishing communities and the resources on which they depend are bleak.



In the European context, fishing communities as such are fast disappearing. The introduction to the European Commission’s Green Paper on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (the Green Paper) paints a dismal picture. “As far as conservation is concerned, many stocks at present are outside safe biological limits... If current trends continue, many stocks will collapse”. It goes on to note that: “The fisheries sector is characterised by economic fragility... this is reflected in poor profitability and steadily declining employment. In the future the Community fisheries

sector will have to be significantly smaller than it is today, if it is to survive.”

Alarming, in all the 41 pages of the Green Paper, there is only one reference to women. In a short section entitled “Addressing other social issues” (Section 5.7.1., page 35), the Green Paper notes that: “Apart from providing sustainable employment in the fisheries sector and assisting in the conversion of fish workers to other sectors, where necessary, the Community still needs to address other social issues, such as improving the physical safety of fishing vessels and regulating working conditions in the sector including working hours, in order to minimise safety risks.... **The Community is also concerned to ensure that the substantial role played by women in the fisheries sector is recognized and enhanced.** But what is the role played by women in Europe? The European Commission (the Commission) will publish a study report early in 2002 that should throw some more light, and include some proposals on the future role for women in European fisheries. Meanwhile the annex to the Green Paper (Volume II, in the Report on the Economic and Social Situation of the Coastal Regions), notes that: “An estimated 84,000 jobs... were held by women... in 1998. Even in fishing... women hold about 6% of the jobs. Female participation is recorded in harvesting of bivalve molluscs in Spain and Portugal, in an on-shore capacity in fishing enterprises in Belgium and Spain, and in gear repair and preparation in Greece. Women also hold the majority of jobs in fish processing... and also fill an estimated 30% of the 47,000 jobs in aquaculture...”

Despite this recognized importance, women have been noticeably absent from the decision-making processes and in the consultation process on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). In preparing for the CFP review, the previous Fisheries Commissioner, Emma Bonino, had announced that: “...it is only through an open dialogue involving every group concerned with fisheries in the community - from the industry itself to environmental organizations, consumers, scientists and public authorities - that we can contribute to building the common fisheries policy of tomorrow”. And that: “...it would be wrong for the review of the common fisheries policy in 2002 to be limited to a few aspects of the Community rules in force. Instead... the aim should be to enable fishing to remain... an activity that is in keeping with economic requirements and the environment

and provide employment and development opportunities for the people and regions that are dependent on it.”

However, the consultation process has made it clear that the European institutions see fisheries primarily as a technical subject, and as an industrial sector. Other considerations (artisanal fisheries, participation, social issues, quality of employment, etc) have been afforded much less importance, ignored, or rejected as irrelevant. Thus, in a special meeting of the Commission's Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) on fishery management issues, when the Development NGO spokesperson, Mme Danièle le Sauce, the wife of a fisherman, raised the issue of women's participation, and concerns about employment and future prospects, she was told to keep to the point!

Against this background, ICSF invited women from fishing communities and women supporters from Spain, France, Holland and Norway to come to Brussels, to meet and exchange experiences, to discuss the review process of the CFP and to meet with the EU institutions. The idea of holding such a meeting had been mooted for some time as a way of revitalising networks and relationships between women in fisheries in Europe.

There was also a particular advantage to holding such a meeting at this time: the meeting was organized to coincide with a hearing in the European Parliament on the Review of the Common Fisheries Policy, where the Parliamentary Fisheries Committee would present their response to the Green Paper. There was also to be a meeting of an ACFA Working Group, where the development NGOs had requested an additional agenda item on women in fisheries, ahead of the publication of the Commission report on this subject. Finally, the 'Green Paper Process' on the review of the CFP would be finalised at the end of 2001. There was therefore an opportunity to make a final contribution to the process through the parliamentary hearing and the ACFA meeting.

Women participants were invited in their personal capacity, but also as members of fishing communities, fishworker organizations and as women directly involved in their fisheries sectors. Specifically, the objectives of the 4-day meeting (19 to 22 November) were:

- To have a reflection between women fishworkers and women supporters on the role of women in EU fisheries, and the space and possibilities

available/desirable for women fishworkers and women from small-scale fisheries in the new Common Fisheries Policy (post 2002);

- To increase understanding about European decision-making and consultative processes, with particular regard to the review and reformulation of the CFP;
- To make an input to the European Parliament and Commission decision-making processes on future policies concerning women in fisheries.

