



Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2010, the United Nations Development Programme released a report titled "Power, Voice and Rights—A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific". It highlighted, among other things, the problem of "missing girls"—in East Asia 119 boys are born for every 100 girls—a chilling reminder of the pervasiveness of female infanticide, one among the various forms of violence girl children and women face in our societies. Women, the report notes, face discriminatory treatment in healthcare and access to nutrition throughout their lives.


The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. It is recognized that such violence, known to be common in almost all societies, is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which has led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men.

While violence against women is a larger societal problem across the world, it is pertinent to note that women of small-scale fishing communities link the increase in certain forms of violence against them to changes in the way fisheries are being developed and managed, or rather poorly managed. In several east African countries, for example, the rise in HIV/AIDS has been linked to the increasingly vulnerable livelihoods from fishing, as women have turned to selling sex to get access to fish to sell and process.

Two recent workshops on women in fisheries, held in South Africa and India, also made similar connections (see reports on pages 2 and 9). At the workshop in South Africa, participants noted that many women have been forced into sex work and drug work as a means of surviving economically. They perceived the present individual, quota-based approach to access rights as a primary contributor to the current crisis in their communities, pointing out that this system has contributed greatly to the breakdown of social ties and has caused divisions between those fishers fortunate enough to get access rights and those who were left out. Poaching of marine resources, including by dispossessed fishers desperate to survive, and fuelled by drug money, is on the upswing. In such a context, women, especially young women, are experiencing extremely high levels of poverty- and drug-related violence.

In another part of the world, at the workshop in India, women participants noted that the higher investment in boats, engine and fuel, needed to survive in the technology- and fuel-intensive fisheries development model being pursued, is creating new forms of oppression of women. Increasing costs of fishing operations, growing pressure on resources and uncertain incomes, is leading to greater violence and alcoholism within families and communities, and, in some cases, even to demands for high dowries.

Such stories have also been heard from other parts of the world. In Canada, for example, women from small-scale fishing communities drew the link between policies that favour the 'professionalization' of the fishery, large fishing corporations, and environmentally destructive practices, at the expense of a small, sustainable inshore fishery and viable fishing communities, to greater violence against women and higher levels of stress and despair within families (see Special Issue of *Yemaya*, August 2000).

The voices of women of fishing communities, facing such forms of violence and oppression, need to be taken seriously, particularly by fisheries managers. Perhaps it is important to ask how fisheries development and management systems can be geared to sustaining resources and promoting community wellbeing, rather than focusing on the narrow objectives of increasing production and 'economic wealth', often of individuals, at any cost. 

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Recasting the Net

A recent workshop of women leaders sought to redefine a gender agenda for sustaining life and livelihood in small-scale fisheries in South Africa

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“Our fishing communities are currently facing a social, economic and environmental crisis. The human rights of our communities, particularly those of young girls and women, are being violated on a daily basis, and we can no longer protect our children or our marine resources under these conditions.”

This was the strong message from 43 women leaders representing 16 small-scale fishing communities gathered at the Women in Fisheries Workshop, held in Lambertsbaai, South Africa, during 16-18 February 2010. While the workshop took its title from the ICSF workshop to be held in Chennai, India, in July 2010, it was most appropriate for the current position of women fishworkers in South Africa. Women living and working in small-scale fisheries in South Africa have been marginalized in the small-scale fisheries policy process, and women at the workshop voiced their demand to government loudly and clearly: “We say to government: you have left us out—go back and recast the policy net to include women in fisheries!”

This was the dominant theme that resonated throughout the two-day workshop as women shared their ‘herstories’ of years of work in fisheries, and, more recently, of years

of activism, fighting for fishers’ rights in the new policy processes in South Africa, standing side by side with their male partners, challenging the marginalization of the small-scale sector within the current model of fisheries production and economic development in coastal villages and towns.

The workshop, facilitated by Masifundise, aimed to provide an opportunity for women to review the history of women in fisheries in South Africa, including the history of women’s work, their roles and their organization and to develop a new ‘gender’ agenda for taking their struggles forward. In the first session women gave oral testimony to the ‘triple shift’ that many of them have worked—as mothers and wives and daughters in their homes, preparing food and doing ‘reproductive’ work, to the roles they have played in the artisanal, small-scale sector, assisting their husbands by preparing bait, mending nets and liaising with marketers, to themselves working in the industrial sector in the processing plants providing ‘productive’ labour. Women realized that their position is unique in that they straddle several different economies: at the household and family level, at the level of the community and local fishery, and often at the level of large-scale production and the market. Women expressed their anger on having been marginalized and how the roles they have played have not been recognized in the new fisheries policy processes that have emerged following the election of the first democratic government in South Africa in 1994.

The women felt that the position of women in fisheries has clearly deteriorated since 1994, and even more so in the last three years. Awareness of discrimination against women as workers in the large, industrial fish processing plants was closely entwined with a growing consciousness of the link between this discrimination and the current exclusion that they are facing from their own male partners and from government in the new fisheries policy process.

This was gradually extended to the links between the extreme levels of gender-based violence that women, especially young women, experience in their communities, the high levels of drug-related violence, and the poaching of marine resources.

