

Voices of fisheries leadership

This interview with **Josana Pinto da Costa** (josanaserrao@gmail.com), Member of the National Coordination Committee of the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen (Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais -MPP), Óbidos, Pará, Brazil, was conducted by **N.Venugopalan** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Manager, ICSF, on 18 October, 2024, with help from **Sofia Norton** (sofia.norton@sapo.pt), Translator and Interpreter, Lisbon, Portugal

Q. *It's noteworthy that the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Brazil (MPP) includes both men and women, unlike many other organizations. The MPP was created to amplify the voices of fishermen and draw attention to their struggles, including water and land contamination and human rights violations against displaced communities. Could you reflect on the origins of the MPP and share your concerns for the coming years?*

A: One of the movement's greatest concerns is grassroots political education. By focusing on this foundation, we aim to strengthen the movement and empower young people, both men and women. This empowerment enables us to continue denouncing the various forms of violence affecting our territories. Our goal is to address issues at the grassroots level, particularly around gender and youth inclusion.

Q. *Here's a question that may interest Yemaya readers. Female fishermen account for approximately 40–45% of all registered fishermen in Brazil. Yet, policies and legislation, such as Law No. 11.959 on fisheries management, seem to exhibit gender bias. These policies fail to recognize the crucial role of fisherwomen and lack adequate measures to support them or secure their labour rights. Could you pinpoint this gap? What are its main causes, and how does the organization plan to address it?*

A: Fisheries have historically been seen as male-dominated work. Even though there is legislation on small-scale fisheries, women are not adequately represented. Rights remain limited, and in some regions—particularly northeastern Brazil—women are the primary producers of fish. They sustain their households, children, and themselves through fishing activities.

Despite the existence of fisheries laws, these laws need to be improved to reflect the realities and contributions of fisherwomen. Public authorities often fail to recognize this. For instance, when a fisherwoman applies for support from government agencies, like social welfare offices, or seeks benefits such as maternity, sickness, or retirement aid, her credibility is often questioned based on appearance. If she appears well-groomed, civil servants may doubt her status as a fisherwoman. This prejudice effectively criminalizes fisherwomen, as if they must conform to a stereotypical image to validate their profession.

We in the fishermen's movement have consistently denounced this form of discrimination and prejudice within public institutions. Addressing this issue remains a critical challenge in Brazil.

With the return of a progressive government, the Ministry of Fisheries has been reinstated. The ministry is now collaborating with others, such as the Ministry of Health and the General Secretariat of the Presidency, to create protection mechanisms for fisherwomen. These include measures to enhance safety and well-being at work. For example, work protection kits are being planned, which include sunscreen to address the intensifying heat caused by climate change.

Fishing, whether in mangroves, coastal areas, or continental waters, comes with shared challenges, and these efforts aim to address them. The artisanal fishermen's movement is closely monitoring these developments and pushing for these plans to move from paper to practice.

Q: *Is the fishing situation in rural areas different from that in urban areas? Are there differences between freshwater fishing and sea fishing?*

A: Challenges exist everywhere—whether in continental areas, rural regions, or urban centres. Fishermen and fisherwomen alike face these difficulties, regardless of where they live or work.

Q: *There's been much news about violence against women and girls in fishing communities in Brazil. The Maria da Penha Law (Law No. 11,340 of August 7, 2006) was established to combat domestic and family violence against women, addressing five types: physical, psychological, moral, sexual, and patriarchal. Despite this law, has violence against women and girls increased? Is the situation worse in coastal communities compared to rural or urban areas? Has the MPP partnered with other organizations to help victims and survivors of violence in fishing communities?*

A: The Maria da Penha Law has been instrumental in combating various forms of violence against women in Brazil. However, violence has continued to escalate, becoming more frequent and extreme. We're not just witnessing psychological, physical, or verbal abuse anymore—there's also been an alarming rise in femicide, the most brutal form of male violence against women.

For example, a fisherwoman from Rio Grande do Sul was recently murdered by her partner, who couldn't accept the end of their relationship. The violence was horrific and deeply saddening.

The MPP, as a member of Via Campesina, collaborates with organizations like Via Campesina Brazil to run the *Enough Violence Against Women* campaign. This initiative raises awareness and denounces such violence. While the Maria da Penha Law helps prosecute offenders, it cannot prevent cases where women lose their lives to partners unwilling to accept a breakup.

Violence isn't confined to urban areas—it also affects rural regions, including rural workers and fisherwomen. Both urban and rural communities grapple with these challenges.

Q: *Did the fisherwoman who was murdered belong to the Movement? Did you know her personally?*

A: I didn't know her personally, but she was a militant in the Rio Grande do Sul movement. Members of our national leadership were familiar with her as she was active in the fishermen and fisherwomen's community in Rio Grande do Sul. She was a dedicated activist in the movement.

Q: *Assessing, reviewing, and synthesizing information on global fisheries is essential for developing better public policies. But can such issues truly be addressed without policies that promote gender equality, recognize women's roles in care and domestic work, and guarantee their participation in decision-making processes with access to social, economic, and natural resources? Are women still invisible in the system due to a lack of disaggregated data, even though some studies show they've been consistently involved in fishing activities? What is the current situation in Brazil, particularly on the ground?*

A: Your question highlights what we already know. Without representation, without gender guarantees, we can't have public policies that benefit everyone. Effective public policy depends on participation and gender inclusion.

Q: *Based on your extensive experience, what recommendations would you make to improve these aspects?*

A: From my experience as an activist, improving access to public policies requires ensuring participation. Gender representation is critical. Men, women, children, youth, and

LGBT+ individuals must all have a seat at the decision-making table.

We cannot continue to be the ones informed *after* decisions are made. We must be active collaborators—those who build, plan, and make decisions together. We, the grassroots, understand the realities of our territories better than anyone.

When public policies are created and implemented with the active participation of grassroots movements and a broad understanding of local realities, they are more equitable and respectful. This participatory approach is the key to meaningful and inclusive change.

Q: *Law No. 11,959 on Sustainable Development Policy for Fisheries and Aquaculture mentions repairing fishing gear and post-harvest activities but doesn't address gender issues. It overlooks the role of women as mothers, workers, and fisherwomen. It fails to respect fisherwomen's identities, ensure their participation in decision-*

making, or provide specialized healthcare programs for fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers. It also doesn't strengthen collectives of women in traditional communities. How does the MPP address these gaps, both within the movement and in discussions with the government?

A: The law is undeniably sexist and exclusionary, failing to represent women

in fisheries. However, there is currently a discussion underway about a new fisheries law in Brazil. Various fishermen's organizations are mobilizing to propose a new model that positions women as central figures—acknowledging them as food producers, fisherwomen, and workers in multiple roles across the fisheries sector. This includes not only shellfish gathering but also fishing, processing, storage, and commercialization.

In our advocacy efforts, we consistently highlight the leadership role of women in artisanal fisheries and emphasize the need to recognize their vital contributions.

Within the MPP, we prioritize gender inclusion. Each state-level coordination team includes a man, a woman, and a young person. This structure extends to our national leadership, ensuring balanced representation. Why? Because we believe that young people, men, and especially women all have critical roles in shaping fisheries policy. Women's



Josana Pinto da Costa

Gender parity must be ensured in all spaces—decision-making, planning, and action. Without gender inclusivity, progress will remain limited



National campaign seminar for fishing territories, Brazil. We continue to fight for the recognition of fishing, Quilombola, and Indigenous territories, as well as settlement areas for family farming

participation is essential for creating fair and inclusive policies.

Q: Looking back from 2009, how would you assess the MPP's journey, from the 2012 National Campaign for Fishing Territory to its mobilizations today?

A: The MPP was founded in 2010 with the goal of defending national fishing territories. In July 2012, we launched the popular initiative bill *PL 131/2020* during a major action in Brasília, where 2,000 fishermen gathered to kick off the national campaign to protect traditional fishing grounds. Today, this bill is under discussion in Congress.

We hope it will be approved, as it would provide legal recognition and security for traditional fishing territories. This bill is a vital tool in our fight against large-scale industrial projects, such as dams, mining, and agro-hydro-mining ventures, which threaten these areas.

Currently, MPP articulation is visible in 18 states across Brazil, though the level of organization varies. Our focus remains on strengthening the movement and securing legal protections for these territories.

Q: The *SSF Guidelines*, which you contributed to before 2014, address various fronts—including hydroelectric projects in Minas Gerais that have harmed rivers, fish habitats, and caused environmental disasters. These Guidelines also propose structuring a comprehensive fisheries policy that accounts for the diversity and socio-environmental roles of fishing communities. How has the National Campaign for the Regularization of Traditional Fishing Territories progressed?

A: The Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Guidelines are a crucial tool for defending fishing territories. However, their impact is limited because many fishermen, especially in rural areas, are unaware of their existence. Initially, the Guidelines were only available in English or Spanish, making them inaccessible to most Brazilian communities. It was only after the MPP pushed for a Portuguese translation that they became somewhat more accessible.

Even now, these materials are overly technical and lack simple, illustrated language that fishermen and fisherwomen can easily understand. This is a major barrier to their implementation.

The MPP has raised these concerns with the FAO in various meetings, urging improvements to make the Guidelines more practical and accessible. For the SSF Guidelines to have real impact, they need to be linked to Brazil's Convention 169 and Decree 6040. These frameworks guarantee the right of traditional communities to free, prior, and informed consultation before any projects are implemented in their territories.

Currently, companies often manipulate consultations by speaking to only one person in a community, sometimes someone they've co-opted. This practice ignores the collective voice and leads to territories being sold or exploited without true community consent.

Q: Since 2022, has the situation on the ground changed? Has the government made progress in recognizing, demarcating, and providing titles for fishing territories to guarantee the security and rights of fishing communities?

A: Unfortunately, not much has changed. The popular initiative bill is still under discussion in Congress, and even under President Lula's progressive government, there has been little progress in demarcating territories.

We continue to fight for the recognition of fishing, Quilombola, and Indigenous territories, as well as settlement areas for family farming. However, the lack of action has left many communities vulnerable.

In particular, small-scale fishing territories are increasingly being exploited for shrimp farming and tilapia aquaculture. These industries have caused widespread environmental damage and undermined artisanal fishing practices. This exploitation violates the principles of artisanal fisheries and threatens the livelihoods of traditional fishing communities.

Q: What mechanisms, forums, and channels does the movement use to maintain dialogue with social movements and address their demands,

ensuring the rights and needs of artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen are heard? Are you able to participate in the Permanent Fisheries Management Committees (CPG), and what are the criteria for participation?

A: We are represented in international spaces such as *Via Campesina* and the *World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)*, where we bring forward our demands. We have also engaged with the FAO on numerous occasions. In Brazil, we are part of the National Fisheries Council (CONAP), the National Artisanal Fisheries Forum, and the Standing Committee for Small-Scale Fisheries Management (CPG).

However, we face challenges. During the Bolsonaro administration, a decree was issued that weakened civil society's participation in these forums. This decree continues to limit grassroots movements' access to these spaces, prioritizing academia and industrial fisheries, which have financial resources to cover travel and participation costs. Grassroots organizations like ours lack the means to send representatives consistently, creating a barrier to effective participation.

Despite this, we are active in other spaces like the National Fisheries Council and the new social participation forums established by President Lula's government. These platforms allow us to voice our demands and advocate for the needs of artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen.

Q: *What support do fishermen and fisherwomen receive to address challenges such as drought, climate change, and declining fish stocks?*

A: Climate change has severely impacted Brazil, particularly in the southern region, which experiences flooding, and the northern region, which suffers from droughts.

In the south, government assistance has been minimal, leaving many fishing families in dire situations. In the north, several Amazonian municipalities declared a state of public calamity last year. Artisanal fishermen who had an active registration (RGP) and received unemployment benefits in the prior year were granted two minimum wages in a single payment.

This year, with worsening conditions and more states declaring emergencies, the government has issued a decree allowing affected fishermen in the north to receive two payments, each equivalent to one minimum wage.

However, accessing essential resources like food and water remains a significant challenge, especially in isolated communities. Many families lack even basic necessities like drinking water, and some cannot even access water for

bathing. In my community, the tributary that once sustained us has dried up completely. We are directly experiencing the devastating effects of climate change.

Q: *Brazil has a constitutional obligation to preserve cultural heritage and owes a debt to its fishing communities. Articles 215 and 216 of the Constitution guarantee cultural rights and emphasize the protection of traditional practices, beliefs, and livelihoods. What progress have fishworkers' organizations made in this regard?*

A: While the Constitution explicitly guarantees these rights, they are rarely upheld in practice. This gap drives our fight to ensure the provisions on paper are realized in our communities. The *Popular Initiative Bill 131/2020* is a key part of this effort, as it aims to secure fishing territories and protect the cultural and material heritage of artisanal fishing communities.

Culture, tradition, beliefs, and ways of life are invaluable. We want to preserve the religiosity, customs, and freedoms of traditional peoples, ensuring their territories are legally recognized and respected. This includes Indigenous territories, Afro-descendant communities, and traditional fishing grounds.

Our goal is for these laws to move beyond bureaucratic delays and be implemented effectively. Communities should not be displaced—whether by water scarcity, flooding, or the encroachment of industrial ventures like agro-hydro-mineral businesses. People must have the freedom to remain in their territories, living according to their culture and choices.

We have also fought for *TAUs* (Terms of Authorization for Use of Territories) through the SPU (Brazilian Heritage Management Secretariat). Through lobbying efforts in Brasília, we've made progress in securing these authorizations, which allow families to stay on their lands while working toward full territorial regularization.

Q: *Congratulations on your leadership within the MPP. Would you like to leave a message for those working on gender and fisheries issues worldwide?*

A: My message to small-scale fishing communities worldwide is this: we cannot fight alone. Gender parity must be ensured in all spaces—decision-making, planning, and action. Without gender inclusivity, progress will remain limited.

Our struggles are strengthened by unity and collective vision. Together, we must fight for the common good, always keeping in mind the well-being of all. Whether on rivers or at sea, we will stand firm in our fight for justice and equity. 🌊

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.

