

Workshop on Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America

10 to 15 June 2000
Prainha do Canto Verde, Ceara, Brazil.



International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
27 College Road, Chennai 600 006, INDIA
<http://www.icsf.net>

Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America

10 – 15 June 2000
Prainha do Canto Verde,
Ceara, Brazil

Proceedings

Published by

ICSF, 27 College Road, Chennai 600 006, India

May 2002

Layout by

Jaisakthi Computers, Chennai 600 024, India
Tel: 91-44-372 2847

The opinions and positions expressed in this paper are those of the authors concerned, and do not necessarily represent the official views of ICSF.

Information contained in this publication may be reproduced freely.
However, an acknowledgement of ICSF would be appreciated.

ICSF, 27 College Road, Chennai 600 006, India
Tel: 91-44-827 5303
Fax: 91-44-825 4457
E-mail: icsf@vsnl.com
Internet: <http://www.icsf.net>

Contents

Report of the workshop

| | |
|--|----|
| Section 1: Background, Objectives and Method | 1 |
| Section 2: Sessions | 3 |
| Section 3: Key Issues | 6 |
| Section 4: Proposals | 13 |

Background papers

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Chile: Women in the <i>Caletas</i> : A Reality in the Chilean Coastal Zone | 17 |
| 2. Chile: Women Fish Plant Workers: Hazards in the Workplace | 41 |
| 3. Mexico: Women in Fisheries | 45 |
| 4. Perú: Gender Issues in the Fisheries Sector | 97 |
| 5. Perú: Women in the Fisheries Sector | 111 |
| 6. Brazil: Women in Fisheries: North-eastern Pará | 115 |
| 7. Brazil: Female Labour in the Industrial Fisheries Sector in the State of Pará, Brazil: Characteristics and Trends | 123 |
| 8. Brazil: Work of Fisherwomen in Fishing Communities of the State of Pernambuco | 130 |
| List of Participants | 144 |
| Selected Acronyms | 149 |

Workshop on Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America: A Report

10 to 15 June 2000, Prainha do Canto Verde, Ceara, Brazil

This report is in three sections. The first provides the background and objectives, the profile of the participants, and outlines in short the methodology adopted at the workshop. The second section is a very brief account of the sessions in sequential order. The third sums up the main issues that emerged during the workshop, while the fourth and concluding section presents the proposals for follow-up action suggested by the participants.

1. Background, Objectives and Method

1.1 Background

ICSF's Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme has been involved in several countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America since 1992, with the basic objective of strengthening the participation of women in fishworker organizations and in decision-making at various levels. In Latin America, ICSF has been active in parts of the north-eastern province of Pará in Brazil since 1996. The period since then has helped in understanding better the role of women in fisheries and fishing communities in this part of Brazil. It has also been possible to identify issues that have a bearing on the recognition of women as fishworkers and key players in the sustenance of fishing communities. The WIF Brazil programme too has been able to network extensively with other organizations and individuals, both within and outside the province, on issues of common concern.

Contact with other fishworker organizations in the Latin American region has helped establish the fact that women

of coastal fishing communities are not only actively involved in fishery-related activities but also help sustain the community and family in diverse ways.

However, most of the work women do, income-generating or otherwise, goes unnoticed. It rarely shows up, for instance, in government statistics on the fisheries sector. Nor is it recognized, or ascribed any economic or social value. Women are practically invisible at the decision-making level in fishworker organizations.

At another level, however, women in all these countries are beginning to get organized into groups. In many *caletas* in northern Peru, for example, women are getting together to participate in activities to supplement family income—a process that was hastened after the recent devastation wreaked by El Niño on the fisheries sector. Similar trends can be observed in the north-eastern states of Brazil, where, for instance, women's groups have begun to claim a legitimate space for themselves in the *colônias* (local-level organizations of fishermen). These groups believe that they have a vital role to play in the community and are demanding recognition and support from both fishworker organizations and state level authorities.

Valorizing the work of women fishworkers and giving them roles of substance in fishworker organizations and in decision-making is important for several reasons. The experience of ICSF's WIF programme in countries such as Senegal and India indicates that in addition to strengthening the fishworker organizations from grassroots level, the inclusion of women helps broaden their agenda and

*Most of the
work women do,
income-generating
or otherwise, goes
unnoticed*

take on issues that are of relevance to the quality of life in fishing families and the community as a whole. Participation of women has contributed to meaningful dialogues on the link between sustainable fisheries and healthy fishing communities. It is in this context that the *Workshop on Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America* was organized.

1.2 Objectives

- To understand the trends in fisheries development and their implications for coastal fishing communities in Latin America;
- To make visible the role of women in fisheries and fishing communities in Latin America, and to work out strategies to strengthen their meaningful participation;
- To facilitate greater networking between organizations that represent and work with artisanal fishworkers in Latin America.

1.3 Venue

The workshop was held at the coastal fishing village of Prainha do Canto Verde, in the state of Ceara, Brazil. This village was selected as the venue in order to provide participants from other countries as well as from other parts of Brazil an opportunity to understand the reality of fishing communities in Ceara. The village community of Prainha has also launched a socially responsible tourism project, which seeks the kind of development that will benefit the entire community and affirm its culture and identity.