Much of the second day of the workshop was dominated by the sharing of horrific stories of such violence and its impacts on women’s

JACKIE SUNDE



Women actively discussing various issues during the workshop. Women shared their “herstories” of years of working in fisheries

daily lives. The women noted that the ethic of caring for one's neighbour and for all the children in the village has disappeared and has, instead, been replaced by what they view as an individualistic, self-protective attitude whereby each person is just trying to survive. The women noted that many women have been forced into sex work and drug work as a means of surviving economically. They identified the current individual, quota-based approach to access rights as a primary contributor to the current crisis. This system has contributed greatly to the breakdown of social ties as it has led to divisions between those fishers who were fortunate to get access rights and those who were left out, despite them having a shared traditional history.

The session in which the women had to reflect on their own organization, and identify the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in how the community-based organization of which they are a part, Coastal Links, has approached gender issues, was a painful one for some of them. Several of the women were very defensive of Coastal Links but others led the way in saying that they felt that they had stood by their male partners during the height of the struggle for recognition but now they had been abandoned by these same male comrades. They decided that the time was right to request Coastal Links to address their demands at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting and they

developed a list of issues they would like to put on the agenda.

The workshop was a very significant moment in the history of women in small-scale fisheries in South Africa. At the workshop, women participants forged a new understanding of their own structural position in the political economy of fisheries; they debated on what it meant to say "women want equitable rights in fisheries"; and they grappled with how the existing social division of labour shapes the unique contribution that they make. They emerged from the workshop asserting a more radical vision of development in the small-scale fisheries based on the interconnectedness of life and livelihoods.

This 'recasting' of the women-in-fisheries position was most significant for two reasons: Firstly, it came one week prior to the sitting of the National Policy Task Team where the Draft Small-Scale Fisheries Policy was due to be finalized. The workshop thus created an opportune moment for the women to develop their position on the draft policy and to give their representative, who is the only woman community representative on the task team, a clear mandate to place their demands on the negotiating table.

But secondly, and most importantly, it created a space for women to grapple with the issue of 'equal rights' which, up until this workshop, had been a demand made but

"We say to government: you have left us out—go back and recast the policy net to include women in fisheries!"

European Parliament resolution recognizes women in fisheries

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 25 February 2010 on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) (2009/2106 (INI)) in which the full involvement of women in activities in the sector, on an equal footing with men, is seen as a fundamental objective of the CFP that should be reflected in all the policies and measures designed and adopted for the sector (paragraph 29). See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P7-TA-2010-0039>

The resolution further reiterated that fishing is a vital activity, not just in food terms, but also in social, recreational and cultural terms.

The resolution highlights the need to value and respect the role of women in fisheries and in the sustainable development of fishing areas. It calls on Member States to take necessary measures to ensure that assisting spouses (that is, "collaborating

spouses") enjoy a level of protection that is at least equivalent to that of the self-employed, under the same conditions that apply to the latter, including as regards access to the profession and the right to fish.

The resolution calls on the European Commission and the Member States to co-operate to promote and incorporate the principle of equal opportunities at the various stages of the implementation of the European Fisheries Fund (including the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages) as provided in Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No. 1198/2006. It further urges the Commission to ensure that the most vulnerable groups in the fisheries sector, especially working women, fisherwomen and women shellfish gatherers, are not disadvantaged when access rights to resources are allocated, by encouraging their participation in the Regional Advisory Councils.

What's New, Webby?



Women in Fisheries Statement Lambertsbaai, South Africa, 18 February 2010

Our fishing communities are currently facing a life-threatening social, economic and environmental crisis arising from the combined effects of the individual quota system, the closure of the fish processing factories and the lack of effective governance and management of marine resources. This has led to a situation in which we live under constant threat and fear due to violent drug- and poaching-related crimes. The human rights of our communities, particularly those of young girls and women, are being violated on a daily basis, and we can no longer protect our children or our marine resources under these conditions.

Noting

That apartheid affected many black communities that depended on the sea for their livelihoods. However, for many of these communities, their access to marine resources has been further restricted since 1994 through the introduction of the new fishing rights policies, which have been geared towards the big commercial companies and not the values, traditions and customary practices of our small-scale communities;

Noting

That women living and working in traditional fishing communities have historically played a very significant role in the development of the fishing industry in South Africa, as well as in sustaining life and livelihoods in coastal communities; and

That much of the work that women have done in the past, and continue to do in small-scale fishing communities, is not recognized, nor is it regarded as valuable;

Noting

That many women from coastal fishing communities have worked as seasonal workers in the fish processing plants, working long hours under extremely harsh, icy conditions, and most have suffered chronic health problems as a result of this work, with no compensation or adequate health care;

Noting

That many women have lost their male partners and breadwinners at sea, with no

compensation or financial support available to their families;

Noting further

That many mothers and fathers had to work long hours in the fishing industry, and that, in many instances, their children were forced to leave school at an early age and take care of one another. This resulted in low formal education levels in many communities, and has further contributed towards the social and economic hardship experienced in these areas.

Noting therefore

The provisions on Equality in Section 9 of our Constitution, and the provisions contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Agenda 21, the Beijing Platform of Action and the Millennium Development Goals and that the South African government has ratified these international legal instruments,

We strongly assert our right to life, to dignity, to safety and security and to sustainable development.