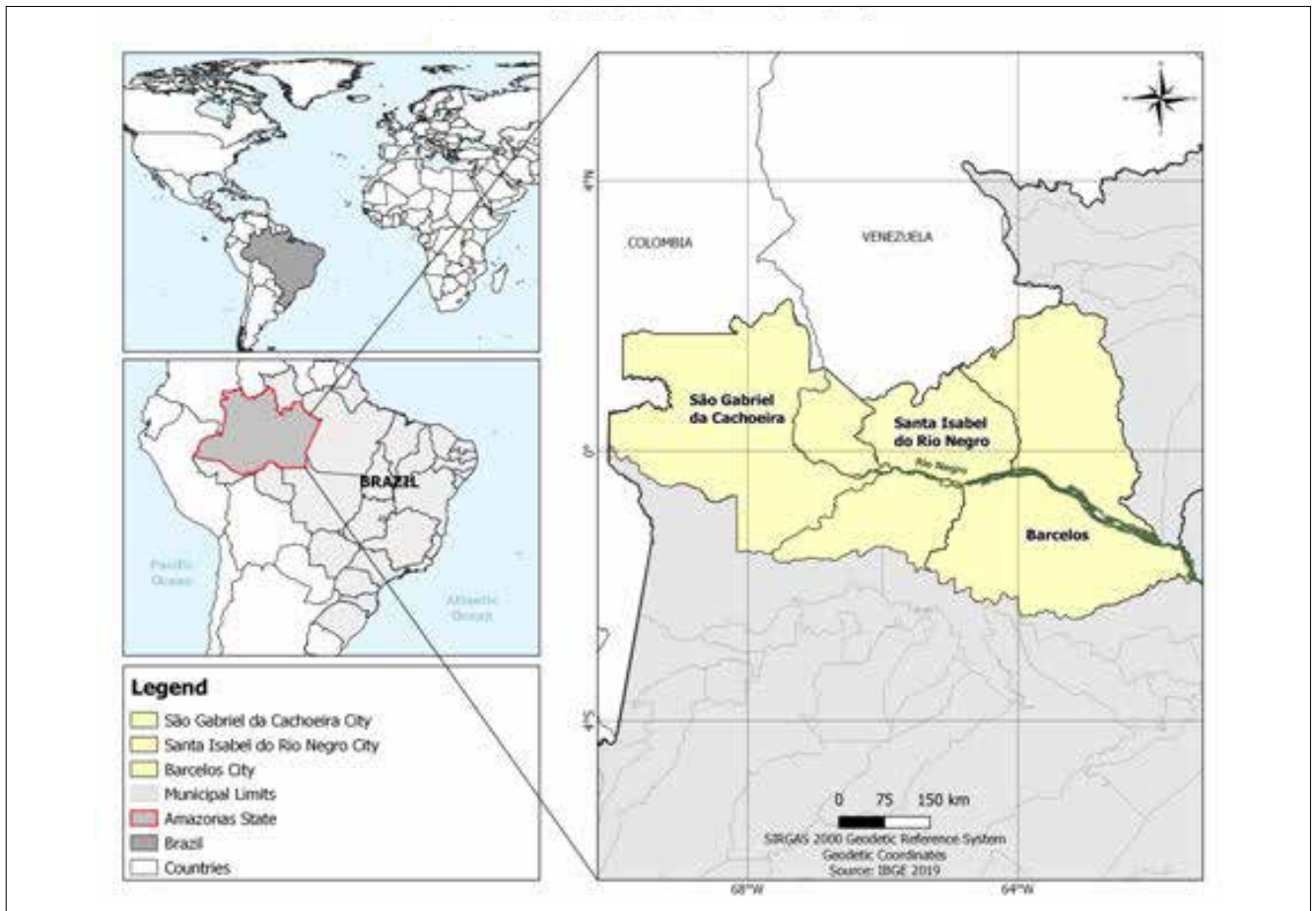
The ACIMRN represents 29 indigenous communities located on the banks and islands of the Middle Negro River and its tributaries, and also the indigenous population residing in the urban area. It is a bridge for the activities of FOIRN and the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations in the Brazilian Amazon (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. ❏

Building knowledge

A report on the 13th Women's World & Fazendo Gênero 11 held in Brazil recently

By **Luceni Hellebrandt** (luceni.hellebrandt@gmail.com), Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro, Brasil (UENF), and **Carmen Pedroza-Gutiérrez** (pedrozacarmen@yahoo.com), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, (UNAM)

The Women's Worlds Congress was organized with the aim of providing a forum for global debate beyond the North-South perspective. Held from 31 July to 4 August 2017, in the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) at Florianópolis, Brazil, the Congress featured an interesting session on 'Transformations, Connections, Displacements of Feminism: Gender, work, educational formation, and traditional communities,' provided the space for discussions on innovative feminist studies and activism in various walks of life. This session, organized by Dr Maria do Rosário de Fátima Andrade Leitão from the Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, and Dr. Maria Helena Santana Cruz from the Universidade Federal de Sergipe, helped establish a dialogue between the diversity of scientific and popular knowledge.

The scope of the session was defined as "scientific studies analysing the conditions of life in traditional communities, their unequal access to political actions and the space of women in communities of fisherwomen and

fishermen; and the equal participation of women and men at all levels of political decision-making processes in public and private spaces".

Seven studies were presented, analysing the roles and work of women in small scale and artisanal fisheries, and their gendered relations within fishing communities. The studies were located variously in freshwater, lagoon, estuarine, marine and continental ecosystems. From Brazil, Hellebrandt and Galvão made a presentation on women in fishing activities in the South while Abreu and Alencar, and Diógenes and colleagues, talked about women in fisheries in the north; Nascimento and Lima presented a case study from the northeast of Brazil. Further, Pedroza presented a case study of freshwater and marine fisheries in Mexico; and Souza and colleagues presented a bibliographic analysis of the research done in Brazil on women in fisheries.

Pedroza from Mexico described gender relations in the community of Petatán on Lake Chapala as well as in the fishing community in Yucatan. While analysing the role of women along the value chain in the lucrative sea cucumber fisheries, she discussed the social and economic costs borne by them. She described the health consequences suffered by women who remain standing for many hours as they carry out fish processing.

ADRIANA ABREU



At the Women's Worlds Congress held from 31 July to 4 August 2017 in Brazil, participants opined that the role of women in fisheries was devalued because of the lack of recognition for their activities

She also discussed the social impacts of high profit margins, including the effect on families and communities, and of sex work fuelled by the money that sea cucumber fishery generates.

In Brazil, the study by Nascimento and Lima highlighted the role played by the Quilombola women in community struggles, in the Cumbe /Aracati mangrove swamps in the State of Ceará, to defend their territorial and livelihood rights. The Quilombola community is descended from fugitive slaves from colonial days in Brazil. The community's livelihood has been severely threatened by conflicting economic activities, including the installation of wind energy in dune fields, and shrimp farming in mangroves; activities which are a violation of the community's constitutionally guaranteed rights to livelihood.

The issue of access rights to natural resources was also the focus of studies by Galvão and Hellebrandt in southern Brazil. Galvão highlighted the impact of port activities on the ecological system of the Patos Lagoon estuary. She explained how port activities impacted the livelihood of fishing communities in Rio Grande in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. She described the various adaptive strategies that the community's women were engaged in, both in the fishing sector and outside, including taking up temporary jobs. She pointed out how traditional fisheries management perpetuated gender inequality.

Hellebrandt's critique of fisheries management was based on two experiences involving women in a fishing community in Pelotas in the State of Rio Grande do Sul: one, pertaining to a religious festival, and the other, to a cooperative ice-making venture. Thus, the involvement of women in both cultural and economic activities established their identity as fisherwomen, an identity that went beyond the narrow definition of the "professional artisanal fisherman" in Brazil. This definition is used to guarantee social security benefits in Brazilian fishing but excludes a large number of women who do not participate directly in catching fish. She therefore criticized the restrictive boundaries imposed by formal fisheries management systems.

Women's agency was highlighted in the work of Abreu and Alencar. Their study described the construction of the Jaruá Fisheries Agreement, whose purpose was to manage the *pirarucu* (Arapaima gigas) fishery



Women filleting fish in the community of Petatán, Michoacán, México.

in Marimaruá in the State of Amazonas. The authors discussed how daily practices contradicted the formal dichotomy used in most discourses, on water as "space for men" versus land as "space for women". They highlighted the critical role of women act in different stages and spaces of the fishing activity.

In another study on the Amazon region, Diógenes et al. described daily lives of women fishers from the communities of São Sebastião da Brasília e Santo Antônio da Catispera, in the municipality of Parintins in the State of Amazonas. According to the authors, fishing freshwater shrimp was one of the main sources of income in the community, in which women were also involved throughout the value chain, fishing and selling shrimp in the municipal market. However, the role of women was devalued because of the lack of recognition for their activities.

Souza presented a bibliographical review of Brazilian studies on women in fisheries. She updated and presented a status report reviewing texts from the 1970s to 2017. The research addressed many of the themes highlighted in the works described here. ❏

The involvement of women in both cultural and economic activities established their identity as fisherwomen, an identity that went beyond the narrow definition of the "professional artisanal fisherman"

Fighting invisibility

Fisherwomen in Brazil demand to be heard on their right to social security and decent work

By **Beatriz Ferrari**
(biacalza@gmail.com),
Independent journalist,
Brazil

This article about fisherwomen in Brazil, when submitted to another publication, came back with the word ‘fisherwomen’ underlined in red. ‘Fishermen?’ asked a comment in the margin. While the comment might have reflected the ingrained patriarchy and invisibilization of women prevalent in parts of Brazilian society, unfortunately, women at work seem to be invisible to the Brazilian government as well.

In Brazil, two federal decrees, 8424 and 8425, published in March 2015, defined the artisanal fisherman exclusively as the professional who pulled fish out of the water. All other professionals involved with support activities—mainly women responsible for secondary activities, such as manufacturing and repairing nets, cleaning the fish or fixing the boats—were registered not as ‘fishers’ but as ‘support workers’. Support workers, according to the decrees, were “similar to fishermen”.

The impact of the federal decrees is not only symbolic, but also practical. As the women are no longer considered official fishers, they are not entitled to pension granted by the government, called *defeso*, during periods when fishing is prohibited for environmental reasons.

“Sexism in fishing is beyond women’s relationship with men. We are seen as incapable by the government,” said Josana

Serrao Pinto, the national coordinator of the Movement of Fishermen and Fisherwomen (MPP). “The decree makes it clear that the government only considers men when it comes to fishing. It is a way of taking away our identity.” The sexist view of the government would impact the sizeable number of women engaged in various activities related to artisanal fishing. There are approximately one million artisanal fishermen in Brazil, according to the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture and Supply (MAPA) statistics published in 2011. MPP estimates that approximately 45 per cent of the artisanal fishers are women.

In enacting the decrees, the government overlooks the fact that when men are prohibited from fishing, women dependent on fishing for work are also affected, and hence, should be covered by the same pension. Martilene Lima, fisherwoman and also a coordinator at the MPP, explained, “Sometimes our own husbands forbid us to go to the open sea. In my case, I have always sewn the nets, taken care of the boat and cleaned the fish that my husband brought home from fishing. During periods of closure, I too can’t work. Fishing begins on the ground. It doesn’t take place only in the water.”

“The decrees affect all women who requested to register from March 2015 onwards. It is a loss of identity and autonomy, especially economic. But it’s not clear yet how many are affected,” said Erina Gomes, juridical advisor of the Pastoral Council of Fishermen. According to the Ministry of Labour, 48,000 women registered as workers involved with fishing from January 2015 to May 2016. These women would not be eligible for pension for the no-fish period.

In June, representatives of women small-scale fishers gathered in Brazil’s capital Brasilia, at a seminar on the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), to discuss, among other things, how to make the government recognize the rights of fisherwomen. One way forward suggested was a report to define women’s activity within fishing. This could be a step towards demanding recognition of work performed by women in the sector as part of fishing,

CONSELHO PASTORAL DOS PESCADORES (CPP)



Fisherwoman in Rio Grande do Norte state. In enacting the decrees, the government overlooks the fact that when men are prohibited from fishing, women dependent on fishing for work are also affected

and hence, a way to assert their citizenship and political and economic rights.

Another problem with the decrees was access to social security, in particular, post-retirement pension. After much lobbying and campaigning with the federal government, another decree, 8499, was published in June 2015. This decree included support workers in the artisanal fisheries access to pension.

However, fisherwomen still have difficulty accessing the National Social Security System (INSS) in case of occupational diseases related to fishing activities, as these diseases are not recognized by the INSS. "I've been asked if my stress injury was because I typed a lot. The government officials did not believe I was a fisherwoman because there were no calluses on my hands," complained Martilene at the MPP. "If we show up all beautiful and fancy in the INSS, no one believes that we are fisherwomen. For the government, fisherwoman can't use nail polish or lipstick. We have to be ugly."

Before claiming their rights from the government, fisherwomen have to face sexism within the profession. "Our space as fisherwomen started to be recognized only since 2009. Men still try to intimidate us, to not lose their space. We've even had cases of sexual violence," said Josana of the MPP.

In a national meeting of the Articulation of Fisherwomen in 2013, the Ministry of Fisheries sent a male official to represent the ministry. Apart from not understanding the demands of women, the representative brought aprons and Bibles to distribute as gifts. "We felt very neglected and disrespected. We decided not to distribute these gifts," said the fisherwoman Cleonice Silva, who was also coordinator of the Articulation of Fisherwomen of Paraná state.