A particular concern highlighted by the women was the lack of information available at the grass roots on the decision-making processes, particularly in a form that was accessible to them. They also commented that it was often the women who were more literate than the men in fishing communities, and thus women played an important role in reading and explaining official reports, briefings and other information to their husbands and partners. All complained that such information as was available to them on the review of the CFP was not in a very user-friendly form.

The main conclusions of the meeting were that there was a need for more regular exchanges, particularly on how women could get better organized. They also highlighted the need for:

- Greater participation of women from fishing communities in the decision making processes;
- A more focussed discussion on how they could influence policy making in their favour;
- More formal arrangements that would enable women to network and exchange on a more regular and sustainable basis.

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Europe/ Belgium

Empowering Fishing Communities

'Issues of Concern for Women in European Fisheries', an intervention at the Fisheries Committee Meeting in the European Parliament on 20 November 2001, made on behalf of women participants from several European countries by Danièle le Sauce, Femmes du Littoral de Bretagne, France.

At the end of 2002 the European Union (EU) will have a new 'Common Fisheries Policy' (CFP). In the Green Paper on the future of the common fisheries policy

that prepares for this reform, the European Commission has noted that: “*the substantial role played by women in the fisheries sector should be recognized and enhanced*”. But what does this mean in a context where European fisheries are in crisis and where communities, men and women, are having to face up to ever more serious difficulties in their daily lives?

A few women from fishing communities in several European countries, including France, Spain, Norway, and Holland, invited to Brussels by the ICSF—the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, yesterday (19 November) had a chance to exchange their points of view. In all cases, the role and place of women is indisputable. They reflected on the space provided and the possibilities existing for them in the CFP. Some of them—the French and the Dutch—have already responded to the Green Paper process by sending their contributions to the European Community.

Today, in this parliamentary hearing, they would like the following issues to be taken up:

1. The role and work of women in communities (preparation of fishing gears, shellfish harvesting, trade, business management, relations with the banks and suppliers etc) should be recognized;
2. Access to professionally recognized training (labour law, trade union law, the environment, management of resources and businesses, languages etc) should be provided;
3. Women should be integrated into official and professional organizations;
4. Exchanges and meeting between women from different countries in Europe should be facilitated;
5. The need for renewing the artisanal fleet to sustain the sector in the longer term should be promoted;
6. The means necessary for assuring optimal on-board safety standards should be allocated;
7. Resources should be managed through promoting scientifically and professionally tested selective fishing gears. Every initiative undertaken in this area should be recognized, and implementing and authorizing their use should be facilitated;
8. A more effective European system for fishing vessel control and surveillance should be established. A programme of harmonization should be launched simultaneously in all countries, leaving no space for different interpretations. Clear and very precise texts should be produced;
9. The fishing way of life should be valorized by investing all the necessary means and by providing part time or full time training;
10. An effective partnership should be established

between scientists and fishermen that takes full account of the experiences and initiatives of professionals;

11. All the means necessary should be invested so that never again do we have to suffer pollution from a shipwreck, such as the Erika. Fishermen are more the victims rather than the cause. They suffer as well from land-based pollution: nitrates, industrial and urban pollution—all highly damaging;
12. Fishermen should be involved in environmental projects and their implementation, as the primary guardians and guarantors of the coast.

In conclusion, current fishery management systems and associated practices do not place any importance on the particular problems or interests of women. But the time is now ripe to reconsider the role of coastal communities and the people (men and women) who depend on each other and who mutually support each other to defend their interests. A community-based approach should be adopted that recognizes the importance of each and every actor (man and woman) in order to empower communities in the negotiations with political and economic powers.

The place of women and their modes of organizing are highly diverse country-wise, but recognizing their role will contribute to the establishment of fisheries policies that are less aggressive and more sustainable. The sea should be reserved for artisanal fishing activities (taking into account their rightful place) to enable coastal and maritime populations to live there.