Noting too, our rights as women to participate equally and effectively in the development of a new small-scale fisheries policy for South Africa and our right to benefit equitably from this policy,

We call on our President Jacob Zuma, on our Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Minister Tina Joemat-Petersen, on our Minister of Environmental Affairs and Water, Minister Sonjica, and on the acting Deputy Director of Marine and Coastal Management, Dr Razeena Omar, to intervene immediately in the crisis facing our fishing communities and our marine resources.

We appeal to our government at all levels to commit to a new small-scale fishing policy that will contribute to the restoration of a community-based approach to the governance of our marine resources, based on an ethic of care in coastal communities, so that we can sustain our communities and our natural resources for the benefit of the generations to come.

with little understanding of what it would mean in practice. In a context in which men predominate in the harvesting sector, it has often been assumed that 'equal rights' meant that women wanted equal numbers of quotas and to go to sea themselves. On the contrary, the workshop enabled women to give content to the demand for equity, which included a qualitative reassessment of the fisheries management

regime as a whole. Women demanded a community-based approach to the sector that moved away from an individual and resource-based approach to a more integrated, holistic approach to the fisheries.

Starting off with rather essentialist notions of women's nurturing role as a product of their biological sex, the participants explored the current development and policy paradigm

that is shaping fisheries production. Following an input on using a 'gender lens' to examine development, the women worked in small groups where they shared experiences of how this has impacted them and their communities. The groups then reached a point at which they realized that the interconnectedness that they have with their children, their communities and the age-old extension of the relationship between fishers and the marine environment, has been destroyed by the current fisheries management regime. Challenged to rethink the way they have articulated their demand for equal rights in the dominant fisheries management and development paradigm, the women then began to identify what they believed would need to change in order to restore a nurturing and caring ethic to their communities, in the interaction with their marine environment.

On the last day of the workshop, the women worked in their regional groupings, identifying the actions that they committed to in order to take their agenda forward. This involved a discussion on new spaces that may have opened up for women and the need to develop strategic alliances with men in their organizations as well as with women in other sectors. It highlighted the need to work at local, provincial and national government levels.

The women identified the need to broaden their advocacy actions which, to date, have focused narrowly on the fisheries department, to include a number of other government departments, most notably those of social development and police and security. This was in direct response to the recognition that women's right to life, to safety and security and to development was threatened by the current crisis in fishing communities. Most notably, the women voiced their deep concern that they feel that they can no longer protect their children or the marine resources from the violence that is being wrought upon them. This touched at the very heart of women's sense of their own identities as women, their spiritual connectedness with their marine environment as life affirming and the interconnectedness of community and coast, life and livelihood.

They expressed this powerfully in a statement developed on the last morning of the workshop, in which they urged their government at all levels *"to commit to a new small scale-fishing policy that will contribute to the restoration of a community-based approach to the governance of our marine resources, based on an ethic of care in coastal communities, so that we can sustain our communities and our natural resources for the benefit of the generations to come"*. ❏

"...to commit to a new small scale-fishing policy that will contribute to the restoration of a community-based approach..."

AMERICA

CANADA

Stuck at the back of the boat

After helping resolve a five-year inshore fishery dispute, women fishers are again shut out of decisions on managing the east coast fishery

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On the east coast of Canada, in the province of Prince Edward Island (PEI), an inshore fishery of about 1,300 small boats struggles to find the balance between sustainability and making a living. In the past 30 years, mostly out of necessity, women have found themselves on the backs of these boats, fishing beside their partners. However, their role in the larger management of the fishery has been limited.

In 2004, several of us formed the Women for Environmental Sustainability (WES) in response to a crisis in the herring industry. A truly grassroots movement led by women in the fishing town of Souris, PEI, WES sought to bring an understanding of the issues to the wider community. One of the many partnerships

we developed was with the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. Through the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network, a pan-Canadian partnership of academics and community groups, a mutual interest in understanding the role of women in fisheries management developed into a full-blown research study.

We, the women of WES, noticed firsthand how few women were involved in managing the fishery and felt that female voices were missing from the table. We wanted to understand why, and by creating a partnership with the local university, we received the help we needed. As part of the resulting study that examined the evolving role of women in fisheries in PEI and our continued absence from management decisionmaking, we developed a case study of the WES experience. Our case study now serves as an example of what can happen when women elbow their way to the management table.



Lobster fishing harbour of Naufrage on the north shore of Prince Edward Island, Canada. Herring is used as bait for lobster fishing

Trouble began brewing in the herring fishery in Souris in 2000 when large herring seiners came to fish in PEI's waters for the first time in about 30 years. Up until 2000, the herring seiners fished their entire annual quota, allotted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), in the Bay of Chaleur, Northern New Brunswick. But concern about overfishing local stocks led DFO to limit the seiners' catch in the Bay of Chaleur to 50 per cent of their quota, and this pushed the seiners out in search of new fishing grounds. When they needed to fill half of their quota outside the Bay of Chaleur, seiners followed these migrating herring to the fishing grounds on the northeast shore of PEI.

