



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

# Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

## From the Editor

According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020) released in July amidst the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people affected by hunger is steadily rising globally. People with higher risk of food insecurity include those with the lowest levels of income and education, the unemployed, those with health problem, those living in rural areas, and those separated or divorced. The report, which carries recent and authoritative estimates of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition around the world, also revealed disturbing gender specific aspects of hunger: moderate to severe food insecurity is more prevalent among women than men; there is a growing gender gap in accessing food; and the most disadvantaged and vulnerable are often adolescents, women and children living in the poorest households in rural areas but also urban areas. When viewed in the context of a pandemic induced global economic crisis, these findings have serious implications for the lives of women in the small-scale fisheries.

Half of the global fish catch and two-thirds of the fish consumed by people come from small-scale fisheries. The sector provides not only full- or part-time employment to millions but also opportunities for seasonal and occasional fishing, which, in difficult times, are a survival lifeline for destitute millions. Women, equally significant participants in the small-scale fisheries as men, in addition to earning incomes in post-harvest and harvest work are also tasked with the primary responsibility of household care-giving. The pressure of feeding the family, no matter how adverse the conditions – how little the income or how difficult the access to food – further stretches the work day of poor women, adding to the burden of health. Women and children are among the most vulnerable sections of fishing communities, for whom rising food insecurity exacerbated by the pandemic related economic slowdown, would have extremely worrying consequences. The articles in this issue do bear out this fact.

Over the last few months, the pandemic has thoroughly disrupted fish supply chains, deepening existing fault lines and vulnerabilities of fishing societies. As one article from Indonesia points out, incomes from both harvest and post harvest have dried up, leaving fishers in the lurch and adding to the anxieties of women who must make arrangements to survive from one day to the next. The harsh economic impact has forced ageing fishers in Costa Rica to return to subsistence fishing. In Mexico, as in other countries, forced sheltering at home has led to increased domestic violence against women.

Meanwhile, women are organizing themselves at various levels in response to the new challenges. A fishing cooperative in the Mexican Caribbean has turned to door-to-door sales of seafood products; others to vegetable farming. Along the Negro River in the Amazon basin, a region woefully lacking in public health facilities and home to diverse indigenous fishing populations, networks such as the Association of Indigenous Communities of the Middle Negro River (ACIMRN), with initiative from women leaders, have lobbied with the government to be part of the official COVID-19 response to ensure that no fishing community is left out of relief distribution.

As Pencum, Sénégal points out, it is imperative that states extend all possible support to fishing communities, particularly to women and other vulnerable sections in order to mitigate the dual challenge of growing food insecurity amidst the spread of COVID-19. Further, as Nicole Franz of the FAO states, the role of international guidelines – like those developed by the Committee on World Food Security in building international agreement on more inclusive, equitable and sustainable food systems – cannot be overemphasised. **■**



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# Returning to land and sea

**The harsh economic impact of the ongoing pandemic-related lockdown has spurred fisherwomen in Costa Rica to return to their traditional sources of livelihood**

By **María Suárez Toro** (escuelabuceocaribesur@gmail.com) independent journalist and social activist, Costa Rica, edited and translated from Spanish by Sol Vals



María Suárez Toro

Although there have been very few COVID-19 cases in the area, the suspension of tourism with the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on the southern Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. Until recently, tourism was the mainstay of the local economy in the coastal communities of Puerto Viejo, Cahuita, Manzanillo and Cocles. However, the crisis has brought about a reactivation of traditional ancestral livelihoods where fishermen and women take to the sea in boats and kayaks bringing food to their families and communities.

Former fisherwoman, the 72-year-old elder, Cipriana Rocha, who had to stop fishing two years ago in Manzanillo, fulfilled a longtime dream to set up her own bakery. “The coconut has always been part of the fishing livelihood and now it is the basis of the food I produce in this emergency so that that my community has bread and I can make a living,” said Doña Cipriana. Her statement reflects the traditional recognition that land and sea are connected in whatever takes place in the livelihood of the coastal communities.

Tomasa Acosta, a 55-year-old indigenous Bribri fisherwoman, started fishing as a child in the rivers of Guanacaste in the Pacific until she married her Afro Costa Rican husband, and came to live in the Caribbean where they have raised their children and later grandchildren. At the beginning of the COVID-19 emergency, she realised that there would be no food on her table if they did not produce it themselves. In less than a week’s time, she reorganized her life. Her retired husband and two of her three children began going out fishing in their small boat every day. Their efforts have fed her family and community during the crisis. Her message to people who do not fish but find themselves struggling in the middle of this emergency: “Grow food and we will provide the fish to compliment what you grow on the land”.

Recently, a remarkable experience occurred in Casa del Pueblo, Puerto Viejo. A diverse group of women, held together by the shared belief that food sustainability is vital during emergencies, organized a meeting so that they could support each other and tend to their family and community vegetable gardens.

“Among all the grassroots projects to reactivate the economy and culture that have

been generated during this emergency, the ones which have to do with family and community gardens are the ones that resonated the most. And so we organized this meeting”, said Gloria Gavioli, president of the Talamanca Association of Conservation and Ecology (ATEC) and spokesperson for the Mano Vuelta, a campaign organized by the Centro Comunitario de Buceo Embajadores y Embajadoras del Mar (Ambassadors of the Sea). The emergency response initiative Mano Vuelta was started in March 2020 by a group of activists to help elderly community members reactivate traditional livelihoods amid the emergency.

“The idea is to improve our food strategy. We all agree that assistance should be provided to people in need. However, we need a solution that, unlike occasional amounts of money conceded to buy groceries, lasts long-term and in an efficient and productive way. Food self-production and self-sufficiency are essential. With such capacity building, one is able to consume locally-produced and fresh organic food, just harvested or just fished, achieving what too many of us lack today – a balanced diet, rich in nutrients, that reinforces our immune system, which, given the circumstances, should be a priority”, Mariana Valls emphasises. Valls is an Argentinian environmental lawyer living in Costa Rica. She is a specialist in food waste and shared with us some alarming facts about the state of world food production: 821 million people underfed; 155 million children are malnourished; 1941 million people are overweight or obese; there has been a substantial increase in food-related diseases including diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer; 1300 million tons of food - equivalent to one third of the world’s food production – is lost or wasted every year, an amount that could feed 2000 million people, that is, more than the double the numbers currently underfed.

Valls’s motivational talk made immediately clear why the local population resonates with the idea of local food production during an emergency such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, providing humanitarian food is good, but teaching people to grow their own food is even better in the short as well as long term.

The experiences of local participants testify to experiences and benefits of community



Sargassum arrived at the Playa Negra Beach, Cahuita, in July 2020. With support of youth and children, gardener Leda Villa and Esteban Gallo, picked it up and spread in in the collective garden.

gardening and food self-sufficiency. The following examples were shared:

Indigenous activist, Bribri Layli Zarrin, who has a lot of experience with working at her family's finca (ranch), Loroco, in Talamanca, began a partnership with, Javiera Alvarenga, Chilean resident, schoolteacher, and food producer, involving the assessment of family and community gardens.

Leda Villa, member of Mano Vuelta, came to the region 45 years ago to develop a governmental programme of rural gardens throughout the Talamanca territory.

Maritza Medrano and Arlene Diez Forbes form part of an Afro-descendent women's group that was recently trained in community gardening and food security, through a project funded by the Japanese Embassy. "We must return to the land and the sea just as we were raised by our grandparents – rich and healthy. There was neither obesity nor sickness because of the way we were feeding ourselves," Medrano claims.

In a coastal community where once "everything came from the sea", community gardens are now bringing the nurturing elements from the ocean into land production.

Among the coasts of the southern Caribbean, the proliferation of the Sargassum seaweed is far from being an environmental problem like in neighbouring areas of the Caribbean. Instead, the community uses the seaweed to fertilise the crops they grow. Coral components present in the land that was once under sea level, play an important role in replenishing the soil with rich minerals.

Some unexpected outcomes have occurred as well. A traditional Afro-descendant dish re-emerged during this emergency, symbolising the indivisible gastronomical link between land and sea in the Caribbean – this is the Rondon (Rundown), a fish soup made of a diversity of tubers and spices grown in family gardens, including taro such as malanga and tiquisque, corn plantain and yucca, combined with fish cooked in coconut milk.

All in all, women play not only an active but a crucial role in every single dimension of the emergency food chain, not just providing food but also teaching and promoting efficient, smart, and practical habits such as local production in coastal livelihoods that boost health and improve the quality of life. ■

**"We must return to the land and the sea just as we were raised by our grandparents – rich and healthy. There was neither obesity nor sickness because of the way we were feeding ourselves"**

# Fishing in troubled waters

The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on a small-scale fishing in Lorient is vividly captured in the pages of a diary maintained by a gillnetter skipper's spouse

Based on the diary entries of **Emmanuelle Yhuel-Bertin** (emmanuelleyb@orange.fr), Deputy President of the Collectif Pêche et Développement, Lorient, France and translated from French by **Danièle Le Sann** (ad.lesann@orange.fr), France



Emmanuelle Yhuel-Bertin



Danièle Le Sann

In March 2020, Emmanuelle Yhuel-Bertin, wife of a gillnet skipper who runs a 13-metre gillnetter vessel with four men on board, began recording the experiences of skipper and crew during the COVID-19 lockdown. Her diary covers the period from mid-March to early May.

The first entry signals a gathering cloud of anxieties. “The media is reporting lockdown restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID,” writes Emmanuelle, “but the artisanal fishery in Lorient is yet to recover from the impact of the winter’s numerous storms.”

The early entries outline the dilemmas faced by the fishing enterprise, torn as it is between lockdown orders and the need to survive. Questions mount. Will ports be functional? Will fish auctions continue? Will boats be eligible for relief in the event of lockdown? What is the skipper’s responsibility towards his crew in the event of a virus outbreak on board? What about other factors: the closure of fish wholesale units; the withdrawal of the producers’ organization; the risk that some fish merchants and fishmongers will take advantage of the situation and offer extremely low prices at the auction? Should the skipper continue or cease fishing operations?

The diary entry for Tuesday, 17 March reads: “Radio exchanges between skippers, phone calls to the authorities, numerous e-mails; a flow of divergent information but a decision has to be taken.”