Fisherwomen are collectively managing to gradually overcome the obstacles of patriarchy within the fishing community and in the government. The awareness of the state and the professionals regarding fisheries' work-related diseases is one of them. Throughout 2016, fisherwomen from 16 states planned to gather in workshops organized by a partnership between the National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP), Ministry of Health, Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and the Pastoral Council of Fishermen (CPP) to disseminate information on working conditions and health of women within the artisanal fisheries sector. "These meetings will be important to gather knowledge about our health and the Public Health System," pointed out Gicleia Maria Santos, fisherwoman of Cabo de Santo Agostinho (PE) and an ANP member. ❏

"The decree makes it clear that the government only considers men when it comes to fishing. It is a way of taking away our identity"

Gaining ground

The Fourth Meeting of the National Fisherwomen's Articulation strongly defends Brazil's fisheries and the rights of the country's fisherwomen

By **Náina Pierri** (pierrina@gmail.com), Professor at UFPR and Member, ICSF and **Natália Tavares de Azevedo** (nataliatavares@ufpr.br), Researcher at Federal University of Paraná-UFPR

Around 80 fisherwomen from 14 out of the 26 States in Brazil met in Pontal de Paraná, a beach town on the Paraná coast in the South Region of the country, from 25 to 29 August for the Fourth Meeting of the National Fisherwomen's Articulation (ANP; please note that all acronyms in this article are based on Portuguese names). This meeting, held once every two years, aimed to take stock of the ground covered since the ANP was set up in 2006, and to define priorities and strategies for the next phase.

The meeting's agenda combined a range of activities and issues. There were thematic panels, in which invitees from government bodies, researchers and support organizations participated. The issues addressed were: health of fisherwomen; access to social security; closed season for species harvested by fisherwomen; and formal recognition of the work of women in fisheries by their inclusion in the General Register of Fisheries Activity (RGP). The

Voluntary Guidelines recently approved in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for Securing Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication—the SSF Guidelines—and their approach to gender were presented.

Narratives presented in working groups and plenary discussions enabled participants to recall their struggle, the historic moment of the creation of the Articulation, and the successes achieved since 2006, while discussing outstanding demands. Based on this, and keeping the current political context in mind, they defined priorities for their mobilizations in the coming period as well as the measures required to broaden and strengthen the movement. The meeting ended with a statement that synthesized these key points.

The issue of fisherwomen's health has been the centrepiece of the ANP's struggle in recent years. Putting pressure on the Health Ministry (MS) enabled certain joint actions to be undertaken that led to advances in the recognition of occupational illnesses of fisherwomen, and their access to the public health system. The progress made in the prevention and treatment of specific ailments, along with the recognition of these ailments by the social security system is helping to facilitate women's access to a range of benefits.

NAÍNA PIERRI



Martilene Rodrigues and others at Pontal de Paraná meeting of ANP. Narratives presented in working groups and plenary discussions enabled participants to recall their struggle, the historic moment of the creation of the Articulation

The fisherwomen, along with members of the MS present, discussed key developments in the session titled “Participation in and control of the Public Health System (SUS): Progress and Challenges towards Guaranteeing the Health of Fisherwomen”. The SUS is the public health system through which everyone in Brazil has the right (in theory) to free medical attention including consultation, examinations, hospitalization and medication.

The fisherwomen began by underlining the importance of a training course dealing with the occupational ailments of women, in which 45 women from 11 states took part. This training course was to be replicated in other parts of the country with MS support. Fisherwomen and MS representatives also shared the participation of the ANP in the Grupo Terra or Earth Group. This group brings together members of the MS, social movements and research bodies. Its mandate includes the formulation of the National Policy for Comprehensive Health Care for Farming, Forest and Fishing Communities, that intends to improve the health of these communities through effective access to the SUS, and the reduction of work related risks. The engagement of fisherwomen in the Grupo Terra has been fundamental for the inclusion of the specific needs of fishing communities in this policy.

The creation of ten new Health Referral Centres for Rural Workers was highlighted. The new centres will directly target farmers, fishers and the forest population to prevent illness and accidents at work, and train and sensitize health workers on how to treat and correctly report cases.

The participation of fisherwomen in the Municipal Health Councils was also discussed. These councils are collegiate bodies constituted by representatives of organized society (50 percent), health workers (25 percent) and government representatives and service providers (25 percent). The Councils help formulate strategies, and apply social controls to the implementation of health policy. Because fisherwomen had participated in these spaces, their work, health problems and relations with the environment were now better understood, forcing the health units to produce documentation that made their situation more visible.

Finally, the importance of recognizing fishing territories and the lives and work of fishing communities as a basic precondition for comprehensive health was highlighted. Comprehensive health, it was noted, needed to be understood as physical, mental and

social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease.

The various panels discussed the difficulties fisherwomen had in trying to access social security. The fisherwomen had formally requested the Social Security Ministry (MPS) and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministry (MPA) to participate in the panel discussions. Rather than sending federal agents, these Ministries sent local and state level agents who were neither informed nor able to reply to questions posed by the fisherwomen. Even worse, the MPA representative brought bibles and kitchen aprons as presents, implying that cooking and prayer were more appropriate for women than discussing policy. The fisherwomen’s reaction was emphatic; the principle of secularism (a principle of the Brazil Constitution) had been violated, and the government had thus clearly demonstrated their lack of recognition and respect for this national social movement.

The Social Security Institute (INSS), responsible for paying pensions, death, sickness, accident and other benefits, took part in the panel titled “Social Security: Recognition, secure rights, and elimination of discrimination”. Fisherwomen highlighted a series of complaints. These included excessive requirements for proof of their activities; lack of recognition for specific work-related ailments; corrupt practices; lack of preparation on the part of the agents attending to the fisherwomen; and discrimination and institutional racism practiced by specialist doctors certifying cases worthy of social benefits and other actors.

As the representative of the MPA had already left, only fisherwomen participated in the panel titled “RGP: Recognition and secure access for women”. The panel drew attention to the failure to regulate the Article in the recently-introduced Fisheries Law of 2009 that broadened the concept of fisheries to include pre- and post-harvest activities. While the legislation allowed women to be recognized as professional fisherwomen, its implementation was inadequate. Another problem highlighted was the MPA’s requirement for annual renewal of the General Register of Fisheries Activity (RGP) as the Ministry was not adequately structured to process the paperwork every year, and fishers were hard-pressed to travel from their places of work to the Ministry offices.

The panel titled “Species caught by fisherwomen: research, and fixing the closed season” had a presentation from a participant from the MPA and one from a woman researcher who presented the case of Para State. The fisherwomen proposed that the

Their demands included the protection of traditional fishing territories; putting labour rights and social protection into practice; recognizing occupational ailments; and establishing a closed season for fishery species targeted by women with a guaranteed compensation.

government should establish a closed season for the species they target to ensure sustainability. Currently, the closed season is restricted to only the species of greatest commercial importance and caught by men. In addition, they said that the closed season does not serve its purpose as the period of closure is inadequate because it does not heed fishers' knowledge.

There was a session titled "SSF Guidelines and Gender Issues". The process leading up to the adoption of the SSF Guidelines and the role played by civil society organizations was explained, highlighting, in particular, the participation of fishermen and fisherwomen from Brazil. The role and rights of women as addressed in the SSF Guidelines was also explained. Discussions underlined the need to press the government to implement the SSF Guidelines at the national level. This would not be easy, given that the current government promotes aquaculture and industrial fishing at the expense of artisanal fisheries.

The session ended with an emotional tribute to Chandrika Sharma. Her dedication to defending artisanal fisheries and the rights of women fishworkers was highlighted. An image was displayed with the text "Chandrika lives and will live on in the struggles of artisanal fisherwomen and fishermen!"

At the end of the meeting, there were retrospective discussions on the road taken by the ANP which identified successes at different levels. The professional recognition of fisherwomen by the new fisheries law was highlighted together with the progress made towards recognizing occupational

health problems and also fisherwomen's participation in the social control of the public health system. Fisherwomen talked about the freedom they had gained from getting out of their houses to participate in the movement. They gained access to information and political training which enabled them to effectively participate in the collective struggle.

The fisherwomen set out their main demands for the next period. These included the protection of traditional fishing territories; putting labour rights and social protection into practice; recognizing occupational ailments; and establishing a closed season for fishery species targeted by women with a guaranteed compensation.

To take these demands forward women emphasized the need to strengthen the organization at the level of States, generate and train more leaders; and improve internal and external communication of the ANP, in order to improve interactions between fisherwomen and give them greater visibility in the society. They also decided to hold the next national meeting, scheduled for 2016, in the State of Maranhão.

The final statement ended with a dedication that expressed the strength and warrior spirit of Brazilian fisherwomen's social movement: "In memory of Chandrika Sharma, strong defender of artisanal fisheries and the rights of women, and in memory of our ancestors, we will forge ahead, until all artisanal fisherwomen have secure rights that are put into practice and until artisanal fishing is free from the impositions of the agro-business and hydro-business." ❏

Advancing the gender agenda

In a meeting of the Brazilian organization, National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP), its leaders discuss aspects of their work and mobilization

By **Náina Pierri** (pierrinai@gmail.com), Professor at Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) and ICSF Member and **Natalia Tavares de Azevedo** (nataliatavares@ufpr.br), Researcher at UFPR, Brazil

Since the mid 1970s the fisherwomen of Brazil have been organizing themselves. This process advanced significantly in the last ten years since the national fishery conferences organized by the government of former President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, between 2003 and 2006, which gave fisherwomen the opportunity to meet and discuss their situation at state and national levels. This led to the formation of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP), created in 2006 at the First National Meeting of Fisherwomen, held in Recife, Pernambuco. The organization rapidly gained support in the states, particularly in the northeast region and parts of the north, southeast and southern regions.

In April 2010, ANP leaders helped found the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Brazil (MPP) in Acupe in Bahia state. Since then, the MPP and the ANP have been active in defending artisanal fisheries and the rights of its communities.

In May 2010, the Second National Meeting of ANP was held in the city of Fortim, Ceará to review the progress made since 2006 (see Yemaya 34). In June 2012, in the third meeting of the ANP held in Cabedelo, Paraíba, whose theme was “Fishing with Health and

Welfare”, the main issues discussed were fisherwomen’s health, the shortcomings of the health system, and the problems that fisherwomen face with social security. It was decided that these issues would form the focus of ANP’s mobilization efforts for the next two years.

National meetings of the ANP are held every two years to analyze the condition of fisherwomen and set priorities for the next two-year period. Co-ordination meetings with state representatives take place twice every year to evaluate the state-level implementation of national-level decisions and to discuss achievements and future directions.

Two co-ordination meetings have been held in 2013—in June and October. The rest of this report describes the second of these two co-ordination meetings.

Aimed at strengthening the organization of artisanal fisherwomen in Brazil and organized with the support of ICSF and the Pastoral Council of Fishworkers (CPP), the meeting, scheduled for 21 to 23 October, was expected to be attended by about 25 leaders from 11 states within Brazil.

The main objectives were to take stock of the progress on the issue of occupational health policies related to fisherwomen, to plan improvements in fisherwomen’s access to welfare rights, and to schedule the next national meeting. Another objective was the sharing of ICSF’s 2010 Gender Agenda programme and the preparatory process behind the *Voluntary Guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication* (SSF Guidelines) being developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with particular reference to women.

When it was held, 11 leaders from eight states, three CPP members, two members of ICSF from Brazil and two researchers of local universities could finally attend the meeting. Many of the leaders reportedly dropped out because this meeting was following too close upon the heels of a mobilization organized by the MPP with other social movements in Brasília, against certain governmental measures, in particular, the privatization of aquatic areas (see Samudra News Alert dated 25 October 2013, <http://www.icsf.net/en/>

NAÍNA PIERRI



ANP Co-ordination meeting at Brazil in October 2013. Two co-ordination meetings have been held in 2013, both in the house of fishworkers in Olinda, Pernambuco

samudra-news-alert/articledetail/50965-25-years-of-cit.html?language=EN).

The first day began with a report of the general situation of the artisanal fisheries in each state. Each leader informed about their participation in the National Campaign for the Regularization of the Fishery Territories—a major national mobilization jointly undertaken by the MPP and ANP since June, 2012 (see SAMUDRA Report No. 62). They also shared their findings and observations on the occupational diseases that fisherwomen in their communities faced.

The ANP has demanded official recognition, particularly by the health and the social security systems, of the occupational diseases women in the artisanal fisheries face. This demand is vital for disease prevention and mitigation, and would allow fisherwomen to obtain occupational health benefits and accident insurance.

In the last few years, a medical team, together with the CPP conducted epidemiological research in Bahia on the occupational diseases of shellfish collectors and the quality of treatment services available. A special primer on fisherwomen's health was prepared. The ANP used this to conduct discussions with communities and to persuade medical teams from universities in other states to conduct similar research. How to use the primer and lobby government officials had been discussed in the ANP co-ordination meeting in June 2013. The progress made on these fronts was now reported.

On the second day, the group planned further activities and reviewed the progress made. The most important advance reported was a meeting with the Health Ministry on 9 September in Brasilia. Members of the ANP, the CPP and some of the doctors who had been involved in preparation of the primer made a presentation to Health Ministry officials on the health situation of fisherwomen and fishermen, following which the Ministry had agreed to undertake an extensive epidemiological study research across 11 states, based on the Bahia study. The Ministry had also agreed to introduce fishers' health-related content into professional health courses.

Also on the second day, Náina Pierri, member of ICSF from Brazil made a presentation on ICSF's Gender Agenda explaining how it had been formulated and how it related to women's struggles in fisheries in Brazil. In another presentation, ICSF member Beatriz Mesquita, talked about the process of drafting the SSF Guidelines, emphasizing the related consultation that was held in Brazil and explaining how the Guidelines address the question of women. The leaders present at the meeting showed a high level of interest in both issues. In our opinion, over the last few years, and to a great extent due to ICSF's facilitation, these movements have improved their understanding of struggles taking place at the international level in defense of artisanal fisheries and gender justice.

The last session was devoted to scheduling the next meetings, in particular the Fourth National Meeting of the ANP to be held from 25-29 August, 2014 in Paraná state and expected to be attended by about 50 leaders and supporters. The main goal of the meeting would be to evaluate the evolution of the ANP since its formation, and redefine its agenda and priorities. Towards this end, there would be one preparatory co-ordination meeting from 15-16 March 2014, and a set of state level meetings. The questions proposed to be discussed are: What have been the main achievements of fisherwomen in the last ten years? Currently, what are the main problems being faced? What are ANP's main demands for the coming years? And finally, what must be prioritized in order to strengthen fisherwomen's organizations?