The large, over 20-m long, corporate-owned seiners began fishing in the shallow waters off PEI that had traditionally been the fishing grounds for the small-boat, inshore, gillnet fishers who depend on herring as bait for the lobster, tuna and rock crab fisheries. The seiners were able to enter these grounds because of a change made to a map showing regulated fishing areas. The change involved removal of a line that had previously limited seiner fishing to waters outside of the 25-fathom depth contour. It was unclear whether this change to the map had been an unintentional error, or a conscious change in regulations implemented without discussion with the affected parties. Whatever the reason for the change, 'moving the line' was actively contested by inshore fishers.

Community members watched with dismay and apprehension as the large seining vessels unloaded their catches on Souris wharf. On average, the five seiners would unload 20 tractor-trailer loads of herring in a single day. Many observers were old enough to recall a time, 35 years ago, when seiners had 'fished out' the herring stocks from the Northumberland Strait on the south side of PEI. It was only after those

stocks collapsed that the government banned the seiners from that area.

Fishers observed that many herring spawning areas in the Northumberland Strait had remained barren after the seiners had gone. They believed this was because herring run in distinct schools, each of which tends to return time and again to a particular place to spawn. Once an entire spawning group has been picked up in a net, there are no fish left with the instinct to return to that spot.

In Souris in 2000, fishers knew well that the north side of PEI had dozens of small spawning beds. They believed that the groups of fish attached to these beds were vulnerable to elimination by the highly efficient process of seining. Souris citizens were worried, not because herring brings a great deal of cash into a fishing enterprise—it doesn't—but because these abundant fish are food for so many other valued species.

Between the fall of 2001 and 2003, tensions rose during the fall herring fishery between the local inshore fishers and the herring seiners, culminating in a blockade at the Souris wharf, where 350 fishers blocked the large seiners from unloading their catch. Although the protests were peaceful, reaction by the provincial and federal governments, the courts, and the police was swift and forceful. Armed with an injunction filed by the Barry Group Corporation (which owned some of the seiners), riot police with loaded semi-automatic machine guns and police dogs moved in to disperse the crowd. They arrested 14 fishers.

Despite a sense of camaraderie among fishers, and lots of talk from politicians and fisheries managers, the disputed 'line' had still not been reinstated by the fall of 2004, and fishers felt abandoned by their government. The police prepared for the new herring fishing season by setting up surveillance on the Souris wharf, while the local fishermen's association advised its members not to protest on the wharf due to the threat of lawsuits by the corporations. The situation in the small fishing community was frustrating, confusing, with the real possibility of violence. The community was at a loss. Everyone was talking about it, but we couldn't protest on the water or on the wharf.

I was on maternity leave that fall, and my father, who was very passionate about fishing and about the damage the seiners were doing to the herring stock, kept saying: "Someone should do something! We need to have a rally!" So finally, after hearing this for a few weeks, I decided that since no one else was doing it, perhaps I should. Within a week I had enlisted help from family and friends and had alerted the media, identified speakers, and organized a rally. At the suggestion of the PEI Fishermen's Association, the rally focused on the impact the

dispute was having on women, families and the community. Over 800 people from across the island packed into the rink for the rally.

Women talked about how the conflict was affecting their lives financially and emotionally. They talked about how hard it was on their children, including how challenging it was to teach their children to respect police authority when their fathers were being arrested for trying to protect their families' livelihoods. Encouraged by community support, a dozen women met after the rally to discuss what to do next. As a result, a new organization emerged: WES, with a board of directors made up of four women.

For us, the fall of 2004 and winter of 2005 will forever be remembered as the 'year of the herring'. In the week following the rally, we met with the provincial leader of the opposition on PEI and the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association (PEIFA). Others, including my

mother, Bev Roach, were involved in a small protest on the wharf in Souris in which they stood in front of a police car trying to pass. The local community came together again after my mother was arrested and fingerprinted, by establishing a legal defence fund on her behalf.

The four WES board members split our work according to our respective strengths. One of us liked research, while another was a natural organizer and administrator; the third took care of the finances, and I became the spokesperson. Faced with arguments from DFO and the seiners that the industrial fishery did not threaten herring stocks, we had a lot of research to do. We met with anyone who would talk to us about herring: fishermen, politicians, the media, community leaders, scientists and resource managers. We read management plans and scientific studies, created a website, incorporated our organization, and wrote letters to editors.



Milestones

Magna Carta of Women adopted in Philippines

On 14 August 2009, the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, signed into law Republic Act 9710—the Magna Carta of Women. The Act is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of Filipino women, especially those in the marginalized sectors.

The Act is based on a substantive notion of gender equality and aims at real empowerment of women. It guarantees all rights of women enshrined in the Philippines Constitution and those rights recognized under international instruments signed and ratified by the Philippines, which are in consonance with Philippine laws. The Act spells out every woman's right to, *inter alia*: protection from all forms of violence, including those committed by the State; protection and security in times of disaster, calamities and other crisis situations; participation and representation; equal treatment before the law; and comprehensive health services and health information and education.