In the context, the skipper decides to continue fishing for four reasons: there is fish at sea; auction prices are correct; boats docked at the quay must continue paying docking charges; and no concrete announcements on aid have yet been made by the government.

Meeting the requirements of the COVID-19 safety protocol is one of the first challenges. “Impossible to go out to sea without a thermometer!” writes Emmanuelle on Monday, 23 March. From thermometers needed to monitor crew temperature, together with a special logbook to log the temperatures recorded, to keeping adequate stocks of sanitiser gel and masks on board, new responsibilities are added daily to the skipper’s list.

In the first week of the lockdown period from 24 to 28 March, the price for fish remained steady and sales were good. The salaries paid over the fortnight were slightly higher than

those paid in 2019 over the same period. In small-scale fishing, salaries are traditionally paid every two weeks and correspond to a percentage of the sales at auction. So far so good but “what will happen in the coming weeks?” asks Emmanuelle.

On 3 April, in a measure that increased the confidence of the sector, the European Commission announced that the loss of vessel turnover would be compensated for up to 75 percent by the European Fund for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (EFAMF).

From the week beginning 8 April, the port of Lorient saw its entire artisanal fleet setting sail again. The wholesalers were also present to organise their purchases according to the arrivals and the demand. However, the staff at the port remained drastically reduced. As a result, there was only one conveyor belt instead of the usual two at the auction. In order to aid the work of its staff, the port management asked the fishermen to sort their fish before putting it up for sale: an extra job for the crews who would not be paid more for this extra work. To further facilitate auction on a single belt, each boat had to bring its catch in two lots; the second lot fetched significantly lower prices as the wholesalers had already bought the best fish in the first lot at the auction. The first lot of auctions started before daybreak at 3 am. The second lot was completed by only around 7 am. The fish sold in the first auction at 3 am traded at around 7 € (8.2 USD). By 7 am, the same species of identical quality was worth only 2.5 € (2.9 USD).

The loss of earnings for the boat over the day’s sale could amount to as much as around 2000 € (2,343.9 USD). While during the very first weeks of the lockdown, the market regulated itself, the subsequent weeks were tough. Fish merchants exploited the situation by offering low prices. Pollacks auctioned at 2.5 € (2.9 USD) were found a few hours later in the stalls of a local fishmonger, selling at 16 € (18.8 USD)! In order to resolve the problem of low demand, boat owners considered going out on shifts through the week, but no agreement on this could be reached.

The situation finally improved by the last week of April. Sole which was negotiated at 10 € (11.7 USD) on Saturday, April 25th, went up to 20 € (23.4 USD). The rise in auctioned prices was due to the reactivation of the second belt,

with which the auction returned to normal. In early May, the government announced the lifting of the lockdown.

“Will May 11th mark the end of the crisis? No! Politicians and the media insist that it is a milestone and return to normalcy will take time,” notes Emmanuelle, pointing out also the few signs of hope that the crisis had signalled, “There has been a real mobilisation to find solutions for the fishing industry, particularly at the European level. Aid will be granted to

affected boats and crews and a communication campaign is being set up to raise consumer awareness.”

The interesting documentation ends with a dairy entry made on Thursday, 7 May 2020. “The port of Lorient managed reasonably well through the lockdown as the actors had the will to adapt to the new situation,” writes Emmanuelle, adding, “This was not without difficulty, but work was maintained, which was not the case in all the French ports.” ❧

“There has been a real mobilisation to find solutions for the fishing industry, particularly at the European level.”

## A resolute mussel farmer

### Amélie Dennebouy has challenged gender stereotypes to become a successful mussel entrepreneur in Pénestin, France

“We don’t employ women!” Just how many times Amélie Dennebouy, a mussel farm worker, heard that phrase since she began working in the sector at age 17, it would be impossible to say. “Ten years ago, I realised that it would be difficult to find employment in the production segment because I am a woman,” says Amélie.

Stories flood her mind: managers laughing at her when she handed in an application for work as a production worker, pushing her to the sales department instead; the crude questioning of some: “Have you passed under the desk?”

“For four years now, I have been trying to get a job in the coquilles Saint-Jacques (scallops) operations. I have good credentials from three managers, to no avail. They are disappointed and now understand my situation.”

Amélie Dennebouy remains undeterred. Indeed, the obstacles along the way seem to have reinforced her determination to do what she likes. It all started at high school. Her father worked for Veolia, a French multinational corporation. Her mother was a social care worker. As a teenager, she followed a general education curriculum in Le Mans, spending her holidays on the Normandy coast.

Then she decided to study marine farming and obtain a professional baccalauréat degree. This took place way down on the Breton coast at Guérande, 25 km from Pénestin. She went on for a BTS (higher technical certificate), which included a number of practical placements. While Amélie was looking for smaller outfits, only large enterprises would take her in. In order to broaden her perception of things, she took care to move to different locations, between Normandy and Vendée.

She observed the techniques in use, the equipment which varies from one sector or enterprise to another. She discovered machines that automatically fill the tubular nets with young mussels. “It is a waste of time to do that by hand,” she says. “I convinced one of the managers to buy one, and she does not regret that decision at all.”

Amélie went on to acquire a slew of qualifications: diving certification, boat master certification for marine culture – Level 1, Capitaine 200 for small-scale fishery, and a licence for elvers or glass eel. She makes it a point to be present at all the mussel seasons, and also in the markets.

In 2016, Amélie chose to settle down in Pénestin in Brittany, France, Amélie kept looking for a CDI (Contract Duration Indeterminée, that is, a permanent contract) but had to make do with CDDs (Contract Duration Déterminée, that is, a temporary or fixed-term contract). One day, however, a mussel farmer of the area, named Yvan Bizeul, informed her that he was about to sell. A deal was concluded, and to ensure a smooth transition both of them committed to working together for three years. The agreement was signed but uncertainties remained. Says Amélie, “As I am not the daughter of Mr so-and-so, nor a native of Pénestin, I was told that I wouldn’t be able to cope, and that I should hire somebody to look after the production.” It was not easy convincing the bank either that a woman too could make the whole thing work, including the production side...

Amélie has gone through her first mussel season, during which she herself fixed the stockings around the poles. “It’s rather stressful,” she says, “although I feel I am in a supportive environment. But,” she notes ironically, “now that the business transfer is on, I have been offered several CDIs!” ❧

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# Yielding ground

## Changing land use patterns threaten the livelihood of female crab collectors in Merauke, Papua, Indonesia

By **Ria Fitriana** (rfitriana@gmail.com), Independent Consultant, Coastal and Marine Resource Management, Jakarta, Indonesia, and **Maria Kurupat** (mariakurupat68@gmail.com) Gender Empowerment Activist, Merauke, Papua, Indonesia



Ria Fitriana



Maria Kurupat

Over the years, crab collection in mangrove and wetland forests has been a major source of income for women of the indigenous Asmat and Mappi communities of the island of Papua in Indonesia. These women harvest crab along the coastal areas of the Maro River, the main river of Merauke District, which is located in the southern part of Papua in the land of the Marind peoples. The Marind form a majority group and hold traditional claim of ownership over the land in Merauke, including the banks of Maro River. Apart from the Marind, other ethnic groups such as Bovendigul, Mappi and Asmat also live in the area and have ha anim rights to access resources for subsistence living. Ha anim rights accrue from a collective agreement among certain indigenous communities, granting them entitlement over resources from mangrove and wetland forests along the river, allowing for hunting, gathering of food and medicinal plants, and the collection of fibres and other materials for crafts such as noken or traditional bag weaving. Outsiders and even other ethnic communities residing in the area, such as the fishers of Sulawesi descent or North Papuans living in Merauki, require explicit consent from the customary land owners, and, in addition, must pay a mutually agreed sum in order to utilise these resources.

Mud crabs are harvested in a ten kilometre region along the mangrove forest and banks of the Maro river. The Asmat and Mappi people have their own territory for crab collection. There are several ways to reach the crab nesting zones. For the Asmat women, it takes two to three hours on foot to reach, while it is an even longer walk, up to four to five hours long, for the women from the Mappi community. Apart from walking, another option is to rent a pick up car or boat, at a cost of about USD 15.50 per trip.

Although crab collection is a daytime activity, sometimes the collectors need to camp overnight in the forest, for example, during unfavourable tidal conditions. The crab collectors usually go to the forest and look for holes in muddy areas that typically indicate a crab's nest. Once a hole is found, they stick an iron crowbar to catch and pull the crab out of the hole, using water from the river to clean the catch. The crab is then

placed on banana tree sheaths and tied using ropes cut from trees. Though crabs are usually bigger in size and more in number during the rainy season and high tide, the nesting grounds are harder to access during such conditions. The cleaned and tied crabs are stored in a sack and brought to traders in Merauke city or sold directly to customers on the road.

The price of the catch depends on a number of factors: the size of the crab, whether the claws are intact, and whether the crabs are alive or dead. The price of small and medium sized crabs is about USD 1.2 per kg, while the big sized ones are priced at USD 2.30 to 3.80 per crab – those with claws intact fetching USD 3.80 apiece and broken ones fetching USD 2.30 apiece. The catch usually includes many crabs with broken claws, as well as small sized and dead ones. Crabs tied with banana leaf can be kept alive for up to three days outside water-important traditional knowledge, which the women use to increase the value of their catch. The average earnings per trip, for a trip of two to three days duration, were found to be around USD 23 to 30.

The income from selling crabs is used to meet food and transportation costs. Rice, eggs, salt, sugar, coffee, fried oil, betel nuts and drinking water are commonly bought items. Food expenses alone may amount to USD 4 to 7 per day. During periods of no income, the crab collectors borrow money from kiosks near their homes, which is paid back later.

Unfortunately, changes in land use have alienated these communities from their main livelihood sources. The area available for crab collection has shrunk or moved further away, increasing overall costs. The area covered by primary mangrove and wetland forests in Merauke has steadily decreased in the decades from 1990 to 2000 and 2010. The rate of conversion of these lands for plantation and city development threatens the mangroves, which are changing from being net sinks to net sources of carbon. These land use changes generate problems for the global and local community. According to the female crab collectors, there was a time when the crab collection area was fairly close to their homes but now involves a long and circuitous walk with access routes often restricted by the new titleholders of the land.