1.4 Participants

There were a total of 36 participants at the workshop (Appendix). The group comprised representatives from five countries in the Latin American region,

i.e. Chile, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico, and representatives of the ICSF from India, Belgium and Brazil. The group that came together was diverse and rich in experience. There were members from the *Confederacion Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile* (CONAPACH), *Federacion de Integracion Y Unificacion de Pescadores* (FIUPAP), *Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores* (MONAPE) and *Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Pesqueras del Ecuador* (FENACOPEC), the national Fishworker Organizations (FWOs) from Chile, Peru, Brazil and Ecuador respectively. There were also representatives from NGOs, research institutes and organizations supporting fishworkers from Brazil, Chile, Peru and Mexico. Representatives of two organizations that provide financial support to fisheries in the Latin American region were present as observers.

It is of note that participants included both men and women as a result of a decision taken deliberately to avoid a situation where women alone get together to discuss gender issues. We thought it important that this be a subject both men and women engage with. Significantly, all the delegations felt the same way.

1.5 Structure and Method

As a part of preparations prior to the workshop, four Latin American countries put together five background papers on gender and fisheries: there was one each from Chile, Peru and Mexico and two from Brazil. Broad guidelines were provided for preparing these papers, though they were modified to take into account situations unique to each country at the suggestion of the researchers/organizations responsible for writing the reports. The background papers have been included in the latter part of this report. They proved useful in highlighting important issues in gender and fisheries in several countries of the region, and

provided the backdrop for discussions during the workshop.

The main sessions at the workshop included presentations and discussions on the following:

- A global overview of trends in fisheries development, with special reference to Latin America;
- Background papers on gender and fisheries in countries of the Latin American region;
- World Forum of Fishworkers and Fish Harvesters (WFF);
- A debate on development and a framework for social analysis;
- Globalization and social movements in Latin America;
- Fishworker organizations in the Latin American region.

The workshop combined individual presentations with group discussions. Working groups were set up at several points during the workshop to consolidate and lend direction to the discussions. The idea was to make use of the participatory process, given the rich diversity of experience and expertise that existed within the group. Meetings were also held every now and then with representatives of the participating groups to obtain feedback and to incorporate changes in the programme, as required.

There were two factors that influenced the design of the workshop and the method adopted. For one, there were three working languages—Spanish, Portuguese and English—to deal with which synchronous, simultaneous interpretations were provided. However, as a result of resource constraints interpretation facilities were limited, and this did somewhat slow the pace of the debate

and increase the length of the sessions. In the second place, there were several different categories of representatives and in all probability, varying expectations—there were people with a long history in fishworker organizations, people from fishing communities who were participating in such a workshop for the first time, academics as well as representatives from NGOs. Sessions had to be designed taking into account the heterogeneity of the group, and this was not always easy. Breaking up into smaller groups was seen as one way in which meaningful participation could be achieved.

2. Sessions

2.1 *Global Fisheries Development: An Overview*

Chandrika Sharma, ICSF, presented a broad overview of the changes that have taken place in fisheries and in the laws governing the use of fisheries resources at the global level. Ms. Sharma furnished information on present trends in fisheries production and trade worldwide and other issues relating to the Latin American scenario, such as those concerned with scale (artisanal vs. industrial) of aquaculture, fishmeal production, fisheries subsidies, over-capacity, role of multinationals and fisheries access agreements. Her presentation made extensive use of figures and graphs.

The presentation was followed by a brief discussion on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which gives States the rights over fish stocks falling within the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and also holds them responsible for their management. It was pointed out that the lack of effective fisheries management regimes in many States meant that they had not adequately fulfilled their responsibilities. There was some debate

The idea was to make use of the participatory process, given the rich diversity of experience and expertise that existed within the group.

... the most important victory for the community was that they could explode myths like fishermen never being able to unify as one group.

as to whether the States could be held accountable for this, and if yes, how fishworker organizations and other citizens' groups could take action.

2.2 Background Papers

Detailed papers on gender and fisheries were presented from each of the countries present: Chile, Mexico, Peru, Brazil and Ecuador. Several speakers made use of OHP slides, videos and transparencies to illustrate their points. Each of the presentations was followed by discussions. Issues that emerged at this session have been elaborated in the third part of this report.

2.3 Field Visit

Participants met leaders of the Fishermen's Forum of Ceara in the small, scenic community of Ilo do Pinto. This was an opportunity to understand the manner in which fishing communities along the coast of Ceara have worked as an organized whole for responsible management of lobster resources over the last decade with support from various organizations and individuals. The role of the NGO, Instituto Terramar, in this process was also highlighted. Thanks to the movement fishermen are now represented, along with other stakeholders, in the state-level committee for lobster fisheries management. One of the leaders of the campaign, Comando, said that the most important victory for them was that they could explode myths like fishermen never being able to unify as one group.