It also guarantees the civil, political and economic rights of women in the marginalized sectors, in particular their right to: food security and resources for food production, including equal rights in the titling of land; localized, accessible, secure and affordable housing; employment, livelihood, credit, capital and technology; skills training, and scholarships; representation and participation in policy-making or decision-making bodies in the regional, national, and international levels; access to information regarding policies on women; social protection; and recognition and preservation of cultural identity and integrity, provided that these cultural systems and practices are not discriminatory to women.

The Act defines marginalized sectors as those who belong to the basic, disadvantaged or vulnerable

groups, who are mostly living in poverty and have little or no access to land and other resources, basic social and economic services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, employment and livelihood opportunities, housing security and the justice system. It recognizes that women fisherfolk—women engaged in fishing in municipal waters, coastal and marine areas, women workers in commercial fishing and aquaculture, vendors and processors of fish and coastal products, and subsistence producers such as shell-gatherers, managers and producers of mangrove resources—are among such marginalized groups.

The Act stresses that the State shall promote equal access to the use and management of fisheries and aquatic resources, and all the rights and benefits accruing to stakeholders in the fishing industry. It shall also ensure that equal status is given to women and men, and to women's organizations, in the issuance of stewardship or lease agreements and other fishery rights that may be granted for the use and management of coastal and aquatic resources. Further, that the State shall endeavour to provide opportunities for empowering women fishers to be involved in the control and management, not only of the catch and production of aquamarine resources, but also to engage in entrepreneurial activities that will add value to production and marketing ventures.

Most importantly, the Magna Carta asks the State to ensure women's participation in policy-making or decision-making bodies in the regional, national and international levels, including the participation of grassroots women leaders in bodies such as the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC).

The complete text of the Magna Carta of Women can be accessed at: <http://www.ncrfw.gov.ph/index.php/magna-carta-of-women>. ■

...what can happen when women elbow their way to the management table.

Despite some resistance from people within the fisheries towards our involvement, we went to meetings in the community and listened to local concerns, which enabled us to incorporate local issues into our research to provide a fresh, articulate and credible voice for the community. Our community commented on our ability to speak the language of the DFO, and to use science and research to make our points. Local fishermen were strongly supportive. They attended our WES meetings, offered suggestions, provided direction, helped with letter writing and, in about three months, raised Can\$25,000 for WES' work—almost all of it donated by fishing families.

Despite our hard work for the community, WES was not invited to play any role in PEIFA. One fishery observer, a male community

member who was interviewed during the research, said: "The PEIFA should be embracing WES (and calling on WES to assist with research and analysis of fisheries issues)." Looking back on our experience at the management table, we were warned not to trust the DFO, that they would use us and pretend to consult with us, the same way they did with the fishermen. We gave DFO the benefit of the doubt and fully participated in many meetings with them. We respected their rules, which meant that at most meetings we did not have a voice at the table and were welcome only as observers. We participated only when invited to do so. But in the end, our role and participation in the management of the herring fishery was neither respected nor documented. When we were no longer useful, we were no longer invited. People in power,

Chitra Suriyakumar is a 56-year old fisherwoman. She has seven children—two male and five female. She is from the Inbacity fishing village in the Vadamarachchi area of Jaffna district, located in the northern province of Sri Lanka. Her husband, K. Suriyakumar is the former chairperson of the Vadamarachchi Fisheries Co-operative Society.

With the outbreak of the civil war in 1992, life as she knew it changed radically. Chitra and her husband struggled hard to keep the community united, and to get back the land captured for security purposes, which was

in 2009, when they were asked by the LTTE to leave for Puthukudirrippu, during the final battle between LTTE and government forces. After April 2009, they were sent to the Menik farm camp being run by the government of Sri Lanka for internally displaced persons.

Reflecting back on her situation, Chitra says, "It is a miracle that god saved us to continue to live with these sorrows and difficulties in our lives. There is no point, however, of living without my children near me." Both Chitra and Suriyakumar have tried their best to find their son, without any success. They have heard all kinds of rumours—that their son is dead, or that he is still alive; they continue to live in hope.

The Suriyakumar family recently returned to their original home at Inbacity village. However, life is yet to return to normalcy. Suriyakumar does not have any fishing gear, as everything was destroyed during the war. So, he needs to start from scratch. Economic difficulties apart, Chitra continues to be highly disturbed. She is not ready to face society. All she wants is to see her son back.

Suriyakumar says, "My wife Chitra is only one example of thousands of such mothers who are waiting to see their children. We do not know when this will happen. But we live in hope. This is our country, our land, our water, and we love it. We can build up our future with the available resources. But there should be recognition of all people as equal citizens of the country. There should be an effective healing process for all these wounds. That day, we all will be in a situation to build up our livelihoods, our fisheries and agriculture, and the skills of our people. We are dreaming for that day to come". This is the dream of all the citizens of Sri Lanka, not just of Chitra and Suriyakumar. ❏

PROFILE

Chitra Suriyakumar: Living in Hope

Chitra Suriyakumar, a 56-year old fisherwoman from Jaffna in the north of Sri Lanka, is struggling to rebuild her life post-civil war

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forcing people to live outside their houses, in camps. However, as the situation became worse, Chitra was forced to leave the village. She shifted to Kilinochchi with her son, as a displaced person, while her husband stayed back to continue with fishing, the only source of income for their family. In 1997, as the situation further worsened, her husband too was forced to shift to Kilinochchi.