A woman catching crab in mangrove, Merauke, Indonesia. Although crab collection is a daytime activity, sometimes the collectors need to camp overnight in the forest.

Participative mapping revealed that over the years 20 ha of crab collection area have changed to private sea port and boat anchorage zones. Not only was the 'new area' restricted but the mangrove forests were destroyed for development, leading to livelihood loss. This form of development disregards food security and poverty among marginalised

communities. In Papua, food security and nutrition are a major concern. Loss of food and nutrition will further weaken the ability of communities to deal with the issues they face. The situation becomes more difficult for female crab collectors because they access and use communal lands without the power to control the resources they need.



The cleaned and tied crabs are stored in a sack and brought to traders in Merauke city or sold directly to customers on the road. The average earnings per trip, for a trip of two to three days duration, were found to be around USD 23 to 30

of land use changes. The compensation shouldn't be in the form of cash money. It could be in the form of capacity building and alternative livelihoods. The expansion of the range of activities available to female crab collectors is needed to diversify their income. The diversification could strengthen the resilience of female crab collectors in addressing uncertainty. Totally new activities could be introduced or value added to current practices such as fattening small crab. This is one way to ensure that the discussion on land ownership transfer will carefully consider impact on the daily lives of common people and on family-level food security.

Second, women are rarely involved in discussions regarding resources in Papua. In the Papuan tradition, the female is considered an outsider

The food security of the Asmat and Mappi people depends on their livelihoods derived from a communal resource in a situation where no attention is given to protect such common resources as a means to secure the wellbeing of the people. There is no acknowledgement of use rights in land use changes and no involvement of women in discussions pertaining to resources.

First, land use changes start as soon as land ownership is transferred. Land ownership transferred on customary land acknowledges traditional claim of ownership. This becomes problematic in the case of Papua because of varied rights over land, which is a mix of ownership and use rights. The owner of a piece of land might not allow the use of the land's resources, even if the local ethnic groups have traditional use rights, since no attention is given to secure the livelihoods of those who with use rights over communal land. We suggest that various rights be taken into consideration in terms of compensation during land transfer. The acknowledgement of use right in land use changes is crucial to protect the source of livelihoods of those with access and use rights. This does not imply that transfer of ownership would necessarily become more complicated. Instead, we suggest that due compensation be given to women to make up for the loss of source of livelihood they face as a consequences

in a family, since she will follow her husband after marriage. Women usually access resources through inheritance from their families, similar to men. After marriage, the norms of their husband's community determines their access to resources. Women's roles are in domestic matters – taking care of the family, raising children, and being responsible for the family's food security. Most of these activities take place on communal lands as among the Asmat and Mappi female in Merauke. The woman's role in the domestic sphere is important for a family but not valued. When it comes to rights transfer and land access restriction, women are not involved in the discussion, especially in customary institutions. The representative in the customary board or the leader of a customary institution is male since men are the heads of families. The woman's position may derive from her husband's role - as the wife of the customary leader, supporting him domestic matters and providing inputs. Females have no formal place in a customary institution.

There is a need to bring the voices of women into discussions and decision making processes related to resource use and access in all customary institutions. ❏

**There is a need to bring the voices of women into discussions and decision making processes related to resource use and access in all customary institutions.**



# Small-scale fisheries and food security

## A brief overview of relevant global findings and processes on the contributions of small-scale fisheries and rights to food and nutrition security, with a focus on the FAO

By **Nicole Franz** (nicole.franz@fao.org), Fishery Planning Analyst, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy



Nicole Franz

The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the UN General Assembly in 1979 can be seen as the formalisation of the recognition of the rights and roles of women, and a commitment of the global community to respect and support these. It also charted the way for the next historical milestone in realising women's rights, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995 which charted the pathways for women's empowerment. The importance of gender equality is also reflected in the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference 'The future we want', which has a section on gender equality and women's empowerment, culminating in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 dedicated to gender equality. All these processes show that the concept of gender is historical, and at the same time developing as global understanding of related issues is growing and evolving. It is diffused, challenged and reaffirmed according to each historical period and context in which women and men live and interpret their lives. Within fisheries, the global normative framework, first and foremost the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries adopted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries in 1995, lagged behind in specifically addressing gender and women, and both issues are notably absent from the Code. Since then, considerable progress has been made in recognising and valuing the role of women in fisheries. In fact, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) endorsed by that same committee in 2014 include gender equity and equality among the guiding principles and have a dedicated chapter on gender. While the final version of this chapter has been

considerably reduced and softened compared to the initial drafts, it can still be considered an important achievement to have such a chapter in a document that was endorsed by a body composed primarily of representatives of national fisheries administrations who often remain grounded in the traditional fisheries management paradigm with an environmental focus.

According to 'The Status of Food Security and Nutrition in the World', a flagship report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), that was just released, the number of people affected by hunger in the world continues an increasing trend that started in 2014. This means that an estimated two billion people in the world were subject to moderate or severe food insecurity and did not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food in 2019. The report notes that the gender gap in accessing food increased from 2018 to 2019 and that the prevalence of child stunting in 2019 was 21.3 percent, or 144 million children.

Reading these figures against the backdrop of the unprecedented situation of COVID-19 that the world is currently facing makes them



Gender-neutral visual identity of International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA)



Woman at fish market in Suva, Fiji. Small-scale fisheries provide nutritious food, either directly for consumption within the household, or by supplying markets, from informal markets on the shores of a lake all the way to highly sophisticated global markets

even more unacceptable. COVID-19 has hit all and everything, and it brings to light important inequalities that persist – and in many cases are deepening, including in relation to our food systems. The above mentioned report points out that “while most of the poor around the world can afford an energy sufficient diet...they cannot afford either a nutrient adequate or a healthy diet.”

The report offers a powerful lens to address this dilemma: “Valuing the hidden costs (or negative externalities) associated with different diets could modify significantly our assessment of what is ‘affordable’ from a broader societal perspective and reveal how dietary choices affect other SDGs.”

This lens can be applied when thinking about the contributions of small-scale fisheries and rights to food and nutrition security. Valuing a food production system requires that there is sufficient understanding of its characteristics, functioning and contributions. Understanding of small-scale fisheries is often notably missing, in particular in relation to broader societal contributions that translate to improvements in health, social stability, cultural identity – or gender equity.

Small-scale fisheries provide nutritious food, either directly for consumption within the household, or by supplying markets, from informal markets on the shores of a lake all the way to highly sophisticated global markets. And in fact, there appears to be a slow shift towards better integrating fisheries and food security and nutrition. In November 2019, FAO organized an International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the Science-Policy Nexus, that took place in Rome and was

attended by around 1000 participants, including from governments, research, and civil society organizations. Importantly, the symposium did include a dedicated session on ‘Fish in food security and nutrition’ which highlighted the need to ensure that aquatic foods are reaching those that need it most, including within households. While the Symposium did not have a dedicated session on gender, it was embedded in the session on ‘Securing sustainable fisheries livelihoods’ and a cross-cutting key message emerged from all sessions that “Gender equality and equity with support to the younger generations must be improved. Proactive mechanisms for this include elevating the role of women in decision making; engagement of youth; focused capacity building actions; gender statistics; sex- and age- disaggregated data.” This symposium is expected to inform the work of FAO, and we can already see this reflected in key messages from the 2020 edition of FAO’s State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, which confirm the growing recognition of the great potential of the oceans and inland waters to contribute significantly to food security and adequate nutrition for a global population expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050.

This recognition of the role of fisheries for food security and nutrition needs to go hand in hand with the recognition of the role of women in the sector. Currently the only global estimate available remains the one in the Hidden Harvest study published in 2012 by World Bank, FAO and World Fish, according to which 47 per cent of the total workforce in the sector are women.

More recent estimates for women’s engagement in marine fisheries have been published, for example, a study by Sarah Harper

and colleagues published in March 2020, which estimates the global contribution by women to small-scale marine capture fisheries production. Currently, FAO, WorldFish and Duke University are in the process of conducting a global study with the title 'Illuminating Hidden Harvests: the contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development' (IHH) that aims to provide global estimates of some of those key contributions and to contribute to better document the role of women in relation to fish production, processing, marketing and consumption. A team of 25 gender advisors representing 23 countries is supporting the preparation of the study. Importantly, this IHH study will include a section on food security and nutrition, with global estimates as well as with thematic studies, for example on the importance of small-scale fisheries in first 1,000 days of life. It will also look into sub-national analyses to better understand the linkages among small-scale fisheries, fish consumption, diet diversity, nutrition and the health status of children. Preliminary findings point to evidence that in some sub-national regions, pregnant and lactating women can consume one and a half times more fish than what is reported for all women at a national level.

The 'Blue Paper: Towards Ocean Equity' released earlier in 2020 has a section that examines the scientific documentation of inequities in small-scale fisheries which are undermining sustainable livelihoods and contribute to the loss of well-being. Among these, invisible gendered inequities are documented from multiple locations around that world, that illustrate how "women are often invisible, and hence marginalised in the management of marine resources (e.g. due to gender-blind policies, focus on formal and paid fishing activities, or the production segment of fisheries value chains)." Similar gendered inequity in access is documented in the form of "barriers to profitable segments of supply chains, and/or access to fishing grounds, boats, fishing, gear, financial capital, credit, education and alternative livelihoods." The key messages of the paper include that "a sustainable ocean economy should protect human rights, improve human well-being, stimulate inclusion and gender equity, and prioritise recognition, diversity and equal access to resources to provide fair opportunities consistent with sustainable development."

The previous sections illustrate the key imperative to ensure gender equity in small-scale fisheries as an enabling factor to fully support the supply of fish as food and as source of income, in line with SDG target 14.b – *Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets*. The realisation of this SDG target should be inclusive of men and women, and it should also be applied to inland fisheries.

A recent human rights instrument that amplifies the underlying SDG principle to leave

no one behind and that supports small-scale food producers, including fisherfolk, is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas<sup>1</sup> which was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018. This Declaration recalls fundamental instruments, such as CEDAW, and even refers to the SSF Guidelines. The Declaration pays specific attention to women, and countries should be held accountable to implement it.