The European women, representing their communities, who have prepared this intervention, would like to express their solidarity with communities in other countries around the world who also suffer from the impact of government policies that favour the interests of industrial fisheries.

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Europe/ Belgium

Needed: A sea change

Intervention of the Spanish delegation, comprising Ms. Carmen Pechero Cacho of Asociación Galega de Mariscadoras (AGAMAR) and Ms. Isabel Otero of Estela do Mar, in the European Parliament, Fisheries Committee Meeting, 20 November 2001

AGAMAR is an organization representing the mariscadoras (women shellfish harvesters) of the

Galician region in North Spain. Till last year there were 12,000 members, 90 per cent of whom were women who gathered shellfish on foot. However, nearly 50 per cent left the sector due to changes in the social security system. Contributions have been substantially increased, and most people cannot afford to pay. Whilst the work is full time, there are only 6-9 months of the year where an income is possible. The other months involve such unpaid work as cleaning the shellfish, maintaining the equipment, cleaning the beaches etc. This means that earnings over the year are low, but the work itself constitutes a full time job. Weather conditions in the last 12 months, combined with industrial and urban pollution, have also had a devastating impact on the fishery for shellfish. This also contributed to women leaving the sector.

Estela do Mar is an organization of fishermen's wives who work to defend the rights of fishermen to safe and fair working conditions, and to reconcile life at sea with life at home. Literally Estela do Mar means "Wake of the Sea", i.e. the trace that the vessel leaves behind it. Whilst the right of Spanish fishermen to work is recognized, their rights to a fair salary and basic standards of safety and working conditions are not. In recent years despite huge investments of EU monies for modernizing the Spanish fishing fleet, with many improvements in fishing capacity, navigational capability and quality of on-board storage, living and working conditions of the crew are as bad as they were 20 years ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning!

To begin with, perhaps we should explain why we, two women, from *Estela do Mar* and from the Galician Association of Women Shellfish Harvesters (AGAMAR), are here. We are sorry to say that our presence has nothing to do with any information sent to us by the Committee to inform us that this meeting was taking place.

We are women directly involved with work at sea, in shellfish harvesting and in defending the rights and quality of the living and working conditions of fishermen. We belong to women's organizations that are concerned with fisheries. But neither of us received any notification at all through the formal channels that, here in Brussels, discussions would be taking place on fisheries and its many associated problems, amongst which are several that concern us in our lives as shellfish harvesters and as wives of fishermen.

Somehow the information flows emanating from the Committee have been hijacked, so that news about

issues that affect us, does not reach us. Luckily for us, an NGO, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), informed us, and it is thanks to them that we are here.

So the first point that the Committee needs to take on board is that the information it produces does not reach us. Immediate action must, therefore, be taken to remedy this situation as it affects our rights to receive information on issues that directly affect our lives as women from coastal communities.



But we don't want to waste time with complaints, but rather to get on to the issues that we want to communicate to the Committee. We would like to tell you, first of all, about our perceptions and about the afflictions we suffer as women shellfish harvesters.

The situation facing women shellfish harvesters in Galicia, Spain is becoming increasingly critical. In the last year and a half, 6000 women shellfish harvesters have had to give up their work. The withdrawal of the administration, the costs of social security, the pollution of the *rias* (estuaries), and bad weather have been a disaster for the sector.

It is a sector where 90 per cent of us are women who gather shellfish on foot. We lack information, adequate training, guidance and the specific support required to sustain a professional sector. We lack information, and of course the possibility to participate in decision-making processes that directly affect our lives as fishworkers.

A social focus is lacking and a sea change is needed: information must be channelled directly to fishworkers, and frameworks for participation and aid must be

established that favour us directly. Mechanisms must be established *in situ* to verify that genuine communication is taking place.

As wives of fishermen and fishworkers, we also demand that the Committee adopts a social focus. Labour laws and fishworkers rights must be respected and complied with, and substantial improvements made in their on-board living conditions. We need a social focus to the policy objectives of the Committee, and control mechanisms in place to ensure that these policies are really implemented.

European aid should be made conditional on respecting the working rights of fishworkers, with monies being used to improve their on-board living conditions. Aid monies should not be used up on technical and commercial aspects, putting aside workers' rights and their on-board living conditions for another day.