Following a presentation of accounts and an evaluation of the meeting, a simple closing ceremony was held, where the participants sang a beautiful song about their struggle. In our view, despite the fact that many were unable to attend, a lot was achieved in the meeting. It contributed ably towards strengthening both the organization of fisherwomen in Brazil as well as the struggle of the artisanal fishing communities—a struggle in which women are at the forefront, demanding their right to a dignified life. ❏

The ANP has demanded official recognition of all the occupational diseases women in the artisanal fisheries face.

VIDEO

Mangroves and Prawn Raising: Violated Green

A Documentary about Brazilian Coast

“... that’s why we want the protection of our mangrove, because if we don’t have our mangrove, we won’t have the river, we won’t have fish, we won’t have our food, we won’t have our survival.” Luis Caboclo, Tremembé



This video is reviewed by **Natália Tavares de Azevedo** (nataliatavares@ufpr.br), a sociology student working for a doctorate in environment and development at the Federal University of Paraná, and **Náina Pierri** (naina@cem.ufpr.br), a sociologist and professor at the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil

The documentary “Mangroves and Prawn Raising: Violated Green,” shows the impact of extensive prawn farming on the communities of the coast of Ceará state in Brazil. Produced for the Second General Assembly of the Redmanglar International in 2004 by the Forum in Defence of the Coastal Zone of Ceará and the Environment and Justice Foundation, the documentary brings together many testimonials from community and institutional leaders.

The state of Ceará is located in northeastern Brazil and has a ragged coastline with well-preserved dunes and mangroves of great scenic beauty. The indigenous and fishing communities living here rely on local knowledge to sustain their traditional livelihoods which include artisanal fisheries using boats, collecting molluscs from the mangrove forests, handicrafts, as well as subsistence farming.

The documentary shows how the watersheds of the Jaguaribe River on the east coast and of the Acaraú River on the west coast are being degraded by prawn farming. Based on accounts from residents of the communities of Curral Velho, Itarema and Cumbe Icapuí, the film shows how the business logic of productivity is triggering widespread environmental, socioeconomic and cultural

damage. Large areas of mangroves have been destroyed, in violation of national environmental regulations, leading to decline in fish and other species upon which the coastal population depends. Other impacts include the contamination of mangroves by untreated effluents from the prawn farms, and the disruption of the traditional livelihood base due to the degradation of mangroves and soil salinization in adjacent areas. The film reveals that most of the prawn farms have been established illegally, without environmental licenses, and have led to major conflicts, even violence.

The privatization of public lands and the support of the government to groups wielding the power of big money demonstrate the state’s connivance with a model of development which is making the survival of the traditional fisherfolk of Ceará’s coast, unviable. The words of the shaman of Tremembé, Luis Caboclo, in the closing statement in the film, summarizes the mood of the coastal communities of Ceará: “We don’t want prawn cultivation here inside our area or on the upstream of the rivers. If the Court does not act on it and stop it, we will!”. ❏



PUBLISHED BY
Chandrika Sharma for
International Collective
in Support of Fishworkers
27 College Road
Chennai 600 006
India
Tel: (91) 44 2827 5303
Fax: (91) 44 2825 4457
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net
Web site: www.icsf.net

EDITED BY
Nilanjana Biswas
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Sandesh
(sandeshcartoonist@gmail.com)
DESIGNED BY
P. Sivasakthivel
PRINTED AT
Nagaraj & Company Pvt. Ltd.,
Chennai

Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable

fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

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.

Equal Rights, Unequal Access

A new fisheries law in Brazil recognizes, for the first time, fisherwomen as workers. But they need to come up to speed to take advantage of the associated work-related benefits

By **Sueli Miranda** (cpp@cnbbn2.org.br) co-ordinator, Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP) Northern Region, and **Maria Cristina Maneschy**, (cristina@ufpa.br) Professor of Sociology, Federal University of Pará

Pará is one of Brazil's main fish-producing States, where artisanal fisheries occupy a very significant economic, social and cultural position. Recently, a meeting organized in Belém, the capital of Pará, by a local organization, the Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP), brought together 19 women of fishing communities from the Lower Amazon Region and from Marajó Island at the mouth of the Amazon.

A very encouraging development was that local *colônias* were represented by women—something that has rarely happened in the past. The three fishermen's *colônias* that participated were Abaetetuba, Mosqueiro and São Sebastião da Boa Vista. Several community organizations were also present. They included the Association of Artisanal Fishermen and Extractivists from Boa Vista, the Association of Women Fishworkers and Farmers from Baía do Sol (Mosqueiro), the Association of Fishermen and Farmers from Aricuru (Maracanã), and the Association of Domestic Women from Santarém.

The proceedings started with a review of the objectives of the meeting. An important aim was to elect delegates from Pará to participate at the next meeting of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil (ANP), scheduled to take place in early May in Ceará State. The other important objective was to hold focused discussions on certain themes. These included: the concerns of women as fishworkers, and as members of communities and organizations; initiatives taken in relation to these concerns; existing fishery policies and their effectiveness; and finally, strategies to deal with these concerns.

At the first session, Sueli Miranda of the CPP explored the question of feminine identity in relation to culture and the way of life in fisheries. After reading from a text titled "Who are you?", she discussed the historical development of gender inequalities, which has led to the contemporary situation of equal rights but unequal access for men and women.

Following this, Maria Cristina Maneschy made a presentation on the new Fisheries Law, in effect in Brazil since June 2009, which, by redefining artisanal fishing to include pre- and post-harvest tasks, opens up a window of professional recognition for women engaged in these activities. In the discussion that followed, some apprehensions were voiced about the scope for middlemen to take undue advantage because of the way the law was worded, but everyone agreed on its potential benefits for women.

The next session on labour and welfare rights attracted a good deal of audience attention. Ana Maria Santa Brígida, from the National Institute of Social Security, explained Brazil's social welfare system, focusing, in particular, on the schemes that applied to small-scale fisheries. Maternity leave, retirement schemes, pension, and sickness and accident indemnities were the main topics of interest. These welfare benefits have been in force for over 20 years but to avail of them requires the right connections within the bureaucracy in cities. There is also much paperwork involved in obtaining an individual worker number, an identification card, proof of fishing experience, and so on. For women, furnishing such proof is sometimes quite difficult. It was informed that purchase slips for fishing gear that mention the women's name, or a child's school enrollment certificate that mentions the parent's profession, may be used in the absence of direct identity proof.

Aladim Alfaia, longtime co-ordinator of the Brazilian National Fishermen Movement (MONAPE), talked about the unemployment insurance scheme for artisanal fishermen—an allowance that is provided to fishers in areas where the four-month fisheries ban is enforced every year. Although it had come into being as a result of a strong movement led by MONAPE, CPP and fishermen's unions and associations, the scheme had fallen prey to corrupt practices. Many outside the fisheries were trying to take advantage of the four-month allowance. The example of a municipality in

Pará State was cited, whose fishermen population, according to the official demographic census, is 2,900; however, the *colônia* records almost twice these numbers—

5,742—as fishermen. The very purpose of the policy is thus thwarted.

On the second day of the meeting the guest speaker was Cárita Rosa das Chagas, who grew up in a coastal fishing village and today works in the State Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture. She also has a seat in the Women's Rights Council of Pará State. Cárita emphasized the many changes that had taken place in the lives of women who had clearly gained visibility as income earners and as participants in the political arena. Fisherwomen's movements have engaged the government in dialogue and have participated actively in national conferences on fisheries and aquaculture organized by the government. However, the policies in place are still far from adequate, and fisherwomen would have to mobilize in large numbers for better access to basic services such as healthcare.

Subsequently, the participants split up into smaller, region-based groups for focused discussions on the previously-agreed themes. The group from the Lower Amazon River presented the main points of their discussion in a most interesting manner, in the form of a radio interview. One of their chief concerns was the lack of medical attention and proper healthcare services in the region. This was a severe problem particularly because women were frequently reporting cases of skin, breast and uterine cancer. Another concern was the inability of women to prove their professional status as fishworkers and hence benefit from the fishing ban allowance. "A woman has to smell of fish to prove she is a fisherwoman. There is discrimination in the State offices. Women also discriminate against each other," the group said. The dumping of untreated pollutants into rivers was another major concern. Participants shared some of the interesting initiatives they have undertaken in recycling waste and monitoring the environment.

The group of women shrimp fishers from Marajó Island, who fish daily for both income and household consumption, said that their difficulties were related mainly to marketing shrimp. Living along rivers in rural areas far from the city, they were forced to

depend on middlemen. They faced problems of transportation and theft of fish traps. When they go to the city markets, they take along shrimp as well as fruit from their gardens to sell. Some reported having regular customers who placed orders on the phone in cities like Belém. The women would then depend on workers they knew in the boat lines to deliver these orders. The group mentioned that an ice factory was coming up in their municipality, to be managed by a local association of fishers, and they hoped it would help them preserve their catches. The group ended their report by stressing the need for women to fight for their rights.

The third group consisted of women from Mosqueiro Island, near the capital city Belém, and from the community of Aricuru, in Maracanã municipality. This group put up a parody which depicted the poor health infrastructure and the lack of organization in many fishermen *colônias*. The shortage of fish supplies was a critical concern for this group, which is now exploring possible avenues of alternative employment such as manufacturing fishing gear and sewing.

In the final session, the participants received detailed information regarding the meeting of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil (ANP) scheduled for the first week of May 2010 in Ceará State. Four women were chosen as delegates to this meeting. Another important decision was to schedule the next meeting of fisherwomen from Pará State for September 2010.

In their feedback, participants felt that more time should have been devoted to questions from the audience and for discussion. A suggestion for the next meeting was to include a specific session on occupational diseases and injuries, which would help fisherwomen claim insurance benefits in a better-informed manner. The participants were full of praise for the good organizational arrangements that had been made for the meeting, and felt they were taking back a lot of positive messages to share with the other women of their communities. ❏

Making their Voices Heard

Fisherwomen in Brazil have organized themselves to demand recognition of their work and rights in the fisheries and, slowly, the government is being forced to listen

By **Naina Pierri** (naina@cem.ufpr.br), a sociologist and professor at the Federal University of Parana, Brazil, and **Natália Tavares de Azevedo** (nataliatavares@ufpr.br), a sociology student working for a doctorate in environment and development at the Federal University of Parana

Women fishers in Brazil have come a long way. The turning point in their recent history was in 1985 when a fishermen's *colônia* elected a woman as its president. By 1994, another woman had been elected to head a State federation of *colônias*. A decade or so later, in 2006, in a move that marked the coming of age of women in the continental and coastal fisheries, a national-level network, the National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil (ANP), was created.

The network recently held its second meeting, from 4 to 8 May 2010, in the town of Fortim, in Ceará State. The meeting was attended by about 60 fisherwomen from 12 of the 26 States in Brazil, as well as by researchers, advisers and supporters. Readers might remember that the first meeting of the network was held four years ago, in April 2006. It emerged from a process of campaigning for the formal recognition of women's contributions to fisheries and aquaculture.

In 2003, the First National Conference on Aquaculture and Fisheries, organized by the Brazilian government, had ignored the role

of women. Reacting sharply to this, women fishers demanded that a meeting to address their specific issues be held. The government consented by convening the First National Meeting of Women Workers in Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2004. This provided the context for women's mobilization, and led to the formulation of a set of demands that challenged the basis for women's invisibility in the sector. This important document was approved in 2006, under pressure from women fishers, at the Second National Conference of Aquaculture and Fisheries.

The recent political mobilization of women fishers is also linked to the organizational revitalization of the artisanal fisheries sector in Brazil. When the government held its third National Conference on Aquaculture and Fisheries in September 2009, an important part of the organized artisanal sector chose to boycott the conference, and held a parallel meeting instead. This boycott was provoked by a loss of faith. Attending the national conference, it was felt, would provide legitimacy to the very government that was marginalizing the artisanal sector through its policies. This then was the overall context in which the second meeting of the ANP was held. The meeting had three major components.

The first consisted of providing information on certain general issues in order to enrich the discussion and contribute to the political development of the present leaders. The topics were: feminism; historical overview of women's struggles globally and in Brazil; occupational health of women in fishing; gender analysis of women's work in fishing; and the need for fishing closure periods, as a conservation strategy, specifically targeting the species captured by fisherwomen.

The second was a dialogue with representatives from the Ministry of Agrarian Development, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Ministry of Social Security, and the Secretariat of Policies for Women, who answered questions about the various policies applicable to artisanal fishing. The issues discussed included the lack of recognition of work; labour rights and social security for women in the sector; difficulty of access to credit for fisheries; and lack of

NAINA PIERRI



60 fisherwomen from 12 of the 26 States in Brazil as well as researchers, advisers and supporters, met at the second meeting of ANP

There is today an enlarged group of leadership from an important part of Brazil to take forward the struggle of fisherwomen. There is a need to build alliances with other social movements including the women's movement and the peasant movement.

access guarantee and livelihood security for fishing communities.

The third and main part of the meeting focused on organizational issues of the ANP, its present situation and perspectives. Organizational problems were analyzed, and strategies at the State and national levels were debated. The meeting decided to enlarge the scope of national co-ordination, with representation from all the States present. Dates for subsequent State and national-level co-ordination meetings were decided.

The meeting acknowledged the progress made by fisherwomen since 2006 in gaining recognition for their work. A working paper on women not directly employed in fishing, but participating in activities along the fisheries production chain, had led to the legislation of the New General Law on Fisheries in 2009. This law, however, is not sufficient for the real and complete recognition of fisherwomen's rights.

The meeting reaffirmed the goals for struggle raised in 2006. These included: strengthening the identity of fisherwomen; struggling against discrimination and violence at work and other places; struggling for labour and social-security rights; demanding a public policy on health, education and housing; demanding the right of access to land and water; preserving natural resources; and, finally, struggling against environmentally and socially damaging projects, such as the uncontrolled spread of shrimp farming.