With no source of income, they went through serious economic difficulties. Suriyakumar took to selling coconuts, to earn at least a meager income. The next blow came in April 2007, when Chitra's son was taken away by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to join the war. This was a period of great mental suffering and economic hardship for the family. They were displaced yet again

including the PEIFA, did not embrace the fact that women fishers had a voice that could and should be heard.

DFO consistently framed the herring debate as one about science, and they claimed to own all the knowledge that was relevant. The fisheries managers would say, “But we have SCIENCE”; and you could almost see it in really big letters, looking very important. They said the inshore fishers had no scientific evidence to support their theory that the seiners were depleting the genetic diversity of the stocks, or the discrete stocks themselves. Depending upon the scientist and the day, they sometimes refused to even accept that there are distinct populations of herring.

In an attempt to understand the science, we spent countless Saturday and Sunday afternoons meeting as a group to study past stock status reports, acoustic surveys, and other research documents. It quickly became apparent that there was more to the science story than DFO was willing to admit, so we organized the Winter Herring Conference on 12 March 2005. We invited fishers, concerned citizens, academics and DFO scientists to spend the day talking about the science of herring. By the end of the day, it was obvious to everyone that DFO’s science was grossly underfunded compared to other countries such as Norway, and that their science was far from cutting-edge.

We also learned what a major role politics plays in the management of the fishery. We were told repeatedly that the only way the herring dispute was going to be resolved was through a political judgement. In Canada, under the Fisheries Act, the Fisheries Minister has discretion to set fishing quotas and boundaries, and it was widely accepted that the Minister

was not on the side of the small-boat, inshore fishery. So in addition to studying the science, we read transcripts from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, trying to assess the political angle. In the end, we believe a resolution resulted from the following formula: intense public pressure + negative media attention + minority government = political action.

On 13 May 2005, our local Member of Parliament, Lawrence MacAulay, announced in Souris that the 25-fathom line was reinstated, effectively pushing the seiners out of the shallow waters off PEI’s north shore. This decision was viewed as a great victory for everyone who had worked so hard—for the fishers, for WES, for the provincial government, for the PEIFA and for the citizens of PEI who had supported the fishers and their communities.

We wish to state that although WES was part of the solution, resolving the herring dispute was ultimately a collaborative effort. The provincial government mounted a lawsuit against the federal government, which drew a lot of media attention to the herring issue. The PEIFA, under new leadership, came out strongly against the seiners and DFO’s position. Bev Roach’s court case provided a focal point for public sympathy. Letters to the editor and media attention provided additional political pressure, and, as a result, MPs from PEI worked the corridors of power in Ottawa, promoting the issue in the context of a minority Liberal government—one that needed votes from eastern Canada. Those in power made a decision based not on what was best for the environment, the industry, or the herring, but on ensuring they would stay in power. It is not a great way to manage a fishery, but that’s the way it works. ❧

“intense public pressure + negative media attention + minority government = political action.”

REPORT

INDIA

Women, the Eyes of the World

A recent workshop in Mumbai proposed strategies for enhancing women’s roles in fisheries in India and how to meet the challenges facing their communities

By **Dharmesh Shah**
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Consultant, ICSF

“*Pengalia, Ulagil Kangalai...* Women are the eyes of the world”, sang Pani Mary and Albin Mary on the first day of the workshop on women in fisheries held in Mumbai, India, from 1 to 3 February 2010. That clarion call set the tone for the next three days during which women from fishing communities around India discussed issues, debated ideas, and proposed strategies to address the various challenges facing them and their communities.

The workshop, titled “Enhancing Women’s Roles in Fisheries in India”, was organized to reflect on issues facing women of fishing communities, as workers and as members of communities and organizations, and to share local agendas and strategies, as well as to take stock of achievements and obstacles. It was also meant to create awareness about key policies and interventions relevant to women in fishing communities, and enhance the capacity of women fishworkers to participate in, and influence, decision-making processes affecting their lives and livelihoods.

The workshop attracted a total of 55 participants, mostly women, representing



55 participants, mostly women, at the ICSF workshop on “Enhancing Women’s Role in Fisheries in India”

about 20 organizations and unions, from all nine coastal States/Union Territories, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The participants ranged from women directly engaged in processing, vending and trading fish, organized into associations, unions, co-operatives, societies, self-help groups and so on, to representatives of support non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Handling the language diversity of the group was a challenge, since as many as nine spoken languages could be heard at the workshop. However, a dedicated set of volunteer interpreters eased communication.

The workshop kicked off with participants splitting into three groups of three States each for the introductory session at which they provided information about their work, the issues facing them in their regions and the initiatives being taken by them. This process set out the gamut of issues and concerns of participants. The problems facing them were identified—problems directly facing women as workers, such as poor market facilities and lack of access to credit and fish, to problems facing them as members of fishing communities, such as the lack of drinking water, proper sanitation, displacement and pollution. The session also listed out the various strategies used by women fishworkers to safeguard their interests, such as getting better organized, conducting protests and demonstrations, and seeking alternative employment avenues. The session helped women from different regions connect with one another around common issues.

