



39 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

In July 2024, the 36th Committee on Fisheries (COFI) convened at FAO Headquarters in Rome, gathering global delegates to address pressing issues in fisheries and aquaculture. A central theme was advancing gender equality, with particular attention to the essential yet underrecognized contributions of women. Efforts to promote gender equity and equality while preserving the fishing culture, highlight the intersection of empowerment, systemic challenges, and the need for authentic, inclusive narratives that reflect marginalized communities' voices. This complexity is explored in this last edition of Yemaya for 2024.

The challenges are well illustrated by fishing culture as a way of life. For instance, the *haenyeos*, Korea's traditional female divers, exemplify how safeguarding cultural traditions can inadvertently lead to the commodification and romanticization of the means of livelihood, obscuring the nuanced realities of women's lives. This tension underscores how gendered dynamics in fisheries intersect with broader inequities, reflecting the need for systemic approaches.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework provides a promising path to advancing gender equality in environmental and ecological contexts. Its Gender Plan of Action, approved during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), outlines a framework for equitable financial allocation and monitoring. However, delays in critical discussions on gender have hindered immediate progress, as was demonstrated in the recently concluded COP16.

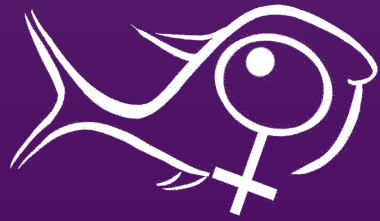
Albeit setbacks, however, gender mainstreaming appears to be gaining momentum in international forums. At COFI 36, a side event spotlighted women's transformative roles in small-scale fisheries, underscoring their significance in building sustainable aquatic food systems. This aligns with FAO policies, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Blue Transformation Roadmap, all of which emphasize gender equality as foundational for systemic progress.

Similarly, the GAF workshop organized during 8th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF8), highlighted the persistent marginalization of women in fisheries, bringing attention to their often invisible and undervalued contributions. Recommendations from the seminar included integrating gender perspectives into research and policy, enhancing capacity-building initiatives, and fostering cross-sector collaboration. Improved data collection, dissemination of gender-sensitive knowledge, and inclusive governance practices are critical to achieving these objectives. Establishing training platforms for young researchers and fostering value-chain partnerships further bolsters the potential for systemic change.

Collectively, these initiatives highlight the interconnectedness of cultural preservation, gender equity, and sustainable development. Whether reframing the narrative of the *haenyeos* or advocating systemic reforms, strengthening the gender agenda remains a unifying thread. Advancing this agenda requires a commitment to inclusivity, transparency, and actionable frameworks that prioritize marginalized voices.

Adding to the significance of 2024, the year has seen recognition of the leadership of Meryl Williams in advancing research on gender and aquaculture. Williams' contributions, recognized with the prestigious Margarita Lizárraga Medal at COFI 36, highlight the vital yet frequently undervalued role of women, who make up nearly half of the fisheries workforce. Her work underscores the systemic inequities affecting fisherwomen, which in turn impact food security, financial stability, and community health. It also shows how addressing these inequities demands robust data collection, institutional support, and unwavering advocacy.

In conclusion, Yemaya wishes all its readers a very happy New Year! 🎉



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