The meeting discussed the future goals for women in the fisheries. On labour rights and social security, the women reaffirmed

the general need for respect and recognition and, specifically, the need for recognition of occupational diseases and access to health and disability insurance. The struggle for land and water was now redefined as a struggle to defend access to fishing territories and obtain formal property rights for land in fishing areas. A new goal set at the meeting was to enlarge the scope of fishing bans to include not only fish of high commercial value but also varieties of fish that women typically harvest and, therefore, need protection. This last is a particularly important goal because it means that, in certain cases, women could also be eligible for fishing ban insurance during periods of restricted fishing.

Analyzing strengths and future prospects, it was pointed out that a key strength of the ANP is its political and financial autonomy from the government. Other important strengths are its growing maturity and critical political comprehension, the centrality of grassroots-level mobilization and also its democratic form of functioning and decisionmaking. Finally, a commitment to life and to build solidarity is a crucial strength.

There is today an enlarged group of leadership from an important part of Brazil to take forward the struggle of fisherwomen. There is a need to build alliances with other social movements, including the women's movement and the peasants' movement. The challenge for this national organization is to continue participating in the struggle "without fear of being women", as reflected in their songs and practice! ❏

Women – Fishing and Struggling

As women fishworkers in Ceará come together for the first time, they highlight the need to forge a political identity and strengthen their collective organization

By **Maria Cristina Maneschy** (cristina@ufpa.br), Professor at the Federal University of Para, Brazil and member of ICSF

From 26 to 29 November 2008, in Caucaia, a beach suburb in northeastern Brazil, fisherwomen from the State of Ceará took the lead in organizing their first meeting near the capital city of Fortaleza. The meeting, titled “Women: Fishing and Struggling”, brought together about 50 women from coastal villages and small cities, including two women from an indigenous community.

The meeting was organized by Instituto Terramar. Terramar is a non-profit organization that works for the social and environmental sustainability of the coastal zone through the empowerment of coastal communities. In the past years, Terramar has been seriously

speakers were fisherwomen and community activists.

The various sessions focused on women’s multiple responsibilities in the household and community. Women work both in fishery-related activities and in areas like handicraft, small commerce and services. Their economic pluralism often depends on networks of mutual aid. The discussions showed how this mix of tasks often hinders the recognition of women as workers and underlined how women’s everyday jobs are both time-consuming and not easily identified as ‘work’.

The women recounted the range of activities they carry out. Some activities, like salting fish and making gear, have declined while new activities have emerged. A fisherwoman, Luzanete, explained: “Earlier many women would weave nets. But today, with machine-made nets available, you will hardly find a woman weaving nets. My husband and I used to even pay women to help us with weaving because it’s a hard job. But now the nets come readymade and we just buy them. Women have lost this source of income. With tourism coming in, the women got into that sector, to work for the tourists.”

Marizelha Lopes (Nega) from Bahia State, a member of the co-ordination of National Fishermen’s Movement (MONAPE) and also a leader of the National Fisherwomen’s Organization (ANP), spoke of health issues of fisherwomen. Nega posed some basic questions: “How can we enjoy good health when there is no basic sanitation, hospitals, energy or education? If we are to be recognized as traditional communities, we need this recognition as a whole. If the State doesn’t recognize our communities, how can occupational conditions like injuries, vision problems due to the sun, skin cancer, back ailments, fungi infections due to humidity and so on, be prevented?”

Nega then talked about an initiative that some communities, in collaboration with a state university and government agencies, implemented in 2007. A medical researcher was invited to study the health conditions of shellfish collectors. Once the results of the study were available, a meeting, inviting selected state officers and collectors, was organized.

IANA SOARES



Fisherwomen from different localities present results from group work about the reality of the fishing communities

concerned about the spread of large shrimp farms and has also helped put in place participatory committees for managing the fisheries and the littoral areas.

As a researcher, I was invited to make a presentation on the topic “Women in fishing: Experiences from different places” as part of a round table titled “Fishing and women days”. The topics of the other two round tables were: “Fisherwomen: Challenges for building political participation” and “Organization and political participation of women in Brazil.” Most of the

“We fisherwomen know a lot, but if we don’t exchange this information and don’t come together, we’ll go nowhere.”

Later that year, a seminar was held that led to an agreement with a city hospital for health checkups for shellfish collectors. “They originally agreed to see four women every week. But our strategy was to press for more consultations. Then, we began taking 10 or 12 women per week. We are now discussing how to increase this support,” said Nega.

Apart from highlighting problems, the meeting also provided space for women to articulate their identity as fishworkers. One woman said: “During the high tide, I look for shellfish in the mangrove with my husband. I have the courage because I have three little children. If one day I separate from my husband, I can still earn a living from the mangrove. That’s all we have—the mangrove.”

An indigenous woman, Navegante, from Tremembé saw fishing as an addiction, a mix of suffering and joy. “I fish in the river, the sea and the lake”, she said. “I use hook and line. No nets. I fish ‘siri’ and ‘maria farinha’ (crustaceans). We take a can to trap these. Then we prepare *farofa* (a manioc flour preparation) and we eat very well. When we go fishing, I prefer to take our food from nature. I feel like a warrior, like an Indian. Today we have been invited here because we have knowledge. And I tell you, fishing is addictive! Like cigarettes! Even if the lake is bad for health, at six in the morning I enter the cold water, up to the waist...When my sister calls me to go fishing, I can hardly sleep during the night thinking of the fishing. And today I am 60. I have eleven children. I am still addicted to fishing but not the way I used to be!”

In most of the northeastern states, shellfish are important resources and traditionally it is the women who gather them. The women are called *marisqueiras*, from the word *marisco* (shellfish), a term that conveys their separate status within the sector. Although it is not common for women to enroll in fishermen’s *colônias*, when they do so, they enroll as *marisqueiras*, not as fisherwomen. This traditional division still influences the representation of women’s roles in the fisheries and often hinders identification—even self-identification—as fisherwomen. As Graça, from Morro Branco, pointed out: “Some women have their professional card as *marisqueiras*, whereas those who fish aren’t even aware that there is that kind of card. Communication is lacking. Often women aren’t aware that they are fisherwomen and that they earn a living from fishing.”

It is worth noting that even in regions where shellfish is frequently found, for example, in the Amazonian region, the term *marisqueiras* is often used by *colônia* directors to refer to fisherwomen.

As long as this perception continues to conceal commonality with men fishworkers, hampering collective organization, this should be a matter of concern for the national organization of women.

The identity question came up again in the final session. This session was facilitated by Sílvia Camurça, from the Brazilian feminist movement, SOS Corpo (Body), who drew attention to two interesting proposals that had come from the participants: first, that the names of the fishermen *colônias* should be changed to reflect both fisherwomen and fishermen, and second, that identities based on local occupations like *marisqueiras* and *algueiras* (algae collectors) should be abandoned in favor of the more general political identity ‘fisherwoman’.

Sílvia Camurça, while acknowledging the relevance of the second proposal in securing professional rights, pointed to the dangers of losing sight of the diverse activities women assume in the fisheries. She agreed with the suggestion that the movement should consider both identities: one that affirms diverse local experiences as well as the other that affirms political selfhood. As Nega put it: “I consider myself a fisherwoman, but I don’t intend to stop being a *marisqueira*.”

The necessity to examine membership statutes came up for discussion. An approved guideline for the fisherwomen’s organization, for example, is “to study shellfish breeding cycles”. This, it was felt, is indeed necessary to protect natural resources in the current context of shrimp-farm expansion near mangroves, mounting fishing pressure, and tourism and population growth in the coastal zones. Sound ecological data too is necessary to negotiate allowances for fishers during the closed fishing season. Clearly, what is required is powerful organization in order to influence agents, researchers, unions and decision makers. In the words of Liduína, from Icapuí: “We fisherwomen know a lot, but if we don’t exchange this information and don’t come together, we’ll get nowhere.”

This meeting might have been the first of its kind in Ceará State but its origins date back to another meeting held four years ago. In 2004, soon after the new government had instituted the National Fisheries Office, a National Meeting of Women Fishworkers was held in Brasília, the national capital. Several delegates from coastal communities, including those from Ceará, were present. The following year, two regional meetings were organized in the east and west coast respectively. A team of women from the

meeting in Brasília co-ordinated these efforts. Six capacity-building workshops were held in 2006, supported by a grant from the Carlos Chagas Foundation, a Brazilian funding organization.

An outcome of the Brasília meeting was the founding of the National Fisherwomen's Organization in 2006. Around the same time, the Coastal Zone Project brought together various social movements working at the state level, which gave rise to the Forum of Fishermen and Fisherwoman from Ceará Littoral (FPPLC), a unique phenomenon in the Brazilian context. Protest marches against predatory fishing and aquaculture were organized, and conferences, well-attended by women, were held on environmental issues. On International Women's Day, 8 March 2007, a preliminary co-ordination committee was established in Ceará with the purpose of organizing the State Fisherwomen's Organization, a branch of the National Organization. With a grant from the Ecumenical Service Co-ordination (CESE), a series of local workshops were held, leading finally to the present meeting: the first meeting of fisherwomen from Ceará.

Looking back, one of the co-ordinators, Mentinha, recalled: "In these four years, we learned a lot. We discussed fishing, health, inequalities, racism, environmental management... everything! We discussed many topics that other movements never discuss."

Despite an acknowledgement of overall achievement, there was concern about the obstacles on the way. The identity issue was a dominant concern: Who is a fisherwoman? Can women who perform other parallel or temporary activities outside the fisheries, be called fisherwomen? What about those who perform pre- and post-harvest tasks? It was also pointed out that the meeting had managed to mobilize the *marisqueiras* but not the *algieiras* or the octopus collectors, who were fewer in number. It was the same case with the fisherwomen from coastal *quilombolas* communities, legally recognized as descendants of ancient slaves. Such groups were yet to be organized.

In every session women talked about the tensions they experienced within the family and even within professional organizations whenever they began to take up active roles. Women also complained about the problems they face in accessing entitlements, such as retirement benefits, maternity leave and adequate health assistance.



Bina, an algae collector and Lourdinha, a fish seller, from Batoque (east littoral) during the net weaving workshop

A major difficulty is that the organization of women still lacks legitimacy within the fishermen's organizations. It was noted that many *colônias* did not accept women at all or accepted them only to 'increase the number of voters', not because they were committed towards women's interests. However, it was felt that the National Fishermen's Movement (MONAPE), which had women in several leading positions, had promoted the fisherwomen's cause much more than the traditional state federations had.

Nevertheless, there was consensus that gender relations in the fisheries were far from balanced, and that conventional attitudes remained. The relationship of fisherwomen's organizations with other social movements or NGOs was reported to be often far smoother than with fishermen's organizations. A woman leader of a fishermen's organization describes the problem vividly: "When we came into the fishermen's organization, we thought our companions would surely have a better understanding. Not true. They assigned women to secretary roles, to serve coffee. So, we started to complain about that. We discussed methodologies, priorities for speeches and the division of tasks. It's not easy at all because when we want to discuss women's health issues, they start scratching themselves; they leave the room; they go out for a smoke. Even the assistants have trouble dealing with the presence of women."

Regarding the structure of the Fisherwomen's Organization, the members of the co-ordination team in Ceará stated that although they had seats in different councils, they had not been very effective in influencing the agenda. Manuela

was candid about the limitations: “Me and my companions were not successful in including our issues in the agenda list. For example, in the FPPLC, we debated closed seasons for fishing and boat licensing but not lake fishing and shellfish collection.”

Communication gaps were a critical problem; gaps in information and input between the state, the regional and the local levels. It was not only about distances or the shortage of transport and funds. The key issue was how to organize effectively and in greater numbers.

Similar concerns were reported at the national level. According to the representative of the National Fisherwomen’s Organization, distances between states weakened national-level organization. To proactively address this concern it was decided that for the next national meeting, scheduled to take place in June 2009 in Bahia State, groups of two members from the co-ordination team will visit as many states as possible from the North to the South to mobilize groups and partners.

Not just problems, there were positive stories as well—the case of Fortim *colônia*, for example, that had implemented different fees for women and men affiliates, proportional to their earnings from fishing.

Numerous proposals emerged from the three days of discussion, touching upon a broad range of issues: basic services, energy and water management as well as problems of violence. There were specific proposals aimed at strengthening the fisherwomen’s movement through documentation of the history of the movement; studies on shellfish breeding cycles; initiatives to control tourism expansion in the coastal zone; and efforts to include the term ‘fisherwomen’ in *colônia* names.

The co-ordination team was expanded from four to six women and a schedule drawn up for visits to coastal communities. To strengthen this initiative, Terramar agreed to prepare two documents with support from ICSF: a brief booklet on the history of organizing fisherwomen in Ceará with an account of the present meeting, as well as a handbook on women’s labour and welfare rights in the fisheries. The working group includes members from Terramar and Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP) as well as two representatives of the State Fisherwomen’s Organization.

To conclude, Ceará’s fisherwomen, who have always engaged in promoting the wellbeing of their community, today know that in order to gain social and occupational status, they need to organize collectively. They realize that this involves self-organization rather than joining existing fishermen’s *colônias* and associations. They are also aware of the obstacles they face: conventional prejudices, institutional barriers or even complexities inherent in the process of self-organization—forging a political identity, for example, that does not obscure real social differences. These hurdles are not, however, a dampener. An indomitable spirit prevailed during the three days of the meeting as fisherwomen shared their skills and traditional knowledge through narratives, writings, poetry, photographs, dancing and chanting. It was remarkable to witness the beginnings of a movement that will eventually no doubt transform fisherwomen into political actors, recognized and respected for who they are and what they do.

Note: This article is based on a report by Cristiane Faustino, Co-ordinator of Planning and Evaluation, Instituto Terramar, Brazil. ❏

“...there was consensus that gender relations in the fisheries were far from balanced, and that conventional attitudes remained.”