In brief, mechanisms for informing, communicating and participating must be improved. An environmental focus is needed to defend the sustainability and healthy quality of our resources. And a paradigm shift is required to favour the rights and interests of those (men and women) who work at sea.

Many thanks.

Europe / Netherlands

Our First Steps

The Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands has now been in existence for one year. How did it go? What were the highlights? And what were the limitations?

By Cornelia Quist, a member of ICSF and contact person for VinVis (the Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands)

Last June the women in fisheries network of the Netherlands completed one year. It has not been an easy process, but we feel that the network has overcome its main 'teething troubles'. So we have given our network a name. She is called VinVis, which is an abbreviation of *Vrouwen in de Visserij* (Women in Fisheries), but also the name of a large beautiful whale, which holds a symbolic meaning.

How did we begin?

In April 2000 some of us met during a symposium about the needs and aspirations of wives of fishermen in the Netherlands. Here the results of a survey by the

research department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were presented to the fishing community and the government. It was revealed that a large majority of fishermen's wives are involved in fisheries activities themselves and that the fisheries and the family enterprise gave a very important meaning to their lives. Nevertheless their role was still an informal one and women were not participating in formal fishery organizations. It was felt that this was the reason for the preservation of traditional gender relations in the fisheries and the continuing weak social position of the wives of Dutch fishermen.

Despite the good attendance at the symposium and the lively discussions (*see Yemaya no 4, August 2000*), there was no follow-up organized, either by the government or by fisher organizations. So it was the women from fishing communities that met during the symposium and wanted to continue the discussion, who took the initiative to meet again. On 22 June we had our first meeting at the fish auction of Urk, where it was decided to form the Network. After this meeting many more followed. Initially these were held at the fish auctions of the various fishery regions of our country. Of late, we have held our meetings at the offices of our two national fisher(men) organizations.

Who is in our network?

In our network there are wives of boat owners and crew from all important fishery regions of our country, representing all the different sectors fishing in Dutch waters. These women are involved in a range of activities in the family fishing enterprise, such as administration, responding to the concerns of the crew, contacting and dealing with banks, insurance companies, auctions, etc., cleaning, supplying groceries, and more. Some of the women are co-owners of the enterprise, together with their husbands. Some women have jobs, mostly in shops or as house help. The network is open for all women who feel concerned about the future of the fisheries and the fishing community and want to be actively involved in influencing present developments in a process of positive change.

What do we do?

We discuss and study a large variety of fisheries issues, such as concerns of the crew, fisheries management, fish trade, fisher organizations, and fisheries policies and politics. We exchange information and experiences about the different fisheries sectors. We also discuss the role and position of women in fisheries. We

participate (and speak at) public meetings and maintain contacts with organizations that influence policy-making and with the media. We also aspire to build contacts with fishermen's wives in other European countries.

What have been the highlights?

- We have visited various fish auctions in our country and learned about present developments in Dutch fish trade.
- We have had meetings with each of the two Dutch national fishermen's organizations to discuss with them the objectives of our Network and the support we wish to receive from them.
- During the North Sea Crisis of February/March 2001 we sent letters to our Minister of Fisheries, Members of Parliament and the press about the negative effects of closing large parts of our fishing grounds in the North Sea for our community. We also gave our first public speech during a large fishermen's meeting in Urk (*see Samudra no 28, April 2001*).
- We have participated in several public meetings concerning (the future of) Dutch fisheries, organized by the government or by fisher organizations and voiced the concerns of fishing families. We hold the opinion that in fisheries policy *the focus should be shifted from the fishing boat to the people on the fishing boat*. Our public participation has been well received so far.
- We studied together the Green Paper for the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union. This helped us to have in-depth discussions about present developments in fisheries as well as the role of women in fisheries and to develop our own vision. We sent our response to the EU Fishery Commission and the EU Parliament. We distributed our response to governmental, fisher, environmental and various other organizations concerned with the future of European Fisheries. We also had an exchange with fishermen's wives of other European countries regarding the Green Paper and, in particular, on the prospects in it for the women of the fishing communities.

What have been our limitations so far?