2.4 World Forum on Fishworkers and Fish Harvesters (WFF)

Humberto Mella, the President of the Chilean national fishworker organization, CONAPACH, and a member of the coordination committee of the WFF, spoke about the WFF and its objectives. He stressed the need for fishworker organizations to come together in the

context of globalization, which is negatively impacting on coastal communities in all parts of the world. He spoke of some of the challenges facing small-scale fishworkers in Latin America, such as the project to introduce Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) in Chile. There was also some discussion on the structure and membership of WFF, and the nature of representation from these countries to the Constituent Assembly meeting of the WFF in France in October 2000.

2.5 Debate on Development and a Framework for Social Analysis

This session was led by Nalini Nayak. It began with a game of trade called 'Star Power', a role-playing exercise which demonstrated the ways in which the more powerful groups set rules for the less privileged to achieve their own ends.

A brief presentation on the historical evolution of various paradigms of development preceded a brainstorming session on the meaning of the term 'development'. Most participants generally agreed that development should be about ensuring that the basic needs of people were met. However, much of what is considered development, is, in fact, not so, they felt. For example, the construction of big dams leads to severe consequences, not just for the large number of people displaced but also for biodiversity as a whole. Technology and mechanization cause loss of jobs, leading to unemployment. Intensive shrimp culture displaces communities and affects fish stocks. Modern systems of communication often create false needs and patterns of over-consumption that did not exist earlier.

It is obvious, therefore, that all that is modern and technologically-advanced has not necessarily lead to 'betterment'. All felt it was vital to ask the question 'development for whom?' Communities

should not only be central to development but should also directly benefit from its sustainable forms. This means that people should have a say in what has been planned for them and also be able to influence and control the process of execution. Development, in short, should be based on appropriate technology and its benefits should accrue to local communities.

Some of the differences between traditional and modern knowledge systems were discussed. The common perception was that modern thinking highlights the divide between man and nature. It prioritizes the individual over the collective, and competition over complementarity. Modern science does not see the whole picture. Only that which is developed in a laboratory is considered science, while traditional science is not given legitimacy. Participants also recognized that the stylized representation of different knowledge systems at the workshop was primarily for the purpose of discussion, and that it may not be possible to make such neat compartmentalizations while analysing existing reality.

Commencing with introducing concepts like the ‘relations of production’, ‘patriarchy’, and ‘mode of production’, Ms. Nayak then brought in a framework for social analysis.

This framework, which was originally developed by Francois Houtart, a Belgian, through his work in Brazil, has been used extensively by activists and the fishworker movement in India. It helps in understanding society and establishing how its various facets are inter-related. It especially finds a way to relate symbolic representations—as used in religion, belief systems and cultural events—to the material and collective life of a society. It also helps forge a link between issues of class, gender and environment, which

means that the framework can be applied to different modes of production.

While discussing the concept of ‘production’ Ms. Nayak explained the difference between the production of commodities and the production of life, i.e. ‘reproduction’. She explained how and why the production of life, being thought ‘natural’, is relegated to the private sphere and, therefore, considered to have no real value. This understanding has evolved, through social conditioning and leads to the exploitation of women in society. The objective of a feminist perspective is to reinstate this production of life in the public sphere so that nurturing life becomes the concern of both men and women, reshaping development priorities.

Ms. Nayak also initiated a discussion on sustainable development that, for lack of time, was not concluded. This was followed by a debate on Women and Organization—how women’s interests find a place in the agenda of the movements, and the barriers that hinder women from achieving leadership status in organizations

The participants were divided into smaller groups to discuss the framework. Those from Brazil felt that it might be relevant to their context and expressed an interest in studying it in more detail. However, several other participants deemed it necessary to take into account other philosophies, theologies, sciences, belief systems and other analytical frameworks. Finally the choice of whether to use the framework at all was left to participants.

2.6 Globalization and Fisheries

In his presentation on ‘Globalization and Social Movements’, Antonio Carlos Diegues, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sao Paulo and member of ICSF essayed a hard-hitting critique on globalization. He elaborated on the diverse ways in which the emphasis on markets,

*...nurturing
of life should
become the concern
both of men and
women, reshaping
development
priorities.*

*“Speaking
of gender for the
first time has not
been easy”*

the overriding influence of market forces, pressures of privatization and the decline of the modern State are impacting negatively on communities and indigenous communities, especially in the South.

Papers were then presented by fishworker organizations represented at the workshop. Among the speakers were Humberto Mella and Pedro Avendano of CONAPACH, Gabriela Cruz Salazar of FENACOPEC, Claudio Nizama of FIUPAP, and Aladim Alfaia Gomes of MONAPE.

All of them highlighted the current problems facing fishing communities and fishworker organizations in these countries. The common trends and issues that emerged from these presentations were later summarized by a small working group comprising Maria Cristina Manesch, Nathanael Maranhao, Soraiya Vanini and Pedro Avendano, and proposals for action were put forth. The summary and proposals formed the basis for discussion on a Plan of Action the following day.

2.7 Future Planning

The proposals that emerged from the session on ‘Globalization and Fisheries’ were discussed in three small groups and concrete proposals to incorporate gender issues within fisheries were outlined by each group. The working group formed the previous day was again entrusted with the task of going through each of the reports and summarizing the final set of proposals for follow-up action (see next section). The proposal to form a coordination group with a representative from each of the organizations present at the workshop was accepted. Everyone agreed that this group would continue discussions via e-mail on the follow-up proposals, and that, for the present, their activities would be co-ordinated by the ICSF Secretariat.