Milestones

By
Maria Cristina Maneschy
(cristina@ufpa.br),
Professor at the Federal
University of Para, Brazil
and member of ICSEF

Brazil's New Fisheries and Aquaculture Law

Brazil's new Fisheries and Aquaculture Law passed in June 2009 has important implications for women. A key aspect of the new law is that it broadens the definition of the term 'fishworker' by including those who perform critical ancillary activities that, till now, had no legal recognition. With this broadening of the definition of 'fishworker', Brazil has taken yet another important step forward. Women working in fishing activities, as harvestors, had already achieved formal recognition with the approval of the Brazilian Federal Constitution in 1988, and the institution of the Social Welfare Law in 1991, that provided rural workers the same kind of social protection accorded to urban workers. Of particular interest to rural women was the recognition of their status as workers regardless of marital status.

The new law adopts a more comprehensive view of fisheries and of the relevant social actors in this field. It ensures recognition of those engaged in fisheries-related activities such as in manufacturing or repairing

nets and gear, and the processing of artisanal fish products.

It is expected that this will provide workers performing fisheries-related activities, most of whom are women, access to welfare rights, notably retirement, accident and sickness cover, and maternity indemnities. Moreover, wherever annual fishing bans are established, they will benefit from the related insurance—normally a four-month allowance involving the payment of the minimum wage for each month of the ban, approximately US\$218 per month. With this entitlement, they will receive recognition as full economic agents, who suffer, just as male fishworkers do, from income shortage during the fishing ban period. Given the major presence of women in pre- and post-harvesting activities, their official inclusion within the sector is expected to greatly increase the enrolment of women in artisanal fishworker's organizations. ■

Latin America/Brazil

Why Are We in CONAPE?

The results, so far, of CONAPE have been disappointing, with highly disparate workers interests being represented, including NGOs, trade unions and associations

By Adriane Lobo, Adviser to the National Association of People Affected by Dams, Brazil

CONAPE, Brazil's National Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture is a consultative collegiate body, integral to the basic structure of the President of the Republic's Special Secretariat for Aquaculture and Fisheries (SEAP/PR). Its role is to review the formulation of public policies, promote debate between different levels of government and organized civil society, and develop and support aquaculture and fisheries activities in Brazil.

CONAPE consists of 54 members who represent government and civil society. Workers (15 seats), the industry (10 seats) and researchers are represented. Civil society organizations are not mentioned per se, as they are considered to be covered in the three categories. The workers' sector is composed of such a wide variety of interests that it is impossible to come to any common position.

In the SEAP/PR, fishworkers are represented by the following:

- The National Fishworkers Movement (Monape, two seats);
- Consejo Pastoral de Pescadores (CPP, two seats);
- National Women Fishworkers Platform (Articulación Nacional de Mujeres Pescadoras, ANP);
- Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST);
- Movement of those Affected by Dams (MAB);
- Movement of Professional Artisanal Fishermen (MPPA);



- The National Confederation of Fishermen and Fishfarmers (CNPA, two seats);
- National Confederation of Aquatic and Air Transport Workers in Fishing and Ports (CONTTMAF);
- National Federation of Aquatic and Related Transport Workers (FNTTAA, two seats);
- The Federation of Fishery Engineer Associations of Brazil (FAEP-BR); and
- The Brazilian Co-operatives Organization (OCB).

Notably, of the worker's organizations represented, the National Women Fishworkers Platform (ANP) is the only one that purports to represent the interests of women fishworkers.

The first meeting of SEAP/PR, during 27 -29 March 2007 in Brasilia, aimed to set objectives and define how the Council should function, but it left many disappointed. It failed to establish working groups, avoided providing an overarching perspective for fisheries and aquaculture in Brazil, and fragmented the agenda of the Council into too many areas.

Civil society has a role in SEAP/PR in defending the dignity and culture of fishing in Brazil, where food sovereignty and the environment provide the basic

pillars that support the fisher people, fishing communities and Brazilian families that depend on artisanal fishing and aquaculture.

There is clearly much work to do.

*Adriane can be contacted at
adrianelobo@ibestvip.com*

Latin America/ Brazil**Struggle for life always!**

Fisherwomen in Brazil create their own national organization to struggle for their rights, and for life

By Naína Pierri, Professor of the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil, and Man Yu Chang, Adviser, Department of Environment and Water Resources, State Secretary of Paraná, Brazil

In March 2006, fisherwomen of Brazil took an important step towards their organization and mobilization. At the Second National Conference on Fisheries in Brasilia, fisherwomen from different regions of Brazil organized themselves and struggled very successfully to highlight their specific rights. At the end of the conference, an independent national organization called 'National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil' was created. One month later, on 8 and 9 April 2006, the organization had its first meeting in Recife, Pernambuco. In the subsequent month, this newborn organization was accepted as a regular member of the National Council for Fisheries, comprising different interest groups and institutions related to the sector.

During the first term of the administration of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, from 2002 to 2006, two national conferences on aquaculture and fisheries were organized, in September 2003 and March 2006. These conferences were preceded by State-level conferences throughout the country. A national meeting for women workers in fisheries was also organized in December 2004, again preceded by State-level meetings.

The purpose of the conferences and meetings was to provide opportunities to government officials to interact directly with fisherfolk in order to ensure that their situation and demands could be incorporated into specific public policies. At the same time, the conferences were undoubtedly precious opportunities for fishworkers to consolidate their class consciousness and set up their own organizations. During the three-day events, over 2,000 representatives of the sector, from different parts of

the country, met and reported on their specific realities, and defined and discussed their priorities and demands. Fisherwomen delegates were particularly aware that such opportunities were rare, and so they used these conferences as an opportunity to strengthen their consciousness, organization and mobilization, grounded in vision, courage and dignity.

The foundation of the 'National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil' was the culmination of a process that had begun at least three years ago, in September 2003, during the First National Conference on Fisheries, when fisherwomen from different parts of the country began to discuss their situation. They realized soon enough that the general conference did not give proper attention to their specific problems, and, therefore, requested the government to organize a national meeting of fisherwomen. The government accepted their demand, and, in the following year, 2004, the First National Meeting of Women Workers in Fisheries was organized, preceded by State-level meetings. Despite the fact that the national meeting was convened by the government, it was very helpful for fisherwomen to voice their demands publicly, in an independent and forceful manner.

When fisherwomen arrived at the Second National General Conference on Fisheries in March 2006, they had already accumulated organizational experience. This made them the group with the highest mobilizing capacity among all participants. They had clearly defined three goals for the conference: (i) to gain a slot in the proceedings schedule for a fisherwoman to deliver a speech at the opening and closing ceremony, to express their specific needs; (ii) to change the rules and settings of the conference by adding a clause to ensure that the composition of the permanent presiding table had at least 30 per cent women representatives; and (iii) to get the General Conference to approve the document finalized at the National Meeting of Women Workers in Fisheries, in 2004, as a way to legitimize their demands of being part of the fisheries class.

A strong demonstration by fisherwomen prior to the opening of the conference called the attention of the organizing committee, and the opportunity was created for a speech to be delivered by a fisherwoman



representative during the opening ceremony. The group also succeeded in ensuring that the organizing committee of the conference comprised 30 per cent women. Two hundred signatures were collected for the approval of this change in the general assembly of the conference, a change that was finally approved by all delegates. The group also collected more than 400 signatures in two hours in support of a legislative change that would recognize activities performed by women, related both directly and indirectly to fisheries. Several activities, both in the pre- and post-harvest sector, are usually performed by women. It was hoped that this project would ensure recognition of this work and confer labour rights on fisherwomen.

Following the intense and successful mobilization, the women's group met one more time and founded the 'National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil'. The first meeting of this organization took place during 8 and 9 April 2006 in Recife, with the support of the Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP), a branch of the Catholic church committed to social causes. There were around 70 participants.

Fisherwomen discussed the principles and goals of the organization, and defined the first plan of action for the next term. A foundation letter was written, which synthesized the history of the struggle of fisherwomen, expressed their main problems, and established principles and priority demands. The

principles highlighted were: solidarity, autonomy, democracy, respect of differences, and respect for the environment. Among the demands prioritized were the valorization of the fisherwomen's identity and their struggle against discrimination and violence of all kinds. The foundation letter ended with the phrase "Struggle for life always!", which synthesized well the spirit of these courageous women founders. The main challenges at present are to increase grassroots participation; promote gender and class consciousness; and strengthen mobilization at local, regional and national levels.

Naina Pierri can be contacted at nainap@click21.com.br and Man Yu Chang at manyu@click21.com.br

Latin America/Brazil

A historic victory

Recently, in March 2006, the Superior Federal Court of Justice, Brazil, ruled in favour of the rights of the community of Prainha do Canto Verde over their land

by René Schärer, of the Instituto Terramar, Brazil, and a Member of ICSF

Prainha do Canto Verde, a small fishing village in the State of Ceará in northeastern Brazil, was settled around 1870, soon after the abolition of slavery, by people from neighbouring communities, mostly freed slave labour from sugarcane plantations. While fishing is the main source of livelihood in Prainha do Canto Verde, the village does not have a port, as the *jangadas* (sailrafts) used are beach-landing craft.

The calm of the village was interrupted in 1976, when Antônio Sales Magalhães, a specialist in acquiring beach terrain, appeared in the vicinity and made up purchase contracts of land belonging to 12 families, stretching from the dunes behind the village until the coast. Within a year and a half, he had acquired 749 ha of land at about one US cent per sq m. The fisher families living on, or close to, the beach did not know what was going on. Actually, nobody seemed to understand why the well-dressed gentleman, Antônio, was buying sand dunes.

In 1979, Antônio started a process to clear the land titles; that is, the local judge began to call neighbours and other interested people to find out if the purchase of land was legal. The fishers again were not aware of the process as they were not specifically invited and could not read the official, or any other, newspaper.

In 1984, the district judge of Beberibe ruled in favour of the purchase since no objection had been registered and there were witnesses who testified to the legality of the purchase. Once the land purchase had been laundered, Antônio passed the land on to the real-estate company called Henrique Jorge SA.

Though the fishers had missed the deadline to register their objections to the deal, they were fortunate in

receiving support from a human rights group called ‘The Centre for Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CDPDH)’, founded by the Cardinal and Archbishop of Fortaleza, Dom Aloisio Lorscheider, one of the defenders of liberation theology and social action by church members.

In August 1989, legal advisers of the CDPDH appealed against the verdict of the district judge and against Antônio Sales and the real-estate company, in the Superior Tribunal of Justice of the State of Ceará. The Court judge returned the case to the district court of Beberibe for an inquiry into the circumstances of the purchase. For the next 10 years, between 1989 and 1999, the case remained in the district court.

In 1999, things began to move when a new district judge started to clear the backlog. The case was opened again and witnesses were heard. The case was then referred back to the Superior Tribunal of Justice, Ceará.

In 2000, the community learned that the legal opinion of the State Attorney was in their favour, with the land purchase being described as immoral and illegal, and proposing that the land be turned over to the “(morally) rightful owners”—the community. In May 2001, judges in the Superior Tribunal of Justice followed the opinion of the State Attorney and voted eight votes to nil in favour of the community.

The legality of the transaction was questioned, given the fact that part of the land (at least 30 m of beach) was State property (under the federal government), so that only a federal judge could have ruled the legality of the land purchase.

Despite this ruling, in 2001, the real-estate company Henrique Jorge SA appealed to the Superior Tribunal of Justice. It lost the case, again by eight to zero votes. Not satisfied, the real-estate company appealed again, this time to the Superior Federal Court of Justice in Brasilia in 2003, claiming procedural mistakes.

On 14 March 2006, five Superior Federal Court judges, following the legal opinion of the Federal Attorneys, voted five votes to zero to uphold the sentence of the lower court in favour of the community.

The real-estate company was asked to compensate for the costs incurred by the court and the lawyers.

This was a historic victory for the community. They won because there was a small group within the community that never gave up, all the way to the last appeals court. Many other communities in the same situation would not have been able to resist the resultant pressure, violence and aggression, and, sooner or later, would have accepted a settlement out of court, which invariably would have been against their interests. Antônio Sales and Henrique Jorge SA could never have dreamt that illiterate fishers would outlast them.

The people of Prainha do Canto Verde held out to the end, because they always had support from other communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and supporters throughout Brazil and even abroad. And the man who deserves most of the credit is, without doubt, Dom Aloisio Lorscheider, Cardinal and Archbishop of Fortaleza, who created the Centre for Defense and Promotion of Human Rights. The community is hoping that Dom Aloisio Lorscheider, though aged, will respond to the invitation for the victory celebration some time later this year (2006).

The decision of the Superior Federal Court should give new hope and courage to the many communities

that are being driven from their beach lands along the vast and beautiful coasts of Brazil.

René Schärer's e-mail: fishnet@uol.com.br



Latin America / Brazil

Conservation contradictions

The marine extractive reserve (RESEX) model could have greater benefits for local communities, as compared to other conservation approaches. However, for this to happen, certain issues will need to be resolved.

by Regina Célia Di Ciommo, based at the Laboratório de Ecologia Humana e Etnoecologia in the Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCAR), Brazil.

Since 1989, Brazil has been experimenting with a novel and unique partnership in natural resource extraction and conservation, called “Reservas Extractivistas” or RESEX. This article is about the Ponta do Corumbau Marine Extractive Reserve (Corumbau RESEX), located on the Costa do Descobrimento, 800 km south of Salvador, the capital city of the State of Bahia, Brazil. The region is home to part of what remains of the Mata Atlântica—areas of mangroves and coral reefs recognized as a World Historical Site by UNESCO in 1999.

The Corumbau RESEX was established in September 2000, thanks to the initiatives of artisanal fishermen from nine different communities. The idea was to protect the region from predatory fishing by industrial fleets, whose operations were harming the shrimp stocks in the area.

The user rights to the resources have been guaranteed to the traditional extractive populations along the coast—484 registered members distributed between nine different communities, organized in three associations. The founding decree of the Corumbau RESEX states that it “aims at ensuring the sustainable exploitation and conservation of renewable natural resources traditionally used by the local extractive population.” Research institutions and government agencies, however, provide essential support for resource conservation and effective results.