- Although we are from the same country, we face problems as a result of differences in culture, class and age. There are differences in perceptions and attitudes, which sometimes leads to miscommunication. There are also differences in knowledge and experiences about fisheries. In spite of this we have succeeded in staying together and

to be open and respectful of each other. We try to build open and transparent relationships, where friendship is more important than status.

- Generally speaking our fishing communities are still very conservative in their perceptions about the role and status of women. Women, therefore, feel reluctant to join our network. All the women who have joined our network have the support of their husbands and also of their parents and in-laws.
- Although we receive support from both national fisher organizations we still feel that they want to patronize us. Initially our plan was to work closely with the two organizations. However, we now keep some distance because we feel they are not yet open to our concerns and ideas. By holding our meetings in their offices though, we do keep the door open to them.



- As we have decided to function as a network and not form a separate women's organization, we have no funds or institutional means. We also lack organizational experience. We depend on each one's personal capacity to contribute and we sometimes make use of the institutional resources of other organizations. This creates limitations, but also creates the opportunity for network building. It encourages the active participation of each one of us as we cannot depend on an office. Of course we readily make use of modern communication technology, such as the internet, that has become broadly accessible these days.

Those who want to get in touch with us and/or want to receive a copy of our objectives and our reaction to the Green Paper on the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union, please send an e-mail to cornelie.quist@wolmail.nl

Latin America/ Chile

Shared concerns

Notes from a trip to Chile

By Maria Cristina Maneschy, working at the Federal University of Pará, Belem, Brazil, and a member of ICSF

In October 2001 I had the privilege of spending two days in Valparaíso, Chile, with the National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen from Chile (CONAPACH), the fishworker organization of Chile. I was well received by Kim Cooperrider and Jéssica Alfaro, professionals working for the project "Women weaving networks to promote the sustainable future of our communities (*caletas pesqueras*)". Though my visit was very brief, I would like to share some of my impressions as well as the information I collected about this project being undertaken by a national fishermen's union.

Having been engaged with ICSF's Women in Fisheries Programme in Brazil for some years, I sought to learn about the Chilean experience in promoting gender issues in fisheries. I also sought to explore the possibility of establishing regular contacts between Chilean and Brazilian groups and organizations sensitive to such issues. My purpose was also to invite CONAPACH to collaborate in a new participatory newsletter project on women in fisheries initiated by several organizations in north and northeastern Brazil.

CONAPACH congregates about 400 unions and has approximately 40,000 members. In 1998 CONAPACH instituted its Women's Department, which has sought to promote and support women's groups and their economic initiatives in fishing *caletas* around the country. Luisa Pineda, a fisherwoman from the South of the country, is the director of the Women's Department. Luisa had earlier visited Brazil, in June 2000, as a member of the CONAPACH delegation that participated in a meeting organized by ICSF in the state of Ceará on *Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America*.

In November 2000 the women's department began the implementation of the above-mentioned project, being financed by the *Fondo de las Americas* agency. According to Kim and Jéssica, the project's aim is to create a network of women who will act as environmental educators in fishing communities and unions. In fact, for several years Chile has been facing serious problems due to the high pressure on fisheries

resources as well as related environmental and economic problems. This led the Government to institute new policies to manage fisheries resources. The introduction of individual fishing quotas has raised serious controversies within the artisanal sector and between workers on industrial fishing fleets.

In concrete terms, explained Kim, the project seeks to educate women who are "concerned about the future of the small-scale fishing industry and the survival of fishing communities". According to CONAPACH leaders, the integration of women is a natural step, especially given the present context of Chilean fisheries. The participation of women promises to strengthen the organization while boosting its political power.

In addition to local efforts to develop organizational skills and knowledge about environmental issues associated with the artisanal fishing industry, the project has, over the last year, begun to facilitate the formation of a national women's network. In a national meeting held in January 2001 in Valparaíso, the participants decided to elect zonal coordinators. This network is expected to contribute to the recognition of the women's traditionally invisible roles in the small-scale fishing industry. Subsequently, it might contribute to consolidating the organizational, political, social and economic force of the artisanal fisheries sector.

According to a brochure of the project: "At present, artisanal fishermen in Chile are defending their cultural and productive patrimony. The destruction of the coastal environment may lead to the disappearance of artisanal fisheries. Therefore, the participation, integration, and organization of men and women is crucial."