The human rights based approach is also the underlying principle of a number of instruments developed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Some of these CFS instruments have direct links to the SSF Guidelines. The CFS is currently shepherding the international negotiations of Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition (VGFSyN) and the draft of these guidelines defines that "Food systems are complex webs of activities and actors involving the production, processing, handling, preparation, storage, distribution, consumption and ultimately waste of food. They are constantly being shaped by different forces, drivers and decisions by many different individuals. Every food system has the capacity to be equitable and to produce healthy diets needed for optimal nutrition. But, they can also be shaped by power concentration and imbalances, which may not be inclusive and equitable. Some food systems are sustainable while others show their limits in terms of sustainability and inefficiency in natural resource utilization, and in the use of labour and energy, leading to environmental degradation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity as well as to excessive food consumption and food waste patterns"

The objective of these new guidelines are in line with the traditional four dimensions of food security as they aim "to contribute to transforming food systems and promoting sustainable food systems to ensure that the food that contributes to sustainable healthy diets is available, affordable, accessible, safe, and of adequate quantity and quality while conforming with beliefs, culture and traditions, dietary habits, and preferences of individuals, in accordance with national and international laws and obligations." If agreed and applied properly, this last addition to the traditional definition of food security can make an important difference in relation to gender equity, and it will therefore be important for small-scale fisheries actors to engage in the finalization of these new guidelines.

To conclude, it is important to start preparing for the celebration of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA) that will be celebrated in 2022 and which will provide an opportunity to further analyse and showcase small-scale fisheries contributions and rights to food and nutrition security. ❏

**This recognition of the role of fisheries for food security and nutrition needs to go hand in hand with the recognition of the role of women in the sector**

# Coping with COVID

## The rapid spread of COVID-19 has introduced multiple challenges in the lives of small-scale fishers in Indonesia

By **Dedi Supriadi Adhuri** (dediadhuri@hotmail.com), Researcher, Research Centre for Society and Culture, Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Indonesia



Dedi Supriadi Adhuri

The COVID-19 pandemic that affected Indonesia in early March 2020 has impacted coastal communities, fisher households and fisher women. Information collected by women fisher activists in 12 provinces revealed that the pandemic has dealt a serious blow to fishing activities. It started with significant decreases in demand followed by significant decreases in fish prices. Reports from various provinces found that the price of fish dropped as low as 50 percent. In fact, in some cases no one was buying the fish at all. With this, there was no incentive for fishers to go fishing as the risk was too high. Additionally, since their savings were used for daily consumption, at the end of the day, fishers were left with no capital to go fishing anymore.

For fisher women, the sale of value added products, such as fish crackers, shrimp paste and other fish products through outlets such as gift shops in tourist areas, stopped. The government's strict prohibition of travel to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, has almost entirely wiped out the tourism and travel industry. A report produced by the Indonesian Traditional Fishers' Association confirmed these impacts were occurring in fishing communities all over Indonesia.

The Persaudaraan Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia (PPNI or Indonesian Fisher Women Sisterhood) has noted that these problems have created a double burden for fisher women. First, because COVID-19 has stopped both fishing activities and post-harvest related business, it

### COVID-19 Impact for Small-scale Fisher and Aquaculture Fisheries in Indonesia



Last data update on 22 April 2020

Sources:

KNTI Data Center, 2020

(Processed from Regional KNTI Officials)



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Women fishers, Indonesia. Information collected by women fisher activists in twelve provinces revealed that the pandemic has dealt a serious blow to fishing activities. It started with significant decreases in demand followed by significant decreases in fish prices.

has, in effect, closed two sources of income for fishing households. Second, the responsibility of putting food on the table rests in the hands of women. So, it has become the responsibility of women to meet all basic household needs.

In response to these problems, PPNI developed some activities to both minimise the spread of COVID-19 in coastal communities and support the basic needs of severely impacted households. Supported by some NGOs and independent activist, PPNI started the distribution of mask and foods. By the end of May, 5,000 masks and 3,000 packages of food such as rice, cooking oil, sugar and instant noodles had been distributed. This was an important source of support for fisher households. Significantly, the food was distributed at the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan marked by the Idul Fitri celebration.

In another round, PPNI distributed an additional 300 packages of food and 5000 masks in the second week of July. So far, given the volume of donations received, the distribution of masks and food packages has been limited to coastal communities in the districts of Demak, Jepara, Rembang and Kendal in Central Jawa, and Surabaya in West Jawa provinces.

COVID-19 in Indonesia is still a serious threat and the curve of infected cases is still rising. Although, for economic reasons, the Indonesian government has partially lifted travel restrictions, and economic activities have resumed, it seems that the pandemic will remain a threat for some time. People still need help to get back on to their own feet. The Indonesian

government has introduced a new term to deal with this circumstance – the New Normal, which implies that people have to learn to live with the potential threat of COVID-19.

PPNI is planning to continue supporting needy fisher households during the New Normal era. Under these circumstances, apart from collecting additional funds for food distribution, PPNI has now turned its attention to helping women fishers prepare to face the new normality. In this regard, PPNI started to expand initiatives toward more long-term empowerment. These include support for small-scale or home based fresh water fish aquaculture using waterproof plastic ponds, and metal or plastic containers.

PPNI also continues to support small-scale women-run businesses by connecting them to government funding sources or training activities. Some support to upgrade the packaging of women-produced, value added fisheries products has also been extended.

To increase market access, the PPNI is now trying to develop an online marketing scheme, and encouraging the use of Tokopedia, the online marketing platform. Although these initiatives depend on phone and internet access, it is important to recognise them as small steps in the right direction. ❏

**COVID-19 has dealt a serious blow to fishing activities**

# Interview of Mme Diaba Diop, general secretary of Pencum Sénégal (GÉF/ Women's Economic Group)

This interview is by **Assane Deme** (assanedeme00@gmail.com), General Secretary of the Network of Journalists for Responsible and Sustainable Fisheries in Africa (REJOPRA), Senegal, transcribed by **Béatrice Gorez** (cffa.cape@gmail.com), Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), Belgium, and translated from French to English by **Gildas** (digormor@orange.fr), France



Assane Deme



Béatrice Gorez

## How did you become a fish processor?

I became a fish processor when I left school. I had sat twice for the Bac ('A' Levels). My grandmother, who worked in that trade, was growing old. So I decided to join forces with her. By 1999, I became a full fledged processor. The site where I work is located at Thiaroye-sur-Mer, along the road leading to the School of Fisheries, near the landing wharf.

## Can you describe your work environment?

At our site, various processing techniques are used. Sardinella and ethmalosa are mainly braised. Species like machoiron, capitaine, and barracuda are fermented and dried to obtain a product named *guedj*. We also process the mollusc Cymbium.

Our site employs 218 persons in processing. Out of these, 117 women are members of Pencum and 54 women take part in certain preliminary stages of processing. There are also 45 men who help us in more physically laborious tasks.

At the processing site, we use traditional equipment: tables, drying racks, boxes for handling the fish, fermentation vats, buckets and basins, carts, scales, knives, and so on. The drying racks are made of wood but we use cement vats, which unfortunately are not conducive to improving the hygiene and quality standards of our products. At Pencum, we have 250 fermentation vats, with only a few made of plastic. These are more suitable because it is easier to keep them clean. Most of them were given to us by our partners, Coopérative Solidarité avec les Paysans pour l'Épargne et le Crédit de Citiboke (COSPEC) and The West African Association for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries (ADEPA).

It is essential to be properly equipped. We have received some training on hygiene and quality of food. But that alone is not enough; we need appropriate equipment. Our objective is to export our products successfully and to develop our activities. To that end, the facilities available on the processing sites would have to meet required standards.

## What challenges do you face?

Most of the goods that reach markets in the sub-region usually travel informally, packed

in suitcases or brought in by women. For example, when someone has an opportunity to participate in a trade fair, she might carry our products along. But only a minority can do that, and we have very few trade outlets abroad.

There are a number of women traders' groups engaged in cross-border activities, and we have contacts among them. On some occasions, we have travelled ourselves in the sub-region, looking for potential customers. Twice we attempted to organize a caravan to reach our products to places like Mali, Burkina and Togo. But on the way, we always faced harassment by the Customs authorities. We were constantly challenged, and each time it proved to be a waste of time. To move on, we had to make gifts to the police, left and right. This harms our revenue and is really disheartening!

Sometimes, we don't accompany our goods; we simply send the load to the destination country. This is a rather risky procedure, unless you have a reliable and trustworthy person at the other end. The buyer might tell you that the fish delivered was damaged, and you wouldn't know what the truth was! Therefore, many women choose to trade close to home in the usual way.

Senegal is part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which, at least theoretically, has a protocol allowing the free movement of goods and persons! I am asking our authorities to have a closer look at all that, especially during the official meetings of ECOWAS. It could be decided, for example, to have customs controls only at one or two checkpoints. Otherwise, selling our products abroad will remain a daunting experience.

## What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the sector?

Over the last few months, our sector has been deeply disturbed by the COVID-19 pandemic and also by the measures taken by the government to combat the disease. A state of emergency and curfew were put in place. Travelling was prohibited. As you know, in order to sell processed fish, one has to move from one region to another. Now, with borders closed and travelling restricted, how can we sell all our production?

Accessing adequate supplies of raw material is equally difficult. Usually, fishermen start

unloading at 5 am, continuing until nightfall. With a state of emergency in place, unloading is allowed only between 6 am and 1 pm. On top of that, there are days when fishermen are not permitted to land any fish at all. So, we process less and less fish, and also have a hard time selling this reduced production. We have all noted a decline in turnover, with consequent impacts on the family's daily life. It should be remembered that 56 percent of the women processors are heads of their households. The little money they earn goes towards meeting necessary expenses – family needs, school fees, and so on. Well, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children did miss school for three months and we have saved a bit on that count, but still, daily life remains very difficult.