The next session helped contextualize women’s experiences within the larger gamut of fisheries and coastal development in a rapidly globalizing economy. Using statistics and information related to

fisheries development, management and trade, the session discussed how the fisheries sector is rapidly transforming, and becoming more fuel-, technology- and investment-intensive. It explored the implications of such changes on women in fishing communities, as workers and as members of fishing families and communities. With greater centralization of landings, for instance, women’s access to fish is declining as they have to compete directly with economically powerful merchants and export agents at harbours. Destructive fishing gears, like trawl nets, affect fish productivity and catches, as they destroy fishing grounds and result in enormous bycatch and killing of juveniles. The introduction of machine-made nets robbed the livelihoods of thousands of women earlier engaged in net-making. Greater exports, including of locally consumed species, is affecting the livelihoods of women processors, vendors and traders, who cater to local consumers. Higher investment in boats, engines and fuel, and the constant need for capital, is creating new forms of oppression for women, as the demand for dowry in some communities increases. The increasing costs of fishing operations and uncertain catches have fuelled violence and alcoholism within families. “We are fishing not for ourselves, but for oil and motor companies”, said some women, pointing to the fact that a majority of the income from fishing goes towards these costs. They pointed to the need to explore alternative forms and technologies for fishing and fisheries development, which would protect resources, livelihoods and communities.

On the second day of the workshop, participants were introduced to government schemes for women in the post-harvest sector. Information about various schemes was distributed, including in local languages, and participants were given time to discuss these schemes and comment on them and their implementation in their States. The feedback from participants was revealing. The coverage of schemes was often seen to be inadequate, and the implementation, poor. Several suggestions were made on how the situation can be improved, and how such schemes can be made more accessible and appropriate for women engaged in fisheries activities.

The post-lunch session dwelt on the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008 and the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors. This session was facilitated by a resource person from Yuva, an organization that has been working closely with the urban poor in Mumbai. In the case of the unorganized workers Act, it was noted that while the Act itself needed to be strengthened and improved, it was nevertheless useful for workers to register under the Act. In the case of the vendor policy, the presenter shared

the experiences of implementing the policy in Mumbai. He outlined various issues that women fish vendors must be careful about when seeking the implementation of the policy in their own towns/cities, to ensure that their interests are protected. The session drew a lot of interest, especially among women from Goa, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, who resolved to form or register already running informal unions to press for their rights, as vendors, to be recognized.

On the last day of the workshop, participants were introduced to the debate around the Draft Marine Fisheries (Regulation and Management) Act (MFRMA), 2009. While a comprehensive legislation for the regulation and management of fisheries resources in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) has been a long-standing demand of NGOs and unions such as the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), there is need to ensure that the objectives of the Act and its provisions include the protection of the livelihood security of traditional fishing communities and their preferential rights to access fish resources in all the maritime zones of India. Participants stressed that women need to be part of the consultative process for finalizing the Act, to protect their own interests, the interests of their communities, and the long-term sustainability of resources. They pointed out that women's interests and access to fish are best protected when fish landings are diversified, beach-based and small-scale.

Participants also discussed the provisions of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification of 1991, its poor implementation, the various attempts to dilute it as well as recent efforts to replace it altogether, with a new notification. Participants expressed their opposition to the dilution of the CRZ Notification, and efforts to replace it. In the face of strong opposition from fishing communities, the Ministry of Environment and Forests had assured fishing communities that no new Notification would be introduced. However, given the enormous pressure on coastal resources from tourism, port development, industry, urban growth and so on, and the consequent displacement and

other hardships faced by communities, there is need for constant vigil. There is also need to ensure that the CRZ Notification is better implemented to guarantee greater protection of coastal resources. The rights of fishing communities to their lands and resources ought to be protected. Fishing communities in India have their task cut out, and women are ready for the struggle, said participants.

The final session of the workshop discussed strategies and steps for the future. Several State groups said that they would spread the information they had gathered at the workshop, strengthen their existing organizations and register their unions. They also said they would seek formal registration as workers. Several women participants from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu said that they would engage more with *panchayat* (local government) processes to protect fishing community interests, while participants from Maharashtra shared their plans of getting hold of the coastal management plan for the State. The women from Maharashtra also said that they would fight for their right to small fish for sale in domestic markets—such fish is now either being reduced to fishmeal or exported. Participants also stressed the need to network among themselves and support one another. They said regular workshops of this nature would improve access to information about developments of relevance to fishing communities. They also requested help in documenting some of the challenges being faced, for example, the rapid industrialization of the Kutch coast and its impact on fishing communities.

For many women participants, the workshop was perhaps the first of its kind. It helped expose participants to policies, schemes and legislation relevant to fishing communities, and provided an opportunity to discuss common issues and strategies. As Ashwini Sawant, a fish vendor from Goa remarked, "This is the first time that we have an exclusive platform to discuss our issues and our future in fisheries. We hope that such workshops are held regularly, if possible at regional levels to discuss women's issues in each State".

Interview with Clarisse Canha from Associação para a Igualdade e Direitos das Mulheres —Association for Equality and Rights for Women (UMAR-Azores)

By **Brian O' Riordan** (briano@scarlet.be), Brussels Office Secretary, ICFSF

What is the role of women in fisheries in Azores?