Some results of the women's meetings held through the project:

- Growing knowledge about women's roles in production and in sustaining fishing communities, within the local and regional contexts;
- Preparation of projects on organization and economic support;
- Identification of women's interests and needs and the development of methodologies for the project to work with their organizations;
- Identification of health and educational problems that fishing communities face.

As in other countries, there are no available statistics that reflect women's actual contribution in the fisheries. According to an estimate by CONAPACH, women

constitute about 10 per cent of the workforce in the fisheries sector in Chile. They work as *encarnadoras* (baiters), fish processors, seaweed collectors and as sellers of fish products.

Local labour and organizational conditions vary along the long Chilean coast. According to Kim and Jéssica, the project intends to facilitate the integration of women in existing fishermen's unions and organizations, in accordance with CONAPACH guidelines. In the event that there is no organization of fishermen, women may consider forming an organization of their own. That was the case in San Antonio, a town about two hours from Valparaíso, where a women's union of *encarnadoras* was formed with CONAPACH support earlier this year. CONAPACH, through the project, has continued to support this initiative. CONAPACH leaders estimate that more than 800 *encarnadoras* live in San Antonio.

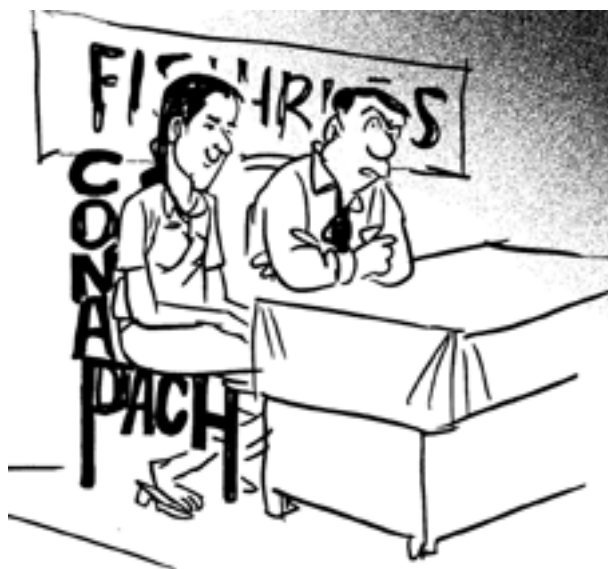
I had the opportunity to visit a community near Valparaíso—*caleta* El Membrillo—a lively fishing port where the 'Union of Independent Workers and Fishermen of *caleta* El Membrillo', founded in 1936, is located. According to the President, the union has 200 members, of which only 10 are women. The President is presently engaged in integrating women into the union.

In fact, the *encarnadoras* play a very active role in the fisheries, given that the use of hooks is common in the artisanal fisheries of Chile. Longlines, with hundreds of hooks, have to be baited before each fishing trip. In general, every crew engages an *encarnadora* or *encarnador* to prepare the hooks. Most of the *encarnadores* are women. On the day of my visit some young men were working among the women. As the workers are paid only after the fishermen get back to shore, they also share in the risks involved in fish capture and sale.

I spoke with a 55-year old woman who has been an *encarnadora* baiting hooks for 36 years. Engraved on her hands were signs of the constant handling of knives, hooks, lines, in ever humid and cold conditions. The work of the baiters involves standing in front of a kind of table where the lines are laid out so they can bait each hook.

Encarnadoras are independent workers whose daily earnings depend on the orders they receive and their ability to accomplish the job. Depending on the volume

of landings, they can work from a few hours to half a day at the port. Many are single mothers. In El Membrillo port about 30 people work as baiters. They pay a tax to the port administration in order to work there. If they unionize they are supposed to pay the monthly fee of the union. Efforts to organize them are still in the initial stages. Organizing these women, who often find themselves without work due to the "closing of the quota" after the quota for the catch has been reached, and who, as housewives and single mothers do not have much time to participate in meetings and events, remains a challenge.



The professionals engaged in the project are enthusiastic. They are very concerned about the future achievements of the project, and hope that it remains a priority for the CONAPACH. They raise concerns that are shared by others engaged with gender issues in fisheries, such as: How to create legitimate spaces for women, alongside men, within fishermen's organizations? How to create strong organizations, able to sustain themselves? How to respond to the existing urgent economic demands of women?