The measures put in place to combat the pandemic have deeply affected sub-regional trade in processed fish as well. If we want to send our products to places within Senegal, we can somehow cope. We manage to identify the few vehicles heading for inland towns like Touba, for instance. But it is just impossible to send our goods to other countries of the sub-region – carriers no longer operate on these routes because borders are closed. A major part of the production meant for sale in these areas has been damaged. A sizable amount of goods intended for the domestic market has also been spoiled due to lack of transportation.

We traditionally import fish for processing from other countries of the sub-region. These are mostly large size species, such as barracuda, capitaine and grouper. These species are no longer found in our home waters. If we chance upon some, they are too expensive for our operations.

Lockdown restrictions have added to the problems of the sector already struggling to cope with overexploitation of fish resources. Sardinella usually is a species that undergoes the process of braising. Our supply has gone down drastically due to the imposed unloading hours. Fishing operations have a shorter duration, landings have therefore declined. And even when boats arrive with big catches, they are not allowed to unload if this happens outside the fixed hourly limits.

Of course, these hourly or daily limits are not the sole factor negatively impacting the availability of Sardinella. It is also a matter of overexploitation. During the meeting held by the profession regarding the use of Sardinella to supply the fishmeal units, the Centre for Oceanographic Research of Dakar-Thiaroye (CRODT) made it clear to us that small pelagics are overexploited. If we fail to take appropriate measures to preserve the stocks, Sardinella, which is the most popular fish in Senegal, may soon disappear. The thing is that some pirogues



We must develop our processing activities and head towards semi-industrial activities instead of relying solely on traditional artisanal processing, says Mme Diaba Diop, general secretary of Pencum Sénégal

with big catches sell their production to fishmeal units because they fail to find other outlets.

When the pandemic reached our shores, we had an abundant stock of processed fish. Generally, when a woman processor sees some fish, she buys and prepares it; then she waits for customers. But that fish has a limited shelf life; and with everything being disrupted by the spread of COVID-19, a lot of the production deteriorated. We could not sell it to our regular customers. As the product is unfit for human consumption, to reduce our losses we can only sell it at a very low price as poultry feed.

#### **What support does the sector require?**

When the crisis is over, we would like our ministry in charge to rehabilitate the processing sites. We are also asking for guidance and field training to master new techniques. The Présidente, Madam Mbathio Niang, keeps saying that we should not spent all our time begging for funds, because it is just a matter of time before the source dries up. My view is that women should be self-reliant. To that end, we must develop our processing activities and head towards semi-industrial activities instead of relying solely on traditional artisanal processing. ■

# Pandemic outcomes

## Women in the small scale fishing sector in Mexico are key drivers ensuring food security and community wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic

By **Inés López-Ercilla** (ilopez@cobi.org.mx) Comunidad y Biodiversidad AC. Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico, **Jorge Torre** (jtorre@cobi.org.mx), General director, COBI, Mexico, **Neyra Solano**, (nsolano@cobi.org.mx) Gender equality Specialist, COBI, Mexico and **Francisco Fernández** (ffernandez@cobi.org.mx), Catalyst of change, COBI, Mexico



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The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have surpassed all imaginable scenarios. The global crisis moves fast and changes quickly, hence forcing people to adapt and navigate through uncertainty as never before. Every generation faces impacts that shake their minds and force them to leave their comfort zone. This is an impact for a lifetime, for current and new generations. Other shocks have posed risks to fisheries before; some of them being global (climate change), regional (overfishing) or even local (illegal fishing, poverty, poor fishing management tools, lack of enforcement), to name only a few. However, the impact of the current pandemic greatly eclipses these in terms of scale and outcome.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicates that seafood represents 20 percent of the average animal protein intake per capita for almost half of the population worldwide; and up to 50 percent in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana or Sri Lanka, hence playing a paramount role in global food security. Additionally, fish production employs almost 60 million people, with 86 percent living in Asia, Africa and Latin America. As the world approaches a population of eight billion people, we face the fact that the numbers of undernourished and malnourished people have been growing. What is happening to these people in the face of COVID-19? Are they able to meet nutritional needs in a locked-down world? What role do women play in ensuring and delivering food security?

Mexico is a fishing exporting country, ranked 13th in the list of global fish producers; with approximately 170,000 fishers dedicated to coastal small-scale fisheries, according to official statistics. It is estimated that only eight percent of fishers are women, which is likely an underestimation of true numbers, as we are aware of major existing data gaps and gender bias with only people dedicated to harvesting being counted in these statistics. There are also very few studies about women in decision making. For example, in Isla Natividad (Mexican Pacific), only 9.1 per cent of high level positions in industrial fishing are represented by women. When considering an inclusive value chain-based approach in some Mexican fisheries, the number can increase to a ratio of one woman per five men or around 20 percent.

In April 2020, COBI (Comunidad y Biodiversidad AC) designed and implemented a survey to understand how COVID-19 is impacting small-scale fisheries in Mexico. Since then, interviews of 194 people on average were conducted each month (between 93 to 241 interviewees) from up to 88 fishing organizations covering 70 percent of coastal states at the national level and up to 20 fisheries. Women's participation in the interviews varied from 27 percent up to 37 percent. Early socio-economic impacts were reported, with 89 per cent of the interviewees declaring that they were affected by market lockdown and reporting price reductions from 30 per cent to 60 per cent, depending on the fishery. Those who continued fishing reported decrease in capture from 30 per cent to 80 per cent. Markets showed a preference for canned or processed food during this period, which went hand in hand with confinement measures such as panic storage of food. Twenty-nine percent of the interviewees attributed these changes to the pandemic. Also, processed seafood increases the consumer's confidence on the product. Women's role in post-production has been a key factor towards maintaining the household income. But with children not attending schools, and even more household responsibilities being sustained by women alone, continued involvement in post production activities has stretched the working day for already overworked women even further. The same situation is observed when a family member gets sick; it is generally the women (daughters, mothers, sisters) who take responsibility, and care for these people. Women in the fishing sector are most likely facing a triple burden in the gender division of labour; as well as disproportionate COVID-19 effects.

In the face of the pandemic, FAO also echoed fears about the impact of COVID-19 being particularly negative for women across economic sectors including fishing, due to the significant reduction in work and income. Those in seafood trade are vulnerable to exposure to viral load since markets are aggregation hubs with limited sanitisation and protective equipment, and since these workers lack direct access to medical care. From among the 56 women interviewed by COBI in June 2020, approximately one-third (31 per cent)





Fisherwomen harvesting clams, Gulf of California, Mexico. Except for those with fishing permits, the majority of women are not recognized as fishers in national statistics. Thus, they do not have the same access to social protection benefits offered by some governments to manage the COVID-19 outbreak

stated that they were not affiliated to any health system. Another third - 31 per cent - of the women who reportedly did have access to social security services, indicated that they were not the card holders, but appeared as beneficiaries of their husband's cards.

Additionally, except for those with fishing permits, the majority of women are not recognised as fishers in national statistics. Thus, they do not have the same access to social protection benefits offered by some governments to manage the COVID-19 outbreak. This is especially true of those who do not have the support of a fishing organization. For example, in Mexico, the government extended the BIENPESCA subsidy to the sector – the sole support provided to fishers during this period in the form of a one-time payment in May-June of approximately 325 USD. It declared that 21 percent of the subsidy amount would be for women out of a list of 193,200 beneficiaries. This would have been the first time that the subsidy was delivered to women participating in different activities in the fishing value chain. However, our interviews in May did not reflect the payment of this amount. With a sample size of 241 people from 64 fishing communities, we found not a single woman who was a beneficiary of the subsidy amount though at that time, the subsidy had not been delivered to all the beneficiaries and this result may since have

change. In the interviews, the fishers reported an unequal delivery of the economic stimulus related to fisheries between women and men as a result of the low numbers of women officially registered in the census. A fisherman stated: “The government is helping with food supplies during the pandemic. However, my wife has tried to access the stimulus package meant for the fisheries sector through her cooperative but is always left out”. Another fisherwoman added: “The stimulus is for our husbands”.

The change in family dynamics due to lockdown has also affected women's health and overall community wellbeing. Increases in violence against women within families have been reported, forcing the government to address such violence. There are national radio announcements advising women to have an emergency bag packed ready as well as access to a supportive network, (commonly, a woman friend or family member) in case of an emergency. Also, alcohol sales have been restricted or forbidden in many states, as a ‘dry law’ initiative to prevent domestic violence triggered by alcohol consumption. Despite this, during the ongoing lockdown, there has been an increase in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. But the rising prices of alcohol, shortages and bans, coupled with anxiety, low frustration tolerance, unemployment, and confinement have all fueled violence against

**Women are traditionally invisible, ignored and under-represented in fisheries worldwide, though they play a key role in providing food security**

women. This combination has led to an increase in domestic violence-related distress calls reported by the National Women's Institute in Mexico (INMujeres), whose response capacities have been overstretched by the pandemic, and which faces severe budget constraints to implement projects.

Interestingly, some women are displaying great levels of adaptive capacity and entrepreneurship in Mexican fishing communities together with collective action. For instance, a fishing cooperative in the Mexican Caribbean began door-to-door sales of seafood products to enable their cooperative to maintain at least a minimum income during the pandemic. A member of the cooperative who worked as a technician with the cooperative took the lead in organizing the logistics, using existing platforms, such as their Facebook page, in an innovative way to boost sales. This also boosted food security by ensuring that high quality animal protein reached families in need. Additionally, the price for fin fish fillet was lowered since it became clear that local families could not afford to pay the usual prices, given the high degree of job loss with tourism, hotels and restaurants all shutting down.