Alpina Begossi’s work in the Amazon concluded that extractive reserves offer significant potential for political organization and improving environmental and social resilience, compared to other conservation approaches. This has, however, yet to be achieved in Corumbau.

In the case of the Corumbau RESEX, communities live in isolated conditions due to the poor state of the roads and bridges in the area, and due to the absence of electricity. This hinders the active participation of the local population in management and decision-making processes. Participation of women is also generally limited due to several difficulties, two key ones being motherhood and cultural traditions that make it difficult to both speak out at meetings and get a grasp of the issues being discussed.

The RESEX includes both the marine and the surrounding land area. However, it is only in the marine area that the extractive populations have user rights. They have no such rights in the surrounding land area where they live, and it is here that most of the social conflicts arise. Whilst the marine reserve is an area of common property protected by law, the land area is governed by commercial and private property laws, where economically stronger sectors, such as the hospitality and tourism industry, exert a considerable influence.

These interests are fuelling a growing speculation in real estate. RESEX community residents are being forced to sell their houses at very low prices, and move far away, where there is no infrastructure or government assistance of any kind. Also, due to the increasing privatization of access to, and use of, the coastal strip, access to the sea is becoming more difficult for communities. This is leading to a gradual cultural erosion, and the complete exclusion of fishing communities from areas near the coast.

A gender-focused participatory appraisal exercise (PAGP) was undertaken to promote the active participation of various interest groups, especially women, in the management of the RESEX, faced as they are with changes imposed by tourism. The PAGP techniques and tools used were those recommended by IUCN—the World Conservation Union.

This article focuses on the results of two of several PAGP workshops: *Rain of Dreams* and *What Hurts Most*. The former was designed to identify the main aspirations of men and women regarding improvements in their personal, community and environmental conditions. The latter aimed to identify critical problems, and to understand how they affect men and women in their personal, domestic and public lives.



Overall, 118 women and 17 men participated in the workshops. Although the limited presence of men constrained the possibility for comparative analysis, it highlighted the existence of power relations between men and women in the communities. The workshop discussions also highlight the differing priorities of women and men, with women more concerned about balancing their productive and reproductive roles. Women expressed concern about children's welfare, the absence of proper medical care in communities, and the lack of piped potable water. The "dreams" highlighted by the women were public daycare centres for children up to six years old, and job and income opportunities that could increase financial independence and their ability to support their families. Participants pointed out that job opportunities abound during tourist seasons, and were daycare centres available, many women could benefit.

The men wanted better working conditions, boat ownership and public transport services. In general, men's dreams related more to improved conditions for their productive activities.

Both men and women ranked lack of healthcare as a primary concern, followed by lack of education. School transport was a "dream" many fathers shared, since their children were attending day or night school in other villages. Women also explained how vulnerable they are to violence, expressed in a variety of ways and worsened by their financial dependence on men.

Both men and women pointed out that associations and other forms of community organizations were non-existent, and drew attention to the problems caused by the lack of local policies for housing, healthcare, water supply, employment creation, and so on. Women specifically mentioned other factors of distress, such as lack or loss of their own houses, non-existent water supply, grief caused by loss of family members through death or by separation imposed by distance, and by lack of family support.

We have used the word "community" advisably, as the power relations between different social groups make it difficult to consider the community as a cooperative and homogenous unit. Existing profound conflicts will probably only make themselves known over time, as the project progresses. However, there is no doubt that the workshops on "dreams" and "painful realities" at RESEX Corumbau have been able to pinpoint critical problems that have a bearing on the quality of life of communities, ranging from housing, education, electric power and water to personal happiness, despair, violence, and alcohol and drug abuse.

It is ironical, though, that it is precisely such "rusticity" that is a tourist attraction. The burden falls mainly on women, and performing daily activities under prevailing conditions is becoming increasingly difficult and strenuous. The construction of roads is another area that needs to be discussed. This is an issue on which local people and conservation organizations are in conflict due to the potential threat road construction represents to the area, as it could pave the way for mass tourism and for environmental and cultural damage.

The research has highlighted the contradictions that exist between establishing a conservation area to safeguard the marine ecosystem, and the interests and rights of the local inhabitants. The specific conservation measures required for the marine area also need to take account of the relationships between land and sea, and the complementary roles played by women and men in sustaining life and livelihoods.

Ensuring a balance between such a diversified and contradictory set of interests is a challenge that will have to be faced by those responsible for the development and management of the RESEX. To guarantee sustainability, it is particularly important that

rules are set to not only control tourism activities and the distribution of its benefits, but also to restrict the behaviour of other economic interests in the area—notably real estate speculation.

This must go hand-in-hand with ensuring the regular participation of the population in the RESEX administration, ensuring gender equity. This could help to empower the community through participatory management, raise the quality of life of the residents, and ensure their contribution to the conservation of ecosystem biodiversity.

(This article has been translated by Brian O’Riordan of ICSF’s Brussels office)

Contact Regina at: rdiciommo@linkway.com.br

Latin America/ Brazil

Changing women's lives

Income women earn from processing crabmeat is leading to socioeconomic and cultural changes in some parts of the state of Para in Brazil

By Denise Machado Cardoso, an anthropologist and teaching assistant at the Department of Anthropology of the Federal University of Pará, Brazil.

Women's work in fishing communities is little recognized or acknowledged, especially when it involves processing shellfish. This can be explained by many factors, one of them being the division of labour in these communities. Whereas women are shore-bound to 'drudgery' work, men engage in the more prestigious sea-faring activities. For example, net repair and maintenance as well as the preparation and salting of fish are frequently relegated to a 'non-work' status. Thus, women's involvement in productive activities is considered of little consequence.

In spite of its significance, the work of women processors in Guarajubal is not recognized by their companions or by the women themselves. Apart from the reasons mentioned above, women themselves do not want to upset the existing social order in their community.

Women processors will not openly admit to the significance of their work because to do so would be tantamount to claiming that their companions are unable to sustain their roles as providers. Within the domestic sphere, one notices that women play a significant role in decision-making, but upon further investigation one finds that women tend to accede more power to the men in their family.

Residents of Guarajubal, like in other fishing communities, are not strictly limited to fishing as they also farm and hunt to sustain themselves. Situated in the coastal region of Pará state in Northeastern Brazil, Guarajubal forms part of the municipality of Marapanim. Marapanim, on the Atlantic coast, is crisscrossed by many rivers and streams, and is home to extensive mangrove areas. Fish, shrimp, crabs and other species of crustaceans and molluscs have been harvested in this region for a long time although

harvesting crabs has become an important activity in the last decade. The work of women shellfish processors starts after the crabs are caught in nearby swamp areas and ends with packaging the crabmeat in plastic wrappers. Crab collection and processing started approximately 10 years ago in Marapanim and, since then, this type of work has led to sociocultural changes in the many towns that comprise this municipal district.

Shellfish processors are predominantly healthy, adult married women, with children, since some income can be earned from this activity without necessarily travelling too far from the domestic space. Concern over reconciling remunerative work as collectors and processors with the non-remunerative activities of housework (childcare, cooking, garden cultivation, livestock raising, etc.) is encountered more among married women, as their single counterparts without children seek working opportunities elsewhere, in the municipal district headquarters or in other municipalities of northeastern Pará.

The work of women shellfish processors begins at daybreak, starting with household chores such as preparing food, washing clothes, childcare, sewing and maintenance of fishing equipment. After lunch, the women head off to begin their work, returning only by the evening. Men, who manually catch the crabs by reaching into their burrows and pulling them out, usually do the physical capture of the crabs. The task of removing the crabmeat from the shell is that of the women. This is stored for delivery to the middlemen, locally known as a *marreteiro*, who usually monopolize this trade.

Women may start off in this work accompanying their relatives or neighbours, ostensibly to help them. Help may not be as much towards production as towards giving company to friends to render their work more pleasurable. Thus, 'help' in itself is more of a leisure strategy among women of Guarajubal than an effort to reduce the overall workloads. Children also engage in shellfish processing to help their mothers. It is more the girls who learn these skills, as the boys prefer to engage in work considered more 'masculine'.

To become a shellfish processor in this region requires patience. The amount of crabmeat processed daily depends on the amount of time invested in this activity

and can take up to six hours to shell 120 crabs yielding about 2 kg of crabmeat. In addition to taking care of their young children, shellfish processors have to display great perseverance in performing a repetitive task that can also cause injury as they often cut their fingers in the process of separating crabmeat.

Denise can be contacted at Demacard@aol.com

Although women do face some risks and adverse conditions in their work, there are hardly any other alternatives for paid work in this region. Despite these problems, therefore, women recognize the positive changes that the processing activity has brought about, both to their lives and that of their families. These changes are evident from a socioeconomic as well as a cultural perspective. The socioeconomic status of working women has improved and, at the same time, women now enjoy more decision-making powers within the family as well.

Nowadays, in Guarajubal, the decision as to how many children a couple will have, rests primarily on the woman. This change is a direct consequence of a married woman's increased participation in the job market and their greater purchasing power. Of course, other factors such as television have influenced behaviour in Guarajubal.

The observation that women now have greater control over the number of children they have is reinforced in other ways. When comparing the degree of domestic violence suffered by women in Marapanim's communities, we can observe that married women processors who have started earning an income are more prone to resisting their companion's aggression than are women who do not engage in this activity.

The processing of crabmeat, known as *massa de carangueijo*, has thus stimulated many changes in the lives of people in northeastern Pará. Until recently, women had few prospects for gaining access to paid labour. They are now able to reconcile earning an income with other activities normally attributed to women, such as being mothers and companions.

People engaged in harvesting and processing crabs are aware that increasing production can eventually compromise the sustainability of this species. Public policy, so far blind to this issue, could eventually see the implementation of a 'closed season' for harvesting crabs.

From Latin America/ Brazil

Who is a fishworker?

A discussion group on gender and fisheries at a recent seminar in Brazil, debated the situation of women of fishing communities

By Maria Cristina Maneschy, a professor at the Federal University of Para in Belem, Brazil, and a member of ICSF

During the General Assembly of the *Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores* (CPP), held in Lagoa Seca, Paraíba State, Brazil from 17 to 19 November 2000, one of the themes was 'Gender Relations in Fisheries'. A discussion group was formed with 29 participants, most of them women from different fishing communities. There were also support people from NGOs, as well as community and union leaders. This represented a rare opportunity to understand the various ways in which women participate in the fisheries and in fishworker organizations, the difficulties they face in being recognized and valued, as well as to discuss the progress that has been made. Some of the debates are described below.

One of the participants, Mrs. Roquelina Almeida, introduced herself as follows: "fisherwoman, poetess, writer, director of the *colônia* (professional organization of fishermen) of fishermen from Maragogipe, Bahia State, and director of the local association of residents." She said that she had begun fishing since she was a child, but that in her time, "a woman could only be a *marisqueira* (seafood collector). Today, thank God I got the right of being a *pescadora* (fisherwoman)."

A shared view among the participants was that women often do not consider themselves as fishers. According to Mrs. Petúcia, president of the co-operative of Ponto da Barra, Maceió, Alagoas: "women are quiet; they are fisherwomen, but they don't like to participate. However, the men are worse than the women, they participate even less." She emphasized the fragility of the organization of fishermen, an opinion shared by many of those present.

In her turn, a fisherwoman named Lídia, director of the *colônia* of Aranaín in the municipal district of Cachoeira, Pará state, said that in her community progress had been notable. Four of the five directors

in Fortim are presently women (all except for the President).

Mrs. Dolores, sociologist from Instituto Terramar, Ceará state, pointed to the lack of data in governmental bodies, in universities, and in organizations, on the work women do in fisheries. In the municipality of Fortim, for example, women collect seafood and they fish. As a result of the work of the current President of the *colônia*, a woman, there are today about 80 women registered in the *colônia*. In other places in Ceará, some women collect algae and, sometimes, they fish with nets on the shore. The algae has a good market for the cosmetics industry, but the collectors sell this at very low prices. At times this income is the only one for maintaining the family.

Dolores emphasized that many women in fishing communities combine fishing with handicraft and other activities. This makes their official recognition as fishers by the technicians from the welfare institute, difficult. While investigating cases in villages, they have to decide whether the woman applying for retirement or other benefits is a housewife, an embroiderer or a fisher.

The characteristic *machismo* of the *colônia* was described by Francisca Ester of Parajuru, Ceará, President of the local community association. "The only woman who goes to the *colônia* there, is me. You don't see a woman there. I ask the fishermen, please, bring your wives for the *colônia* meetings so they can get informed!" According to Francisca, almost all of the villagers in Parajuru take crabs in the swamps, as well as oysters and *sururus* (small mussels).

Mrs. Cárita Chagas, president of the women's association in the village of Cachoeira, Pará, emphasized the points common to the situation of women across several states. She emphasized that the Mayor of her town and the management of the *colônia* have not showed any interest in complying with the demands of the fishers, men or women, especially of the women. With the support of outsiders, women in her municipality have formed two associations. These women took an active role during the last elections of the *colônia*. "Last year we removed the former President of the *colônia*. The current one is committed and the women have more space inside it. ...The *colônia* of the municipal district was founded 70 years ago. However, it was opened to women only a year

ago. Unfortunately in many cases the barrier is cultural. It is the history of submission that is reproduced.”

(*Maria Cristina Maneschy can be contacted at crismane@terra.com.br*)

The subject, *who is fisherman or fisherwoman*, raised heated discussions. One of the issues discussed was the status of the women who weave nets, salt fish, take care of the fishing equipment and other related tasks. Who are they? Do they have to be recognized as fishworkers? In fact, they are not considered legally as fishworkers.

In this context it was noted that in this discussion group on gender, there were hardly a few men. This was seen as indicative of the fact that within the category of fishermen, the discussion on such issues still interests only the women and is not seen as a priority.

The participants of this mini-seminar presented their ‘histories’. In spite of the progress that has been made, their testimonies showed that while women work, and have always worked, their work remains largely invisible.