2.8 Evaluation and Conclusion

At this last session, participants were invited to give their feedback on the design and methodology of the workshop. In general everyone felt that the forum had provided a meaningful opportunity to exchange views on gender issues. As one of the male participants put it: “Speaking of gender for the first time has not been easy”, and, “When there are no opportunities to talk on these issues, our ideas tend to become set.”

A couple of participants were of the opinion that some of the sessions had been repetitive and that the sequence could have been juggled around a bit. One of the participants voiced that she was still unclear about the concept of gender. A representative from an NGO working with fishworkers in Brazil said that the workshop had provided an opportunity to interact with fishworker movements in Latin America. She spoke of the sense of discrimination she sometimes experienced in larger forums for being part of an NGO, and not an organization representing fishworkers. The interaction with movements at the workshop had been very valuable.

The session closed with the customary round of thanks: to the community of Prainha do Canto Verde for its hospitality, to Instituto Terramar, to the interpreters, Sophia Alvares, Euclides Lazarotto and Michelle Schärer for the wonderful job they had done.

3. Key Issues

This part of the report attempts to sum up the main issues that emerged at the workshop. It tries to capture the overall tenor of the discussions, the different perspectives of the participants, and the general priorities that were identified. It also draws from the background papers that were presented. In fact, the brief

report that follows should be read in conjunction with these background papers.

3.1 Artisanal Fisheries: an Overview

In all the countries represented at the workshop, i.e. Chile, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico, the pressure on coastal fishing communities and their means of earning a livelihood is increasing. This is also a consequence of globalization and of the neo-liberal policies being adopted by the states in the region. While different countries are experiencing this change in different ways, there are several commonalities:

- Greater pressure on the coastal zone and its resources, and inadequate provisions to protect traditional use and access rights of coastal communities, is leading to their displacement. This is especially so in cases where coastal communities may not have land titles or a legal right to reside in a particular place and use these resources. In this context, the recent development in Chile where fishing *caletas* have been recognized by the government, is an important move in the right direction.
- The indiscriminate development of tourism is displacing many communities from their native lands on the coast, as in Brazil and Chile. In addition, the development of water sports interferes with fishing activities through the destruction of nets etc.
- Pollution and degradation of coastal areas and the depletion of fish resources as a result of industrial and other development activities, is a problem in all countries. The destruction of mangroves in Brazil, pollution from fishmeal plants in Chile and Peru, construction of dams in Brazil and Chile, are cases in point.
- Fisheries management policies and legislation have often worked to displace traditional fishworkers. These

policies also tend to promote privatization and favour the interests of the industrial and corporate sector, for example, the move to introduce ITQs in Chile, and to grant mariculture concessions to private interests in Peru. The move to privatize fisheries resources through the ITQ project in Chile will assign fishing rights free and in perpetuity to boat owners whose catches presently include the identified species. This move might well marginalize small-scale fishworkers and their communities.

- Policies that support and provide subsidies to the industrial sector have led to overcapacity in the industrial fleet and have contributed to the overexploitation of resources, as in Peru and Chile. This is impacting on the livelihood of artisanal fishworkers.
- Neo-liberal policies that support decentralization and the withdrawal of the State are also a matter for concern. The process has often meant that the State washes its hands off its responsibilities while continuing to retain its rights over resources, as observed in Brazil and Chile. The responsibility for raising capital is delegated to local municipalities. In some communities of Ceara, for example, the pressure to raise their own funds has forced municipalities to support beach tourism that brings in revenue, even if it proves detrimental to the local communities.
- Cutting back of State participation has also meant that fewer resources are now available for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities. While weak MCS systems have characterized most developing countries even in the past, the decline in availability of funds to government agencies is making the problem more acute. It continues to be common for industrial fleets to encroach with

*The
indiscriminate
development of
tourism is
displacing many
communities from
their native lands
on the coast*

impunity into inshore waters reserved for the artisanal sector, as in Chile, Brazil and Peru.

- Where communities have demanded better enforcement, the burden of bearing related costs often have to be borne by the communities themselves, as in Brazil and Peru. Brazil, Peru and Ecuador also have to contend with the serious problem of piracy, as a result of which fishermen often lose their gear and even their lives. Action taken by the State to tackle this menace is inadequate.
- Social security in the fisheries sector continues to be a matter for concern in all countries, with the possible exception of Brazil. In Chile and Peru, the system of social security is privatized, keeping in line with their neo-liberal policies. In Peru, for example, the system that has been recently initiated requires that fishermen make substantial contributions to avail health and accident benefits, while the State makes no matching contributions. Mexico and Ecuador completely lack any system of social security.

Given the problems enlisted above, never before has it been so important for fishworker organizations to work together towards a better recognition of artisanal fisheries at all levels. And never before has it been so important to work towards valorizing the way of life and the culture of artisanal fishing communities.