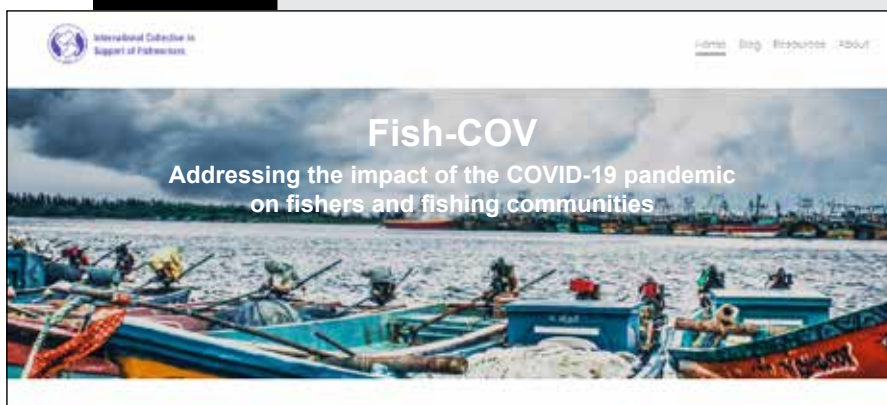
Through our interviews, we have observed equal contributions from men and women to

innovative adaptation strategies and solutions. Women from fishing communities are developing alternative activities to stabilise their incomes. These activities include preparation and trading of food (46 percent), cleaning and sanitisation of spaces and clothing (14 percent), selling general products such as makeup, jewellery and clothing (12 percent), as well as preparation of personal protection equipment (PPE) against COVID-19, handicrafts and conservation activities.

Women are traditionally invisible, ignored and underrepresented in fisheries worldwide, though they play a key role in providing food security. Sadly, the pandemic has done nothing but exacerbated those effects, deepening the gender gap in fisheries. An interviewee remarked that more gender-inclusive leadership could be the way forward since "we have read that countries led by women are getting out of the crisis more quickly". Women display great adaptive capacities and will probably play a key role in the path to the new normality. Therefore, greater opportunities must be generated for them to participate in decision-making arenas, so that their ideas are heard and considered when building resilience of fishing communities in the face of the current crisis. ❏

What's New,  
Webby?

## Covering COVID-19



Since its outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, COVID-19 has spread to 202 countries and territories, leading to 14,508,892 confirmed cases and 606,206 deaths as on 20 July, 2020. ICSF SAMUDRA and DC daily news alerts have tracked the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on fisheries value chains since the early stages of the pandemic. Launched in May, ICSF's new website (<https://covid.icsf.net>)

has drawn on these news alerts and information from ICSF's networks of members and partners to map the effects of lockdown restrictions, closure of markets and restaurants, and changes in demand and supply of fish and fish products around the world. The website presents information on specific sectoral issues, guidelines and best practices at national, regional and international levels, on two parameters – impact on fishing communities and relief measures by governments and multilateral bodies. The website will also disseminate new information as signs of recovery emerge in the fisheries sector.

For more information, visit: <https://covid.icsf.net> ❏

By **Manas Roshan**  
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Manas Roshan

**L**ovin Kobusingye is a well-known young woman fish entrepreneur working in Central Uganda's Wakiso District. For over eight years, she, along with her two partners and over a thousand other fish farmers, has worked on fish processing and value addition. At the same time, she has persistently lobbied the government to support women-led entrepreneurship through an enabling policy framework designed to protect women in fisheries activities both in Uganda and, at a higher level, throughout Africa.

Lovin Kobusingye has a string of achievements to her credit. She is the Director and Co-Founder of Kati Farms (U) Ltd, a fish agro-processing enterprise. She is also the President of the Eastern Africa Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture Association (WIFA) that includes representation from eleven countries: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, southern Sudan, Sudan and Tanzania. She is President of the Uganda National Women's Fish Organization (UNWFO) and Treasurer of the African Women Fish Processors and

managers at the Cooperative did not wish to invest into processing but they encouraged Lovin to start a fish processing business as a side job. That was the start of Kati Farms. Based in Wakiso, it now buys 15 metric tons of fresh fish from Ugandan farmers every week for processing into various fish-based processed foods for the local market and for export to East, Central and Southern African neighbouring countries

Lovin's idea was to use all the fish being delivered by farmers to launch a brand new product: fish sausages. But because she didn't know how to run a business let alone produce a sausage, she needed to build her own capacity in business management and food processing. She had heard about a business incubator at the Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), which funded, trained, and hosted businesses of young entrepreneurs. The UIRI's Head of Production was supportive of Lovin's innovative business proposal. Capital was however needed to fund the growth of the enterprise. Commercial banks considered the venture too risky. The only people willing to help financially were the fish farmers in the cooperative. They agreed to provide their raw material on credit and only be paid at the end of each week.

The Farmers Cooperative, with its ongoing fish production training programme and a ready market outlet created by Kati Farms, now has 1000 members. Kati Farms purchases 15 tons of fish every week, equivalent to 75 per cent of the total production. The fish meat is processed into 1.5 tons of sausages and other products like chilled gutted whole fish, chilled fish fillets, fish samosas, and fish mince for pet food.

The operations are scientifically and hygienically managed. To produce fish sausages, for example, the fish purchased from farmers is separated into fillets, trimmings and fatty tissues, all of which are cut into small pieces. The fish fillets and fats are ground separately in a 3 mm mesh. The resulting fish mince and fats are chopped together with ice, spices and food additives and chilled to +12°C. This mixture is stuffed into sausage casings of 26 to 28 mm diameter, and the sausages are linked and twisted to form individual pieces, each about 50 g in weight. The sausages are packed in plastic pouches to reach the retail weight of 0.5 kg (10 pieces) or 1 kg (20 pieces). Finally, the packed sausages are frozen to -18°C, at which temperature they can be stored for three to six months.

Launched as a fledgling enterprise in the UIRI business incubator with only 800 USD worth of savings, Lovin's Kati Farms is now worth an equivalent of 400,000 USD, shared among three investors. It provides direct employment to 38 people and indirect employment to about 500 others through distribution, marketing and sales activities.

Lovin Kobusingye's achievements are a source of inspiration to women not just in Uganda or even Africa but to women all over the world. **M**

## PROFILE

### **Adding value to fish: Lovin Kobusingye is not just a successful woman entrepreneur in Uganda but an influential voice in shaping pan-African fisheries policies**

By **Nasser Kasozi**  
(katifarms@yahoo.com) Kati Farms (U) Ltd, Uganda



Lovin Kobusingye

Traders Network (AWFISHNET). Co-created by African Union Commission, AWFISHNET is a group that brings together women in fisheries throughout the African continent. One of Lovin Kobusingye's biggest achievements was in 2012, when she won the Africa Agribusiness Award. She was also recognised jointly by the Rabobank Foundation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Market Research Centre (EMRC) as the best innovator of the year for her flagship product, the fish sausage, made from farmed fish. With all these achievements to her credit, Lovin Kobusingye has never looked back.

Her first venture, Kati Farms, grew out of her search to link Ugandan fish farmers with markets. Her first job in 2008, after graduation, was with the Fish Farmers Cooperative Society, where she joined as a programme administrator for what was then a 34-member fish farmers' cooperative. She conducted training programmes to help farmers produce more fish. Very quickly the productivity of the aquaculture ponds increased. Farmers started bringing in more fish to the cooperative office. Their complaint however was that there was no market for their fresh fish. So Lovin also started looking for marketing outlets. She approached processing plants in Uganda. No one seemed to be interested on account of multiple problems: small volumes, bad taste, too many bones, and irregular supply by smallholder farmers. The

# Reaching out, holding hands

**The President of the Association of Indigenous Communities of the Middle Negro River (ACIMRN), Sandra Gomes, speaks about the challenges indigenous communities face due to the COVID-19 pandemic**

By **Lorena França** (alorenafranca@gmail.com), anthropologist and Ph D candidate at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil; **Luclécia Cristina Morais da Silva** (lucrisms@yahoo.com.br), professor, Federal Institute of Amazonas and Ph D candidate at the Federal University of Amazonas, Brazil; and **Beatriz Mesquita Pedrosa Ferreira** (mesquitabia@hotmail.com), researcher, Joaquim Nabuco Foundation, Brazil, and ICSF member



Lorena França



Luclécia Cristina Morais da Silva



Beatriz Mesquita Pedrosa Ferreira

The Negro River in the Amazon region is the largest black water river in the world. Its basin area of approximately 750,000 sq. km accounts for seven percent of the total area of the Amazon basin, and its length from pre-Andean Colombia to its mouth, is approximately 1,700 km, making it the Amazon's largest tributary.

The Negro River concentrates a population of approximately 97,000 inhabitants, located between the municipalities of São Gabriel da Cachoeira in the Upper Negro river area, and the municipalities of Santa Isabel do Rio Negro and Barcelos in the Middle Negro River area. This population depends directly on the river and its fish for daily subsistence. The municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira alone has a population of approximately 45,000 inhabitants while between the Içana and Uaupés rivers, more than 750 indigenous communities live. This is a region of wide cultural diversity, congregating 23 indigenous communities belonging to diverse language families.

The indigenous populations along the Negro River are among the most vulnerable in the world, facing grave threats from the COVID-19 pandemic. From May to June 2020, the numbers infected with the virus increased fivefold and the number of deaths doubled, according to data compiled by the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB). According to the president of Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro (FOIRN), Marivelton Barroso, the great challenge is to safeguard the health of community elders: "They are like a living library in our midst. The main doctor and teacher is the traditional village elder". In fact, the region has already lost many village elders, artists and leaders, who carried a depth of knowledge, to the virus.

A collapsed health system and the lack of intensive care facilities in the region greatly increase the vulnerability of the local indigenous population. As of 12 July, São Gabriel da Cachoeira had 2,982 confirmed cases, 192 under observation and 47 registered deaths. To meet the challenge and build preparedness, the indigenous peoples have been organizing themselves in networks along with community associations, public institutions

and non-governmental organizations.

One of the most proactive community associations in the region is the Association of Indigenous Communities of the Middle Negro River (ACIMRN). Founded in 1994, its mission is to defend indigenous collective rights as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of 1988, to encourage cultural preservation and the revitalisation of traditional medicine, and to promote the sustainable development of indigenous communities towards autonomy and self-determination.

The president of ACIMRN, Sandra Gomes spoke to us about the challenges faced by the indigenous peoples of the Negro River. Sandra Gomes de Castro is a Baré Indian, a teacher, current president of the association and a former city councilwoman. She has been active in the indigenous movement in the region for 14 years. In March 2019, she participated in the Indigenous Fisheries Seminar in Amazonas, which was organized in Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, by the NGO Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN) with support from the International Collective of Support to Artisanal Fisheries (ICSF).

Sandra described at length the impact of the pandemic and the response by civil society and other organizations.

"COVID-19 here in our municipality took a little while to arrive. Now (late July, 2020) it has reached its peak. In just one month there has been an absurd increase, both in the city and in the countryside."