The seminar pointed to the urgent need to produce data concerning women’s work in the fisheries, and the links between fishing and other related work. If the statistics on fisheries are poor, on the work of women in the fisheries, they are absent. The traditional approach that regards women’s works as ‘complementary’ reinforces this invisibility.

The testimonies at the seminar made it clear that women in fishing communities undertake different activities, unlike the fishermen, who tend to be specialized (net fishermen, fixed-trap fishermen, lobster fishermen etc). Women:

- fish in several ways (the *marisqueira* also fishes)
- collect algae
- weave and repair fishing nets
- take up other activities through the year (embroidery, craft, agriculture...)
- participate in community work (like for instance, in the residents’ associations in Ceará they have taken up the fight against land speculation).

It was clear that the barriers remain. Many participants referred to the weight of the ‘cultural issue’. And, in Brazil, several social benefits are linked to the status of a person as a worker. The need to change this situation was stressed, because it is source of social exclusion.

FROM LATIN AMERICA/ Brazil
Proud to be a fishworker

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Women do not do any fishing in the open sea. Our area is the estuarine mangrove area. We mostly work inside the estuary and the problem we have is the

destruction of the mangrove habitat, as a result of shrimp aquaculture projects.

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

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

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

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

I have a grand child who is five years old. Before coming here the TV network "Rela Global" interviewed me about the mangroves and my grandchild told me that he had seen me on TV. He was very excited. I told him he should not be excited about being on a TV because this is a struggle and you only achieve things when you struggle for them and you have to start when you are little to fight for things that you will achieve later.

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

FROM LATIN AMERICA/ Brazil

Gender Focus

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

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

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

The objectives were as follows:

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

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

The group included representatives from the Confederacion Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH), Federacion de Integracion Y Unificacion de Pescadores (FIUPAP) of Peru, Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores (MONAPE) of Brazil and the Federaci3n Nacional de Cooperativas Pesqueras del Ecuador (FENACOPEC), the national fishworker organizations from Chile, Peru, Brazil and Ecuador respectively. It also included representatives from NGOs, research institutes and organizations supporting fishworkers from Brazil, Chile, Peru and Mexico.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- The work and roles of women within the fisheries and within fishing communities has historically been, and continues to be, important, though often invisible and undervalued;
- There is a need to valorize the work and labour of women, and to recognize this as an important part of the productive chain within family enterprises. This may involve redefining what is seen as fisheries;

- However, these efforts need to take place within an overall context of strengthening and affirming the way of life and cultural identity of coastal communities, and on fostering mutual respect between men and women. There is a need to be wary of triggering a divisive conflict within the community;
- Women's participation in fishworker organizations should not only be seen to support issues important to men. There are issues that are specific to women that need to be addressed. The role of women should not be seen as complementary but as an issue in its own right.

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

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

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

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

From Latin America/ Brazil

Fish, women and videotape

A film being made in Brazil will attempt to capture, on film, the roles of women in fishing communities

by **Maria Cristina Manesch, Professor at the Federal University of Para, Brazil and coordinator of ICSFs Women in Fisheries (WIF) Programme**

A video film is being produced through the Women in Fisheries Project (WIF) of the ICSF. It aims to show the various roles played by women in four of the fishing communities in the state of Pará in North Brazil. It also aims to show that women in fishing communities are organizing and thus gaining recognition.

The script has three main parts. After presenting briefly the importance of fisheries in the region, it stresses the fact that both men and women are present in the fisheries. They engage in different, though complementary, activities. However, women's roles and spaces are less visible than the ones of men. Some women fishworkers will be interviewed—a shrimp fisher, a woman who fishes with fixed traps alongside husband, a net weaver, a fisherman's wife who works in agriculture and is part of a women's association, a woman who catches crabs in a mangrove thicket, and a woman boatowner who manages the familial business. They will explain their work and the relationship between home and work.

The next part of the film will present a historical background. Two women will talk about their past, when it was necessary to work hard to dry and salt fish, as well as to prepare the fishing nets and gear.

The final part of the video will focus on the way women have now organized, as part of associations. It will explore what organization means to them, and specifically, the difficulties that those who participate have to face: the resistance of their families and communities, a general lack of recognition of their roles by others, and their own lack of self-esteem. Despite these difficulties, the growing awareness of the "woman fishworker" inside fishermen movements will be highlighted.

"Land Partners," as the video is titled, is being pro-

duced by an NGO from Belém called "CEPEPO" (Center of Studies in Popular Education), in collaboration with the WIF project. CEPEPO has extensive experience in making videos that function as popular educational tools.

FROM LATIN AMERICA/ Brazil

Growing recognition

Women fishworkers emerge as subjects in their own right in the province of Para

by Maria Cristina Maneschy, Professor at the Federal University of Para, Brazil and coordinator of the ICSF's Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme

Fishermen and fisherwomen from six coastal municipalities in the province of Pará, Brazil, as well as members of unions and community-based associations, took part in a meeting organized by the Comissão Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP), from 24 to 26 September this year. The objectives were to present to fishworkers and their organizations an overview of the present trends within the fisheries sector in the province and in the region, and to create opportunities for them to reflect on ways to improve the capacity of artisanal fishing communities to resist adverse developments.

Titled "Fishermen and Fisherwomen Looking for Citizenship in the New Times", the meeting was held in the village of Marudá, a fishing community about 180 km from Belém, the capital of the province of Pará. Sixty people—20 men and 40 women—took part in the meeting. CPP had invited five persons from each of the municipalities where it works directly, or where there are fishworkers organizations and groups, like the ones with which the ICSF-WIF project is working. But some groups sent more than five participants, as they had managed to raise funds themselves for the trip.

A total of 12 groups were present. Most of them stressed that they were looking for alternative means of income generation as well as for means to improve their organization and to create a political voice. They mentioned the environmental problems facing their fisheries and the fact that they have few means to cope with these.

The absence of representatives from *colônias* was significant. Representatives from only three of the *colônias* were present. Only one *colônia* was represented by its president—the *colônia* of Maracanã municipality, whose president, a young woman, is doing a lot of interesting work, such as approaching local schools to teach children more about fishing culture.

Colônias—with their past history of military and government intervention—are still recognized as the professional association for fishermen in Brazil. The *colônia* card is accepted as evidence that a person is a fisherman. The presidents of *colônias* have considerable power, and are often propped up by political or economic interest groups. Most of the *colônias* are politically controlled and rarely work to enhance the social and political status of fishworkers. All fishermen are required to be members of *colônias* and to pay regular fees to it, though this is often not the case in practice.

Associations and independent groups develop initiatives that are not usually taken up by *colônias*—economic projects, for instance. But they also take on roles that should belong to the *colônias* or Federations (of *colônias*), such as representing the interests of fishworkers in governmental institutions dealing with credit programs.

At the meeting, it was interesting to observe the growing recognition of women within the fisheries and within the fishworker movement. The initiatives taken by four of the 12 organizations, directly working with women, are described below. It is significant that some of the themes raised by them are not commonly discussed at fisheries-related events.

- ◆ Women's Association, Cachoeira village: The president of this association spoke of the productive credit they have received from a governmental program, to support net weaving and crab processing activities. The group has received no support from the local *colônia*, making the work more difficult. They have problems in obtaining raw material and in accessing better markets.
- ◆ Women's Association, Baía do Sol: The group recalled its recent initiative in organizing a seminar on the social welfare system. The president of this group has herself learnt how to help fishworkers register with IBAMA—the government agency for the environment—a procedure obligatory for anyone in the country engaged in fish harvest.
- ◆ Group Erva Vida and Association of Women from the Fishing Area, Marudá: Both these groups are engaged in the production of traditional medicines. According to the president of the first group, through this work, women have gained self-esteem and autonomy, since domestic work—even if related to fish or to agriculture—does not have

social recognition. The second group shared its plans to support women's efforts to register in the *colônia*, as an initial step towards their greater recognition as fishworkers.

From the meeting, it was evident that women are emerging as political subjects in these communities and in the fishworker movements within the region. It was also evident that they face strong barriers in achieving their objectives—barriers ranging from a lack of recognition of their roles and identity, to their lack of access to education, to markets or to the means for reaching the markets.

Several challenges face the fishworker movements (MONAPE, MOPEPA etc.), and the NGOs that support them, researchers and activists, as well as policymakers: how best to support these individual group initiatives and to integrate them within a sustainable development programme for the coastal region, which is inclusive of men and women, and their communities.

FROM LATIN AMERICA/ Brazil

Count us in too

Lourdinha Rodrigues has worked to give fishworker women a new self-identity

by Chandrika Sharma, Programme Associate, ICSEF, Chennai

In January this year, Cristina Maneschy, the coordinator of the ICSEF- Women in Fisheries project in Brazil, and I, had the opportunity to meet with different groups working with artisanal and small-scale fishworkers in Brazil. In Recife, in the north-eastern state of Pernambuco, Nathanael Maranhao of the Centro Josue de Castro, took us to meet with Lourdinha Rodrigues, the secretary of the *colônia* of Ponte de Pedras Goiana for the past two years. It was a rich experience for us.

Lourdinha told us that she started her work in the *colônia* on a voluntary basis. Her earlier workplace was close to the *colônia* office and she had observed that there were no women who were part of it. Concerned about this, she had spoken to the president. She had convinced him that it was in the long-term interest of the *colônia* to have women members, and he gave her the freedom to work on this issue.

In 1995 she called a meeting, and 75 women from the community came for it. She discussed the importance of women's participation in the *colônia*, of having proper documents, of making regular contributions to the INSS (the social security agency in Brazil) and to the *colônia*. Women responded well to her initiative.

During her work, she observed that women lacked self-esteem and did not see themselves as individuals or as fishworkers. They saw the *colônia* as a male space. They came to the *colônia* only to make the payments and not for the meetings. She decided to call another meeting to discuss these issues, though she was still not paid a salary for her work. She also organized meetings to discuss other important issues, such as women's health.

Many more women began to participate in meetings of the *colônia*. This was quite an achievement, since women had to overcome the resistance from their husbands or fathers, and even the resistance from other women. Their level of confidence increased. Women

who went fishing, mended nets, or processed fish (salted and dried) subsequently asked to become members of the *colônia*. At present, of the 649 members in this *colônia*, 200 are women. About 100 women make payments to the INSS. Earlier, the officials at the INSS were not even aware that a woman could be considered a fishworker. Today women feel that the *colônia* is their space too. They participate in weekly meetings, formulate their own agenda, and take notes.

The process has, however, been long. The women were mostly illiterate and Lourdinha worked to teach them how to write their names, keep accounts, etc. They were supported in this work by the Centro Josue de Castro, an institution based in Recife.

Earlier, even the women did not consider themselves as fishworkers. Lourdinha worked on their own reality, and women began to become aware of the role they play in the fishery and in the family and community. They realized that though they work, they are not recognized as workers. Lourdinha worked with images to help them discover their identity. This helped women move from domestic to public spaces. Issues of citizenship, sexual relations and familial problems were also discussed. It became clear that being active in the public domain does not mean that the other roles women play within the family and community are compromised.

Also, as a result of these efforts, payments to the *colônia*, especially from the women, have become more regular, and its income has gone up. The number of *colônia* members receiving unemployment insurance and other forms of social security from the INSS has also increased. Lourdinha's own work has become better recognized. While her earlier efforts were voluntary, she later began to be paid a salary of R60 (about US\$35) per month, which has subsequently been increased to R130.

Meanwhile, the women in the *colônia* have begun to work together to increase their income and employment opportunities. In 1997, 20 women formed a group for fish processing, and undertook a two-week course on this. This has helped improve the utilisation of fish and reduce wastage. Women make small burgers of fish, sausages, etc., and supply to snack bars in Recife. They are being supported by the *colônia* in this work, even though at every stage this has been so only after a struggle.

FROM LATIN AMERICA/Brazil

A gender workshop

by **Gustava Bezerril of the Instituto Terramar.**
(Translated from the Portuguese by **Rène Schärer**)

Profound changes are taking place in fishing communities in the state of Ceara in northeastern Brazil. And the pivot of these changes lies in a small community with the romantic name of Prainha do Canto Verde (Little Beach at the Green Corner) and in the creation in 1994 of the NGO, Instituto Terramar.

Abandoned for decades and plagued by high levels of illiteracy, lack of organization and participatory citizenship, the state of Ceara is being shook awake, thanks to the women who are playing a prominent role in the changes taking place.

Inspired by ICSF's Women in Fisheries programme and a meeting of women from fishing communities that took place during the International Seminar on Responsible Fishing in Ceara in 1997, the first gender workshop took place in the community centre of Prainha do Canto Verde on 28 and 29 November 1998. The aim was to discuss the role of men and women as partners in the pursuit of improving living conditions. The 16 participants included fishermen, women, community leaders, teachers and adolescents.

Given the total absence of women's organizations in fishing communities as well as the multiplicity of women's occupations, there was some difficulty in attracting a great number of women to the two-day workshop. The strategy was to awaken their interest in the issue and to create an awareness of the importance of discussing certain taboos in the presence of men. The proposal was understood and the challenge accepted by both men and women. This contributed to a rich and profound discussion, both in group work sessions, plenary sessions and in role plays.

The following themes were discussed, with the active participation of everyone :

- the differences between men and women, and the social aspects of these differences;
- the necessity for women to assert their own identities and discuss their anxieties openly, instead of adhering to their traditional roles of submission; and
- the need to strengthen the participation of women beyond their household and communities.

At the suggestion of the participants, it was decided to explore the possibility of holding further workshops to discuss these issues, initially with the participation of community leaders from 11 villages of the region, who are already in regular contact through the monthly meetings of the Fishermen's Forum against Predatory Fishing. Subsequently, we plan to hold several more workshops. These will include three preparatory meetings in the municipality of Centre, one in the municipality of Fortim, and finally, a regional workshop on gender relations in Prainha do Canto Verde.

We hope that these workshops will become one more instrument in the struggle of fisher populations to influence the social and democratic changes taking place in Brazil.

- the identity of women and men;
- sexuality and equality in gender relations;