3.2 Women in Fisheries

The work of women in fisheries differs from culture to culture and region to region, and between rural and urban areas. It is not possible to make generalizations. The common factor, however, is that they are rarely seen as 'productive'. Their work has little value and is normally considered an extension of 'domestic' activities.

In fisheries, women take on a whole range of responsibilities and jobs: they may work in marketing, in preparation of bait, making and repairing nets, collecting crabs and shellfish, gathering and cultivating seaweed and algae, in smoking, salting and drying fish, and, in rare cases, fishing.

Women also take on work on behalf of their fishermen husbands, such as dealing with financial institutions for loans, with government fisheries agencies, and so on. Women are very active in the processing sector, as either part-time or full-time workers in processing plants. The nature of work is typically repetitive and low-paying. The conditions at work and social security provisions leave much to be desired. These problems are being compounded by overfishing and erratic supply of raw materials to processing plants in most countries in the region, and the pressure on such businesses to cut costs to retain their competitive edge in the world market. Fish plant workers may or may not belong to fishing communities. A recent study in South Chile indicates that there is, in general, no relationship between artisanal fishing communities and fish plant workers and this has implications for the building of solidarity links between worker groups.

Often, women of coastal fishing communities take on activities outside the fishery that give them some kind of stable income, since the earnings from fishing tend to be unpredictable. This is especially true in urban areas where there are more job opportunities, both for educated and less-educated women. In rural areas women may start small businesses to generate income, such as running a small shop or restaurant, either on their own, or together with other women. This is quite common in Brazil, Chile and Peru.

Also, given the nature of fishermen's work and their frequent absences, women

are almost entirely responsible for running the family, and it is often this additional income from the extra work they take on that sees the family through lean periods. Women of fishing communities have been active in political struggle, though the issues they have mobilized around have varied. In Chile, women have been active in the struggle against ITQs, in Peru and Brazil they have campaigned for better social security, in Mexico against the pollution by oil companies.

Women are important protagonists in the fishing community, responsible for keeping the social network and culture of the community alive.

3.3 Gender in Fisheries

The discussion on gender issues in fisheries was interesting and thought-provoking, even if a bit heated at times. There was much debate on the concept of gender, and how its understanding could be translated into practical initiatives. There were, as can be expected, widely varying opinions.

There was consensus about women being important in the fisheries and in fishing communities. They have always been the centre around which family and community life has evolved. However, on several other issues, there were arguments where participants took opposing stances, and of course, there were questions aplenty.

One participant argued that 'gender' is a concept introduced by the West. Traditional societies in many parts of the developing world are based on relations where both men and women perform different roles that complement each other. In indigenous societies the sea is seen as a woman, as a source of life, and there is respect for both. There is no concept of inequality nor any competition between men and women. However, modernization and the influence of other

cultures modifies, often negatively, these features. The need, therefore, is to value and revive indigenous culture.

There were others who felt differently and thought it important to recognize that women are discriminated against in many ways. Men and women may be born with the same potential but do not get the same opportunities in life. Women face more obstacles while men tend to have more power within the family and community, and often abuse this power. This may also take the form of domestic violence, which seemed distressingly common, and as one of the participants from Mexico put it: "Violence will never end since our children are being raised in it. They will imitate their fathers."

There were those who felt that women's work, especially domestic chores, are not considered real work. There is need to change this perception and ascribe value to such work.

However, it is equally important to not create conflict between men and women over differences in perspective on gender issues. There was also some concern about professionals who work with fishing communities on gender issues but who might not share the same perspective. This could lead to divisions within the community. Discussions on such issues need to take place within a larger context that affirms and strengthens the culture and identity of coastal fishing communities. It should take place within a framework that tries to create a new kind of society, one that values the labour and role of women.

Other participants who thought along similar lines emphasized the need to create a society based on respect for women and nature.

In general, everybody was committed and receptive to the problems brought up during the discussions and recognized the

The discussion on gender issues in fisheries was interesting and thought-provoking, even if a bit heated at times.

need to be sensitive to gender issues. Several spoke of the work they had already initiated to this end.

However, as one of the participants pointed out with some bitterness, the issue may remain a mere verbal concern, with little actual implementation. According to her, male colleagues spoke sympathetically of gender issues but when they came to power, they did not make any effort to create any space for women fishworkers in the organization. The projects they pursued had nothing to do with women. Deeds, not words, are important, she stressed.

In the same vein, another member emphasized that increasing women's participation should also mean creating forums within organizations to discuss issues that are of concern to women. They should not be seen merely as agents who support the agenda of their men.

There was also some concern about the way gender issues in fisheries are being interpreted by mainstream agencies. The whole issue is being reduced to a mere call to increase the economic participation of women in fisheries, without an understanding of the larger social context. A greater role for women in aquaculture is being mooted as the answer to demands for broadening their scope to contribute. But those at the workshop concurred that this was a reductionist approach.