Regarding the food security situation in Santa Isabel do Rio Negro, Sandra said, "In Santa Isabel, in the city, there has been no lack of fish or food in general. With activities paralysed, families returned to their homes in rural areas, to their family farms and traditional practices. So the city is emptier. The fishers from both the city and the communities fished a lot during the dry season, between February and June when the river level drops, so there was quite a lot of stock! Moreover, practically all indigenous communities are regularly receiving basic food



Sandra Gomes



Indigenous net fisher on the Negro river, a major tributary of the Amazon. Our main activities aimed at social and environmental sustainability in the region are projects associated with tourism

assistance through FOIRN, distributed by us at ACIMRN.”

“People have been given two masks each for protection and communities have received materials and posters for awareness-raising,” she added. “The ISA (Instituto Socioambiental) prepared booklets in different indigenous languages for distribution along the Negro River with guidelines for the prevention of the contagion and the identification of symptoms. Here we distributed the booklets in the community of Roçado, in Portuguese, Nheengatu and Nadeb.”

Regarding civil society response, Sandra said, “Greenpeace, through its Wings of Emergency campaign, has brought protective equipment and rapid test kits by airplane. The União Amazônia Viva has managed to send people some basic food aid. In general, this support is financed by the group of institutions that was already supporting FOIRN’s actions: the government, FUNAI, the Norwegian Embassy, the Rainforest Foundation and ISA. But now we have new partners like Greenpeace and also Nia Tero. ACIMRN fought hard to be part of the COVID-19 response committee, as the municipality’s health secretariat did not accept other institutions at first. However, with much effort and persistence, we succeeded. This representation with the municipal policy helps a lot to ensure the best assistance for the communities.”

Another worrying aspect of the pandemic is the negative impact on local livelihoods.

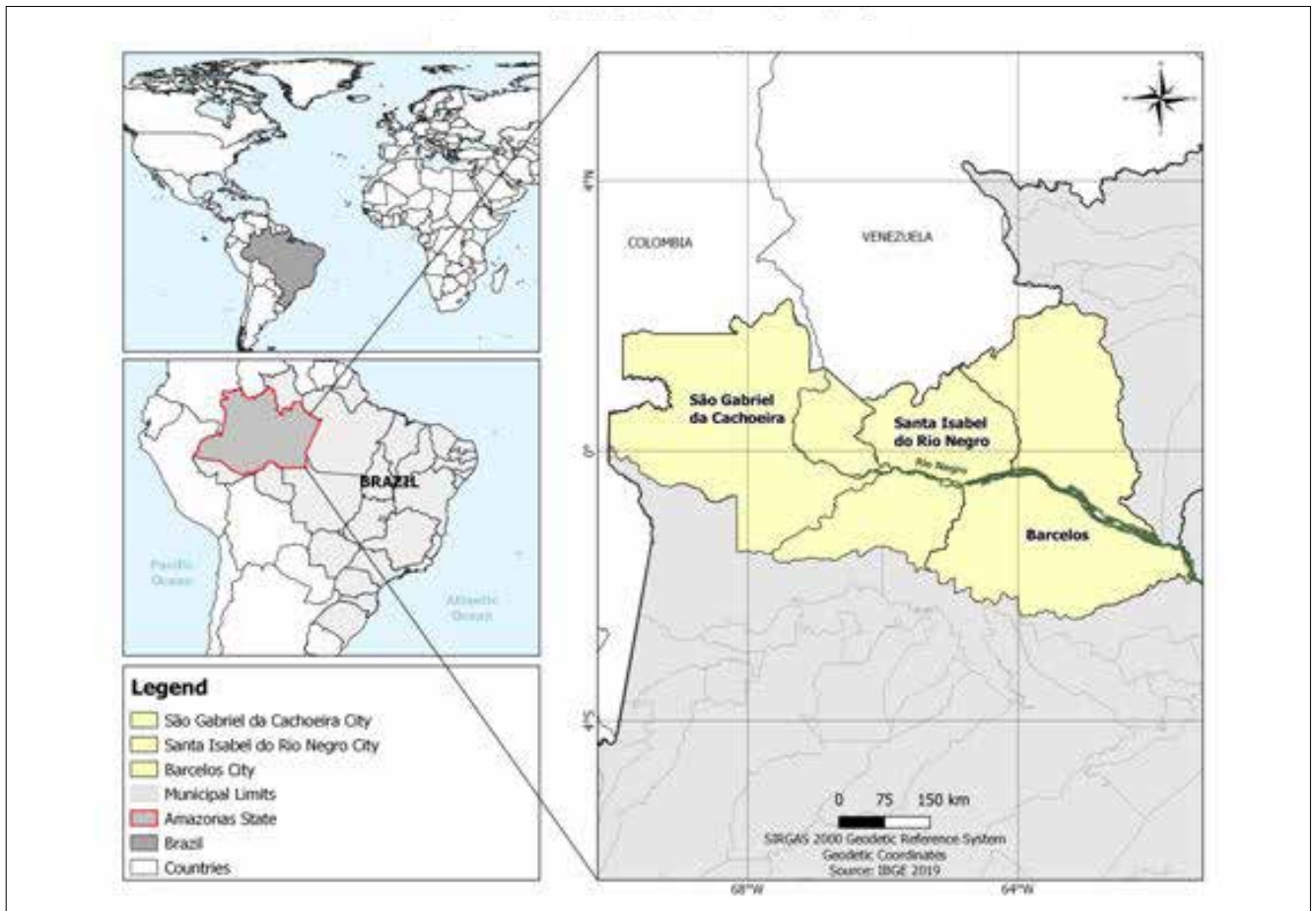
The ACIMRN represents 29 indigenous communities located on the banks and islands of the Middle Negro River and its tributaries, and also the indigenous population residing in the urban area. It is a bridge for the activities of FOIRN and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations in the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB). One of the pioneering ventures to stand out in this part of the region along the Marié River, a tributary of the Middle Rio Negro, is the experience of community-based fish tourism. After years of exploitative pressure from companies that brought groups of tourists to fish for peacock bass (*Chicla temensis*), the indigenous movement, with support from the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) of the federal government and the non-governmental organisation Instituto Socioambiental, managed to guarantee contracts to regulate the activity in ways that respected the environment and the traditional population.

Sandra discussed the challenges in sustaining local livelihoods dependent on fish tourism.

“Our season starts in the middle of September and ends mid February. Nevertheless, we are concerned for the next season because FUNAI has suspended the letters of consent (authorisation documents for the legal entry of companies). Next week we will have a meeting with some business people to evolve a contingency plan. I imagine that together we can think of a way to safeguard the project. Our biggest concern is sustaining the wages of security guards in the territories, as

**We have learned to open up more than ever before. We have learned that together we are stronger**

## Upper and Middle Rio Negro river basin (elaboration by the authors)



the money for that comes from the fish tourism contracts.”

We then asked Sandra to tell us about indigenous health regimens to build immunity against the virus.

“When people heard about COVID-19, they thought it was a complicated flu,” she said. “Consequently, to prevent it, many people started to drink homemade or bottled tea. The teas are mixed with ginger, lemon and garlic. However, the most commonly used concoctions are the ‘bottled’ ones: you take a bottle and put in it some *caranapaúba* bark (*Aspidosperma nitidum*), some *umiri* bark (*Humiria balsamifera*), some *saracura mirá* (*Ampelozizyphus amazonicus*) and let it sit overnight. In the Roçado community, they also use *tauari* bark (*Couratari tauari*). These are all very bitter plants, and must have some chemistry because they make the body strong.”

Finally, we ask her about future plans to strengthen the social, environmental and productive sustainability of indigenous communities.

“Our main activities aimed at social and environmental sustainability in the region are projects associated with tourism,” says Sandra. “This could be fish tourism in the Marié and Jurubaxi rivers or community tourism in the

Guerras Mountains. We believe that these are good ways to mobilise people in the community, generate income and protect the territory. In fact, last year we, from FOIRN and ACIMRN, with the support of ISA and the NGO Garupa, won the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) recognition award for innovative indigenous tourism projects. The prize money will be invested in infrastructure. And now the business people who work with us are our partners too.”

Sandra is full of strength and optimism about the future. “In general, with this pandemic,” she says, “we have learned to unite even more. The state, municipal and federal governments in Brazil had hardly been concerned with indigenous peoples, but we did not give up lobbying with them, as and when necessary. We have learned to open up more than ever before; we have learned that together we are stronger; we have learned that only those who live in the forest know what it is to take care of themselves and others. We have learned never to be intimidated by criticism and abandonment.”

*Note: The authors are grateful to Sandra Gomes, who gave the interview by teleconference under challenging conditions of communication and connectivity. ❏*

# Fishing for crustaceans

This photo-essay depicts the practice of aratu fishing carried out by women in the mangroves of northeastern Brazil

By **Beatriz Mesquita Pedrosa Ferreira** (mesquitabia@hotmail.com), researcher, Joaquim Nabuco Foundation, Brazil, and ICSF member



Beatriz Mesquita Pedrosa Ferreira

**A**ratu (*Goniopsis cruentata*) are small, reddish crustaceans that live on the branches of mangroves. They are processed and sold, the sweetness of the meat making them a prized delicacy.

Aratu fishing is carried out mostly by women, for whom it is a source of income, allowing them to get by without formal employment, and offering a certain freedom in their lives.

Unlike the crab, the aratu is a fast breeder but both types of crustaceans have their own pros and cons. “If aratu bred like crab, there wouldn’t be much to pick since there are a lot of people fishing. We’re lucky that it reproduces fast. Crab is less labour intensive and fetches more money. Aratu has to be picked before it is sold; crab doesn’t need any such processing”

Aratu are fast moving crustaceans and require stillness and patience to capture. They move with the tide, and to catch them fisherwomen need to have an intimate knowledge of the local mangroves and tides. Aratu fishing requires special skills. The capacity to remain almost immobile and the choice of the right spot in the mangroves are crucial for success. Trying to fish in a spot recently harvested would be fruitless, and so the fisherwomen first inspect a site closely for marks and signs that indicate recent harvesting by other fishers. The fisherwomen then enter the lagoon and begin to move ahead in a circle as they fish. If there are men in the area, the women usually move to another location.