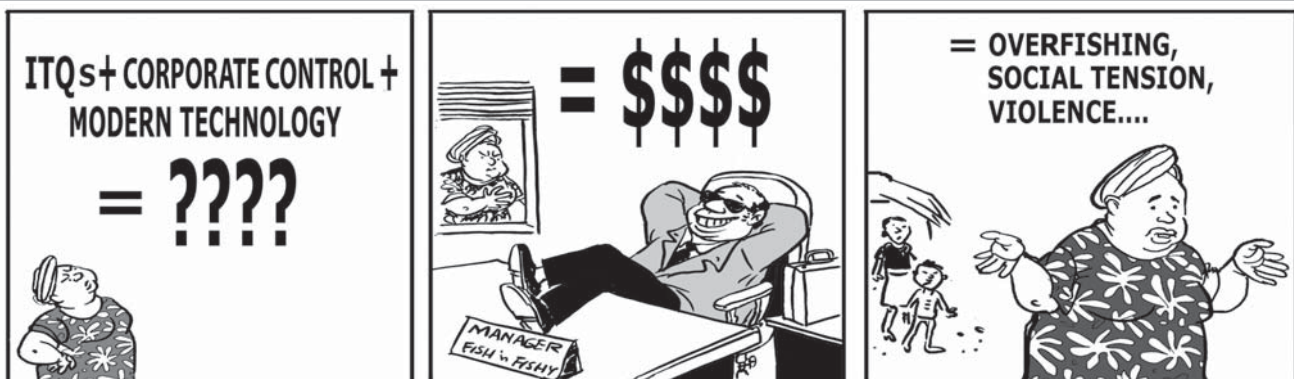
Women are engaged in fishing as crew or owners, in shore-based activities, and as wives/partners of fishermen to carry out several types of activities related to fisheries and fisheries management. Women also work on shore preparing bait, mending nets or in fish processing plants (tuna canning industries).

Of the work women do, what is paid and what is unpaid work??

The majority of women are remunerated for their work, though those who work in a 'family regime' are not. There are women who 'help' their husbands as much as or even more than a paid crew member, but are not remunerated for their work. When this 'help' is analyzed in terms of content, duration, periodicity and time employed, it becomes clear that it is 'work'. The issue of women's remuneration is thus marked by gender discrimination, based on which women's labour has been, and continues to be, undervalued. ❖

YEMAYA MAMA

... sums it up !!



FILM

FISHERWOMEN, FISHERMEN'S WIVES

(Femmes pêcheurs, Femmes de pêcheurs)

A documentary by Georges Vilasalo - 26mn, 2004

This review is
by **Alain Le Sann**,
Member, ICSF

In the Mediterranean, along the coasts of Provence and Corsica, eight women involved in fishing activities took part in the making of a book that told readers about their lives, their worries, their hopes. The book, titled *We, Fishermen's Wives, on the Mediterranean Shores*, was quite a success. It was the outcome of a writing workshop that provided them the encouragement to write. It also made them more determined to assert the importance of their role in fishing, and, as it turned out, they were invited to take part in the NGO Forum, during the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. "Being a fisherman's wife is not considered as work but as helping one's husband!" They rebelled against this stereotyped image prevalent in society, which displays a total ignorance of their role and their work.

The book was later made into a film in which five of the women talk about their lives and their jobs. One of them is a fisherwoman who works alone on her boat, having started to fish after her husband's death. She works hard, fishing from 4 a.m. onwards, then going to the fish market, a long drive from her port. Another woman works as a crew member with her husband, and shares all the tasks with him, the only difference being that she is not allowed to be in charge, for lack of an official diploma. A third one sells her husband's catch on the landing quay in a small port crowded with tourists. Two others help their husbands

and have responsibilities in the fishermen's organizations. "A fisherman's wife works from morning till night, without stopping, with no fixed working hours, no salary, and no holidays. Without her, a fisherman wouldn't survive", says Anne Torunczyck, one of the women in the film.

All of them testify to the difficulty of engaging in work dominated by men, especially for one not born into this milieu. Yet, fishermen must accept that women play a major role, a role that is generally unknown and devalued. In the sector in which they dominate, that is, in fish processing, their work is thought to be unskilled, though this is not the case. Women are involved in the management of the boat, in charge of relations with the authorities, selling of the fish, and sometimes, they even go fishing. While being responsible for the children and the family, they also contribute to providing security and moral support to the fisherman. Moreover, the couples try to diversify their source of income. If the wife has a job with a fixed salary, it reassures the fisherman, as his own income is quite uncertain, and the supplementary income can also allow him to invest more in fishing-related activities.

All the women featured in the film say that fishing is a difficult job, but that it is, nevertheless, "a fascinating way of life" in a "fascinating environment". The work gives them much "happiness" and "they share a feeling of solidarity with the other women".

This documentary offers simple testimonies. The tender view provided by the filmmaker makes it possible to see fishing activities in a different light. These testimonies also help us understand how coastal fishermen have managed to resist the pressure of tourism and to stick to their spaces in ports amidst numerous sailing boats. Without these fisherpeople, the famous Côte d'Azur wouldn't be as attractive as it is! **✚**



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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.