The discussion was certainly not conclusive—it raised many unanswered questions. In all probability it represents but one step in what is no doubt likely to be a long and continuous process. There was, however, consensus on the following:

- The work and role of women in fisheries and fishing communities has always been important, though invisible and undervalued;
- There is a need to valorize the work and labour of women, and to recognize

their contribution as an important part of the productive chain. This may involve defining a new concept of fisheries;

- These efforts, however, need to take place within an overall context of strengthening and affirming the way of life of coastal communities, and fostering mutual respect between men and women. In doing this, it is important to exercise caution to avoid triggering a divisive 'war' between the sexes;
- Women's participation in fishworker organizations should not be promoted merely to generate support for issues important to men. These bodies should also give due importance to women-specific issues.

3.4 Country-specific concerns

The section below puts together some of the issues relating to women in fisheries in each of the represented countries:

Chile

- Fisheries-related tasks carried out by women are not officially recognized in Chile. The definition of artisanal fishermen is not based on ground reality and there is no legal recognition of all the pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest activities associated with fish capture. Since women's work in fisheries does not fit in with the way artisanal fisheries are defined, it is difficult for them to get licenses and be recognized as fishworkers.
- Certain low-value, low-paid tasks such as baiting are performed by women. It is significant that a majority of these women are single heads of households, and have little organizational support or protection, since they are not defined as fishworkers.
- Statistics available do not provide sex-based classification and it is difficult

... increasing women's participation should also mean creating forums within organizations to discuss issues that are of concern to women.

to obtain information about women's participation in the sector. This contributes to their low visibility.

- Women fishworkers have little access to credit and there are hardly any women-based projects that have been funded by government agencies.
- Women workers in processing plants are hired on a contract basis, which means job security is absent. The work is low-paying and repetitive and exposes them to various health hazards.
- At the social level, several factors impact on women of fishing communities. There are instances of alcoholism and domestic violence. Myths about the bad luck women bring to fishing continue to exist in a few pockets, restricting their ability to participate in fishing activities.

CONAPACH has laid down that there be no discrimination, but women have begun to unify under its umbrella only over the last few years. Their participation in the organization has risen to the level where they are now assigned even leadership positions. Higher levels of organization are found among women *algueras* (seaweed collectors) from Southern Chile. But the sector continues to remain characteristically *machisto* and women in CONAPACH still find it difficult to raise issues pertaining to themselves.

In general, the incentives that have brought women together are either productive activities and projects or political issues. For example, women were active in the struggle against ITQs. CONAPACH plans to organize a congress of women of coastal fishing communities in the latter half of 2000. It is committed to valorizing the work of women, both within the family and community, and in fisheries. It has worked

out a detailed strategy to deal with these issues (See Background Paper Chile).

Brazil

- While fisherwomen and women collectors are legally recognized, it is hard to obtain licenses and become members of *colônias*. The inherent prejudices of male *colônia* presidents and other government agencies are a deterrent to getting membership, to accessing social security, etc., the reason being the low value ascribed to women's work.
- Only those involved in the actual capture of fish are considered fishworkers. In reality though, fisheries is a synthesis of various activities. But women who engage in activities such as net-making, for example, are not considered fishworkers.
- Traditionally, women have collected and fished in the inshore and riverine areas of north-east Brazil. Degradation of coastal resources such as mangroves has led to a significant decline in means of livelihood. Little thought is given to the fact that women who collect crabs etc. in mangroves and inshore areas are, in many cases, single heads of households and sole providers for their families. Also, fishermen now tend to go further afield and for longer durations due to the depletion of resources, because of which women find it difficult to participate in fishing operations.
- More men have been able to access state-supported credit schemes as compared with women. Women have succeeded in getting loans only when they have formed organized groups. Very few individuals have received credit.
- Sex-wise classification of workers in fisheries is not available, and this

*Higher levels of organization are found among women *algueras* (seaweed collectors) from Southern Chile.*

The definition of fishworkers focuses on capture, whereas the fact is that fisheries is a synthesis of various activities.

contributes to women's lack of visibility;

- When women have formed groups, they have voiced their concern on diverse issues including education, health, food and nutrition, pollution, tourism, domestic violence, alcoholism, abandonment, women's health etc.
- The persistence of myths, such as menstruating women bringing bad luck, also restrict the role of women in fishing operations;

MONAPE, the national organization of fishworkers in Brazil, has been working with women since 1993. It has conducted three national-level meetings to bring together women of fishing communities especially from north-east Brazil. Several NGOs and projects have also been active in this field as a result of which more women are now members of *colônias* and federations and have better access to social security. Some women's groups have also been able to obtain loans.

Peru

- While fishing is a predominantly male activity, there are some fisherwomen too. However, they are denied licenses by fisheries agencies on legal grounds.
- Statistics on fishworkers in Peru do not adequately reflect the participation of women in the sector.
- Women workers in processing plants are low-paid, work under difficult conditions, and are rarely covered by labour or social security regulations.
- Women who work in fisheries are rarely members of unions at the local or national level. Where they have formed groups, they are part of the Women's Committees (*Comités des Damas de Pescadores*) but may or may not be invited to the meetings of

the unions. They do, however, take a lead role in protest actions against developments that threaten the community.

- Women face domestic violence, especially during periods of crisis in the fisheries.