The methodology of this project and the experiences of CONAPACH's Women's Department, merits attention and reflection, especially by leaders of fishermen's organizations and women's groups from other countries in Latin America. It is necessary to increase networking and sharing of interesting experiences of citizenship in the fisheries sector.

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Asia/ India**Public Hearing**

Women workers in Kerala highlight how globalization processes affect them

By Nalini Nayak, working with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Kerala, and also a member of ICSF

At the end of September 2001 the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Kerala organized a Public Hearing on "The Impact of Globalization on Women Workers in Kerala". This was one of several hearings organized by the National Commission for Women, Delhi, in an effort to understand, at first hand, the problems women workers face in different sectors of the economy and eventually to make necessary policy recommendations to the Central Government

SEWA, Kerala is concerned about the numerous suicides and hunger deaths reported in the media. These deaths have occurred mainly in the plantation and small farm sectors in Kerala, partly as a result of recent import-export policies that have caused a massive drop in prices, dragging small farmers into a debt trap and leaving them with little alternative to surrendering their lands to the banks.

Kerala's economy is based on its agricultural and traditional sectors like coir-making, cashew-shelling, fishing, transformation of forest produce etc. Most of these sectors are in turmoil as a result of the New Economic Policy, the Structural Adjustment Programmes and the WTO-induced import-export policies. The majority of workers in these sectors are women.

There were women from four sectors that testified at this Hearing—from the plantation, farm and fish processing sectors and from the Cochin Special Export Processing Zone. I will report here only on what the women in the fish processing sector had to say.

The ICSF Women in Fisheries Programme, through the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), had, in 1996, conducted a Hearing on the problems of migrant women workers in fish processing plants in India. At that time, a majority of such migrant workers were from Kerala and worked under sub-human conditions in processing plants in distant areas. These plants undertook the entire gamut of processing activities from procurement of shrimp to freezing, canning and export, and were not regulated.

Under pressure to regularize the sector, several of them have subsequently adopted the casualization and 'putting out' policy. This means that they try to subcontract as many of the processes as possible, in this case, the actual peeling of the shrimp. Over the years there has been a rise in the number of shrimp peeling sheds in Kerala where merchants with relatively small investments set up a shed, purchase shrimp in bulk and hire women to clean the shrimp. These merchants then sell the cleaned shrimp to processing plants.

This is what Sreedevi says about the way these sheds operate: "I have been cleaning shrimp ever since I was 12 years old as I needed money for the family and for my studies. I had to stop my education when I completed 8th standard and I went full time into cleaning shrimp. At that time we went to the landing centre, sorted the catches and did some cleaning there itself. But about 10 years ago these sheds came up in our village itself, as work in coir processing declined. Over the years the sheds have grown bigger. The owners keep changing either because they have made enough money and want to move on, or because they are incurring losses. We women just keep working. We are paid on a piece rate basis and receive no other benefits. Our present owner, who has been here for the past few years, used to give us 10kg of rice at festival time but this year gave us only Rs50 (approximately US\$1.1) as a kind of bonus."



"For cleaning a basin meant to contain 1.5 kg of shrimp—generally it is much more—we are paid Rs3. So on an average we can make Rs30 to 40 (less than one US\$) a day. We work in permanently damp conditions, sitting in rows on our haunches. We do not

use any gloves or boots. When there are bulk landings we work for 12-14 hours non-stop and there are several occasions when our fingers bleed but as they are so numb we do not feel the pain until we go home at night. I generally soak my hands in a hot decoction of tea. This helps me to go back to work the next day. I need the work as my husband is only a casual worker and we have no other means of livelihood. When my child was born, I stopped work for a few months and then my mother helped to care for the child. But there are several women who bring their babies to the work sheds and hang them in cradles outside so they can feed them when required.”