This photo essay depicts the way of life of the aratu fisherwomen as well as the production processes they follow. The fisherwomen shown here are led by Elialda Avelino, a leader of the Puxim do Sul community, who is always joined by two or three co-workers who may be family members or neighbours, since aratu fishing in the mangroves is never done alone.

The engine was acquired by the community about five years ago. As a result, travel time decreased and the fishing territory increased. Fishing however is most viable when there are four people to split fuel costs.

It is a long journey to find the ideal fishing spot, typically, a mangrove that has still “not been fished”, that is, it was not harvested the

previous night. Places with bee hives are strictly avoided. The choice of fishing site is usually left to the most experienced fisherwoman in the group.

Entering the mangrove requires knowledge and attention. You must wear special clothes to protect yourself from insects, special socks and shoes to facilitate walking and balancing on the roots of the mangrove, and a meticulous search to decide where to start fishing.

## Why fish aratu?

“Crab brings in more money but is hard work; more suitable for men! Blue crab is lighter but it only appears from time to time. Aratu is present all year round. It suits women more. Men don’t like it, they prefer the crab.”

Attracting the aratu is an activity best done alone, and so the fisherwomen separate while fishing. Just as the movement of the human body drives the aratu away, certain stimuli attract them, including bait - usually small crabs called almofala (*Aratus pisonii*), the bark of trees, and also certain sounds – for example, the sound of whistling. Many fisherwomen have reported that in the mangroves as they fish in silence for aratu, they feel as if all their problems disappear. The stillness necessary to attract the creatures appears to bring peace into the lives of the aratu women as well.

Fifty aratus are needed for a yield of half a kilogram of processed product. Daily production varies between half and two kilos a day in winter, and may reach up to eight kilos a day during the best fishing period, which is summer. Journey time to reach fishing spots in the mangrove may take four to six hours.

Much more work and time are required in the post harvest phase. The aratus are cooked right after fishing, and then their shells are removed. This work may go on well into the night with a kilo of aratu taking up to two hours to process.

The price of a kilo depends on the time of year. In the summer, when production is higher, the price is around R\$ 20.00 (5 USD).

The residual shells are used as fertiliser and chicken feed.

The women report that yields have been declining. In the last 20 years, the practice of



Preparation and arranging the material. It is a long journey to find the ideal fishing spot, typically, a mangrove that has still “not been fished”, that is, it was not harvested the previous night.





Preparation and arranging the material. Aratu fishing is carried out mostly by women, for whom it is a source of income, allowing them to get by without formal employment, and offering a certain freedom in their lives.



Entering the mangrove, choosing the fishing location. Entering the mangrove requires knowledge and attention. You must wear special clothes to protect yourself from insects; special socks and shoes to facilitate walking and balancing on the roots of the mangrove



Aratu are fast moving crustaceans and require stillness and patience to capture. They move with the tide, and to catch them, fisherwomen need to have an intimate knowledge of the local mangroves and tides.



How to attract aratu?. Many fisherwomen have reported that in the mangroves as they fish in silence for aratu, they feel as if all their problems disappear. The stillness necessary to attract the creatures appears to bring peace into the lives of the aratu women as well



The fisherwomen enter the lagoon and begin to move ahead in a circle as they fish. If there are men in the area, the women usually move to another location



Post harvest work. Much more work and time are required in the post harvest phase. The aratus are cooked right after fishing, and then their shells are removed. This work may go on well into the night with a kilo of aratu taking up to two hours to process

night fishing using lights, carried out mainly by men, although prohibited in the Management Agreement of the Protected Marine Area Canavieiras Resex, has grown.

The author would like to thank: all the fishers and leaders who opened their fishing universe to her; the managers of the Canavieiras Resex; the Amex – Mother Association of the Resex, and finally, all the fisherwomen of Puxim do Sul, represented by Elialda Avelino, who welcomed the author into her world.

[Note: The images are part of the research study 'Political ecology of crustacean fishing in mangroves in northeastern Brazil', which was carried out over the last three years (2017-2020) by the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation in the Protected Marine Areas for Sustainable Use (Resex) in Northeast Brazil. This essay is based in the Resex of Canavieiras, Southern Bahia, Brazil.] ❏



## Milestones

By Ahana Lakshmi  
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Ahana Lakshmi

# Pulled Backward

## The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SDG 5

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. How has progress towards this end been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? A new report, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, released in July by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presents an overview of progress towards the SDGs before the pandemic started, but it also looks at some of the devastating initial impacts of COVID-19 on specific goals and targets. We focus here on SDG 5: Gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Data indicates that there has been considerable progress over the last decades with more girls in school, despite regional variations, and a reduction in maternal mortality, which fell by 38 percent between 2000 and 2017, as well as an increase in legal and regulatory reforms in support of gender equality. Data from 133 countries shows that women now have better access to decision making positions at the local level, mainly through legislated gender quotas. Women continue to face higher barriers in getting jobs and even when they get employed, they are often excluded from decision making positions. The gender gap in labour force participation among adults aged 25 to 54 has stagnated over the past 20 years standing at 31 percentage points. Globally, while 39 percent of employed women work in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, only 14 percent of agricultural landholders are women. The COVID-19 pandemic may reverse any progress and exacerbate existing inequalities as women are having take on additional unpaid domestic and care work as schools and day-care centres are closed. Women also account for nearly 70 percent of health and social workers globally which means that they are in the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. The pandemic is also intensifying the risk of violence against women and girls and many of those seeking help, including medical

help, are not able to because of lockdowns and service disruptions. Women in fisheries who form the bulk of the post-harvest sector have also been hit hard with disrupted supply-chains, lock-downs and lack of public transport that has restricted fish vendors from reaching landing centres and markets.

In the case of the fisheries sector, women play a crucial role throughout the fish value chain, providing labour in both commercial and artisanal fisheries. However, SDG 5 data is not available in a disaggregated manner for the fisheries and aquaculture sector. From fisheries and labour at sea to migration and human trafficking via waterways, gender equality is critical to the effective protection and sustainable management of the ocean and marine resources. These are being addressed through a number of voluntary commitments for SDG 14 which would also positively impact SDG 5 building on gender and ocean initiatives launched at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference by countries, civil society and business (Gender equality grows as key aspect of sustainable ocean management. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2020/03/gender-equality-grows-as-key-aspect-of-sustainable-ocean-management/>). These commitments can be found in <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>. Examples include Blue Justice for Small Scale Fisheries (BTI Global), Small-Scale Fisheries Academy in Senegal (Mundus maris asbl), Enhancing Coastal Communities Social and Ecological Resilience and Reducing Vulnerabilities towards Fisherfolk Empowerment (Tambuyog Development Center) and Pacific Women Defend the Commons, Pacific Communities Defend the Commons (Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality, Fiji).

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 can be accessed at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/>

The report on SDG 5 can be accessed at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/goal-05/> 📄

## YEMAYA MAMA

## “A fishy deal”



DOCUMENT

# Seguridad Alimentaria (Food Security) – A short film on food Security and small-scale fisheries in Costa Rica

Produced by Poró Studio, directed by CoopeSoliDar R.L, 187 seconds, Spanish with English subtitles

By **Vishakha Gupta** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Associate, ICSF



Vishakha Gupta

“From the sea to the plate”, remarks Cintia Vega in ‘Seguridad Alimentaria’ (‘Food Security’), a short film directed by CoopeSoliDar. She is talking about fresh seafood in Cabuya, a small fishing village on the Nicoya Peninsula of Costa Rica, and her words capture the significance that fish as food holds for the coastal Costa Rican community.

In Costa Rica, 14,800 artisanal fishers were identified on both coastlines and inland waters in the period 2009-11. When we consider their families and communities, the number increases nearly fourfold with almost 50,000 people depending upon marine and inland resources for their food security and livelihoods.

Food security depends on a wide range of factors, including availability, stability of supply, access and utilization or absorption leading to improved nutrition. For an artisanal fishworker both in Costa Rica and in other parts of the world, these are addressed to a certain extent by their tenure rights and capacity to fish and gather marine resources in coastal waters. Women from different parts of the country reiterate that fish is not only for the market

but first of all, for their families, providing an essential part of their staple diet.

Through the film, the cultural significance of fishing, gathering and eating seafood is highlighted in kaleidoscopic ways. From families working together and community members supporting one another to experiences connecting generations. Hellen Serracin from Cabuya talks about how activities such as fishing and clam gathering, in particular, are experiences through which the community connects and continues to pass their heritage forward.

Alejandra Matarrita from Cabuya shares how community members offer support to one another in small but meaningful ways. This is part of the film’s larger effort to show the balance of relationships and support structures that exist within the fishworker community which accrue in benefits such as reduced costs of operation and enhanced food security.

The work and contributions of women in the fishing sector often go unrecognised and unacknowledged. This film challenges that invisibility with almost every frame. Women play an integral role in several steps of the value chain. The film highlights this work, not by drawing special attention to their contributions, but by simply naturalising it.

The film also draws attention to coastal communities’ inherent drive to protect and manage an ecological balance which supports the continued productivity of their marine resources, for example, through the targeted fishing of the invasive Lion Fish.

Peppered with mouth-watering scenes of preparing and cooking fresh seafood with local produce, the film undeniably reinforces the importance of fish as food. Especially for a community whose lives and histories are intertwined with the seafood they produce. The diversity of food shown also provides an indication of the nutritionally diverse diet which coastal communities, given their livelihoods, can access.

For coastal communities, fishing is a way of life, not simply a means to an end. It is the shared bedrock upon which the well-being of small scale fishworkers thrives. The film reasserts this fact and impresses upon the viewer the need to protect and support small scale fishworkers.

Supported by ICSF, this film has been created by CoopeSoliDar R.L and Poró Studio. The film can be viewed on CoopeSoliDar R.L’s YouTube channel along with the other films in this series, which are on climate change, governance, blue economy, and diversity in Costa Rica’s small-scale fisheries sector.

The film may be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Yw5y8qRVfw&t=1s>



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note

that write-ups should be brief, about 2000 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working

towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.  
Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.