FIUPAP, the national fishworker organization in Peru, had taken the initiative to form a Women's Committee (*Comité des Damas de Pescadores*) at the national level in 1996. However, it could not be sustained for several reasons. Women representatives from the *Comités des Damas de Pescadores* participated in the last congress of FIUPAP that was held in April 2000. Based on the discussions that took place at the Congress, there are now fresh moves to revive this committee and FIUPAP plans to hold a national level women's meeting in November 2000. A working group comprising women has been appointed to take this process forward.

Mexico

- Statistics on fisheries do not reflect the contribution of women.
- Few programmes are directed at women, since their work is not seen as 'productive'.
- The sector is not covered by social security, and given that fishing is a high-risk occupation, this is a matter for concern, especially for women who lose their men at sea.
- It is often difficult for women to eke out a living from fisheries-related activities. For example, in some parts of Mexico, sale of fish is controlled by intermediaries and women vendors find it difficult to get quality products at a good price, and are, therefore, unable to enter the trade in any meaningful way.

- Women workers in fish processing plants are not well-organized and work under difficult conditions for low wages.
- Women face a lot of violence, both at the societal and domestic level.
- Culturally and socially there is resistance to women taking on non-traditional roles such as that of income-earners for the family, and they tend to face hostility.
- While there are women who are part of fisheries co-operatives in Mexico, they are rarely ‘genuine’. Co-operatives are seen as male bastions and it is, in practice, difficult for women to be members.
- Myths about the ‘bad luck’ women bring to fishing continue to persist and restrict women’s participation in fishing.

At present there is no national organization representing fishworkers in Mexico, which makes it difficult for women fishworkers to raise issues that concern them.

Ecuador

Women are active participants in fisheries in Ecuador. They are also enthusiastic members of the local co-operatives and hold high positions even at the national level. However, it is also true that women face obstacles in other ways. For example, there continues to be resistance from men to their participation in meetings.

4. Proposals

These proposals constitute the guidelines, for action to be implemented by organizations working to support communities and fishworker organizations, and the national or regional representatives.

These guidelines are geared towards achieving the following objectives: of increasing, as much as possible, the role of women in fisheries; working towards a better recognition of these roles; reinforcing the visibility and political power of artisanal fishing communities; and mapping out socially just and responsible strategies for fisheries development.

The proposals were classified under the following categories:

(a) Information and Analysis

- Work towards a detailed and systemized collation of data and analyses of fishing communities, with specific reference to gender relations. The data and analyses should be shared among communities and organizations;
- National co-ordinating committees should be formed to carry out the analyses. Those undertaking the assessment must work out a proposal to conduct this exercise in different regions with the objective of identifying:
 - i the status of women in fishing communities (coastal and riverine);
 - ii their activities, both in the public and private (domestic) sphere;
 - iii the impact of existing pressures on fishing communities, especially with relation to the life of women.

(b) Stimulation and Participation

- Facilitate greater participation of women in fisheries and fishing communities through a combination of action and event (gender related programmes). Provide a forum for women to meet and to explore avenues to ensure their participation. Such events must create openings for women in community organizations;

The sector is not covered by social security and, given that fishing is a high-risk occupation, this is a matter of concern, especially to women who lose their men at sea.

- Organize discussions on the organization of fisheries and on promoting the participation of women;
- Encourage and ensure the participation of women, and give due consideration to the proposals and demands put forth by them, in national and international forums of fishworkers;
- Facilitate the creation of women’s departments within organizations that represent various categories of fishworkers (fishworker *colônias*, *sindicatos*, associations, movement’s etc.), to enable them to define and articulate their interests and needs.

Such action should aim to:

- highlight the contribution of women in fisheries and within the community ;
- facilitate legal recognition of women workers in this sector;
- take measures against the exploitation of women in the workplace;
- ensure that the demands of women are taken into consideration while formulating public policies and employment programmes, charting out educational, training and health programmes, and disbursing credit ;
- contribute towards forging a more equal relationship between women and men in order that both have the means to enrich their personal, professional, familial and cultural spheres. Work towards putting an end to domestic violence.

(c) Education and Training

- Facilitate training programmes that enable fishing communities themselves to carry out surveys and document production in order that they permanently have at their disposal the means to aid and evaluate their work;

- Encourage training programmes for communities, especially gender related ones;
- Take a leaf from the Chilean and Brazilian experience where generation of information has significantly aided the fishworker movement;
- Develop a gender focus within the sector;
- Collect and share information on fisheries and policies relating to fisheries.

(d) Sharing Experience

- Facilitate the establishment of a permanent working group, which allows for a regular exchange of ideas and a means by which communities can learn from each others’ experience;
- Make alliances with other sectors so that fisheries comes to be recognized as an important sector;
- Seek to exchange experiences in managing zones reserved for artisanal fisheries. Discuss the role of women in their management.
- Encourage interaction with other sectoral groups, such as farmers, labourers etc, so as to get the benefit of their experience in gender-related issues.
- Promote participation of women of fishing communities at international and national events and conferences;
- Encourage setting up of fora for dialogue and exchange between women along the coast and those in riverine areas.