“Over the years we have created our own union to represent our case to the government. Not only do we lack any kind of job security and workers benefits, we are not even considered as workers by the Fisherman’s Welfare Board. We waged a long struggle last year and the Labour Officer—a woman—intervened. She made a good report about our actual working conditions, making a case for punitive action. But, rather than taking action based on her report, she was transferred. It became clear that the owners of peeling sheds are better organized than we are and certainly have more political clout. We know that Kerala claims to be a progressive state where labour rights are concerned. However, the reality in our case is the opposite. There are thousands of women like me working in the hundreds of peeling sheds in my district. These peeling sheds also cause considerable pollution as they dispose of the contaminated water in common water bodies, leading to the spread of disease.”

“This year shrimp catches have fallen and several peeling sheds have closed down. We also hear that consignments of shrimp exported last year were returned to India as they did not pass the sanitary standards of the importing country. The owners try everything possible to maximize their profits but, in the end, it is at our expense.”

Sreedevi’s account sums up the problem in the processing industry quite lucidly. More and more women are being employed on a daily wage basis with no workers benefits or job security. Labour laws are being modified to suit the new labour practices that favour the casualization of labour. All this will further facilitate the movement of work from northern countries to the south where labour standards will be flouted at all levels.

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Asia/ Malaysia

The power of knowledge

Men, women and children of fishing communities in Malaysia come together to learn about drug addiction and HIV/AIDS

By P Balan, Advisor/Coordinator of the Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association (PIFWA)

In the tranquil village of Batu Kawan, the Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association (PIFWA) brought together inshore fishermen, youth, children and women for a workshop on HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse. PIFWA invited distinguished speakers from the State Health Department, the National Drug Agency and the Police Department to speak to the group on these two social issues. Even the woman representative from the state assembly of the area was present to lend her support to the workshop.

The workshop provided a good opportunity for fishermen and their families to learn more about these two issues. In some fishing villages the incidence of drug addiction among fishermen is quite high, and authorities conduct frequent raids to arrest drug traffickers and drug addicts. Wives and children are negatively affected when their husbands and fathers become involved in such activities. The workshop also strove to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS among the fishing community—women, youth and children. The possibility of contracting this deadly disease is real considering the use of injected drugs and the low level of education in the community.

Women—mostly wives of fishermen—contract HIV/AIDS as a consequence of the sexual escapades or drug habits of their men and are then shunned by society. It was definitely a turning point in PIFWA’s activity when the women, with their husbands and children, came to learn about HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

It is hoped that this workshop will be a turning point in their lives enabling them to take control of their health and their families. By giving these women the power of knowledge, it is hoped that they will be empowered to speak out against the negative activities taking place within their communities. It is well established that women in fishing villages have always had a strong family and community tradition. Their active involvement on any issue could certainly make a difference.

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Video Films



Smoke in the Water

A video film highlighting the problems and prospects for developing artisanal fish trade in West Africa, produced by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF).

Fisheries, and in particular, the artisanal fisheries sector, is a vital source of livelihood for the communities that live along the approximately 4,545 km long coastline of West Africa. There are around 1.8 million people, mostly women, directly engaged in processing and marketing fish in the region. Nonetheless, despite the vibrancy of the trade, several problems confront the sector, while the role and importance of the women processors and traders remain invisible.

This video, available in English and French, provides an overview of the issues involved, and highlights many of the concerns of the actors in the sector. It also reports briefly on the workshop on *Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa* and the *West African Fair for Artisanally Processed Fish* held at Dakar, Senegal from 30 May to 3 June 2001. For details contact ICSF (icsf@vsnl.com)

Rising from the Ashes

The School of Continuing Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, has brought out a video film on Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries. We reproduce the blurb...

In May 2000 an extraordinary group of women came together in Newfoundland, Canada. They were researchers from universities and non-governmental organizations around the world, and women fishworkers from Atlantic Canada.

Rising from the Ashes is a one-hour video documentary resulting from this meeting. Women from 18 countries discuss vital fishery issues from the perspective of gender and globalization. They share observations related to gender relations and aquaculture development, fish marketing, fisheries and tourism, and fisheries management. Questions related to the conduct and purpose of fisheries research are raised.

Rising from the Ashes is recommended for all those interested in the fishery: harvesters and processors and their service organizations; community groups; unions;

policy-makers in government; researchers in universities and non-governmental organizations; and students from a variety of courses such as resource management, women's studies, sociology and political science. Copies of the film can be ordered from the School of Continuing Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. E-mail: fholling@mun.ca.

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.