(e) Public Policies for Fisheries

- Seek a review of the legislation that defines a fishworker as only one who engages in fish capture activities. This definition does not allow for the range

Seek a review of the legislation that defines a fishworker as only one who engages in fish capture activities.

of activities that complement the industry, and which are carried out through the year (fishing, agriculture, extraction, domestic work, tourism promotion etc);

- Seek better legislation from the point of view of gender;
- Ensure social security, unemployment and insurance benefits for women.
- Arrive at a common understanding and definition of the term 'artisanal fisheries', taking into consideration the

differences between and within countries and continents.

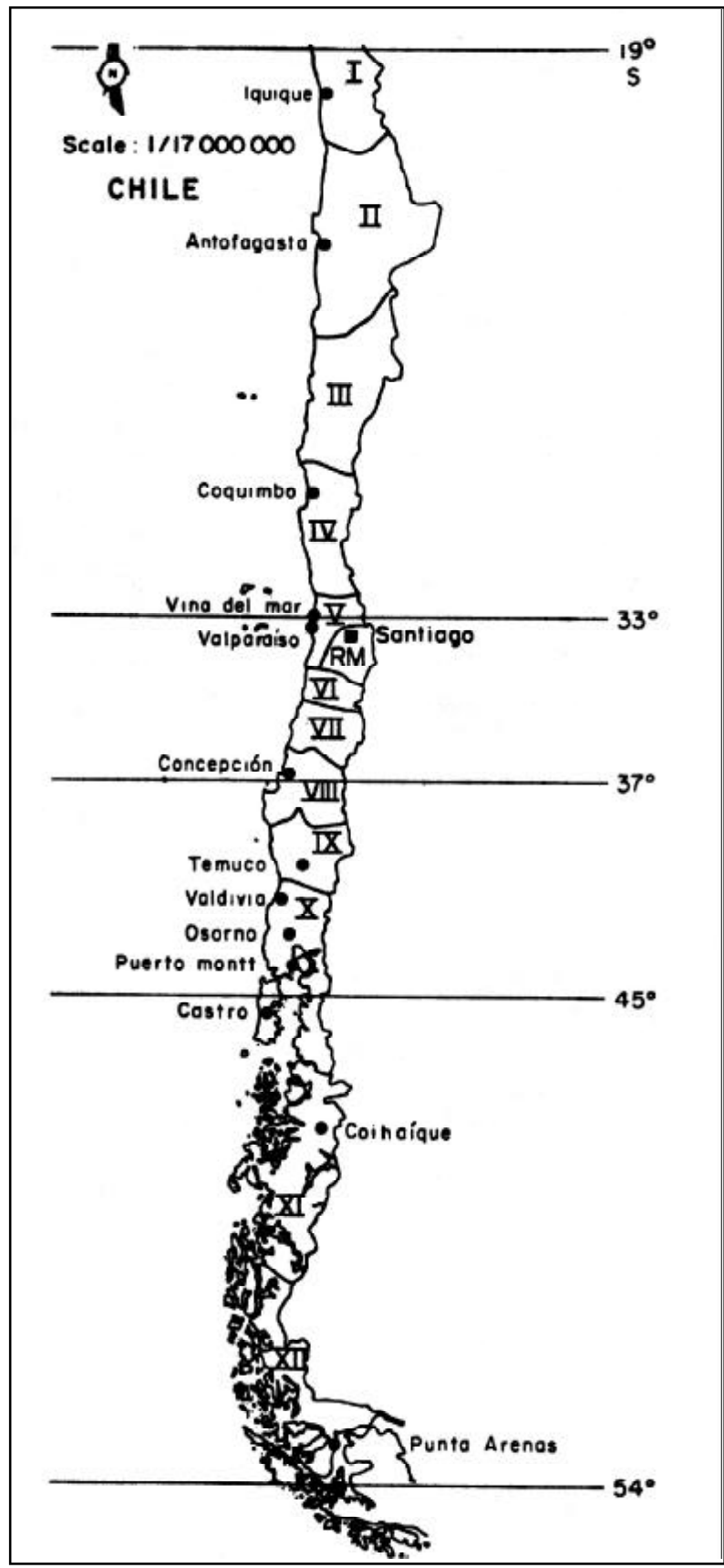
- Call for government recognition of women fishworkers, seaweed and shellfish collectors, vendors and traders, makers of fishing equipment, etc. and ensure this recognition impacts on the way public policies are formulated;

(f) Operational Recommendations

Organizations can elect their representatives to form a working group to consolidate the 'Minimum Gender Programme'.



Map of Chile



1. Background Paper : Chile
Women in the *Caletas*: A Reality in the
Chilean Coastal Zone

Summary

1. Gender in Artisanal Fisheries: a Cultural Framework

- 1.1 Regional Characteristics of Women's Work
- 1.2 Background and History
- 1.3 Gender as Development Strategy

2. Women in the *Caletas*

- 2.1 Women and Production
- 2.2 Effect of Changes on the Work of Women

3. Women in Artisanal Fisheries and Chilean Institutions

4. Participation and Representation of Women in Organizations

- 4.1 Women's Participation in the CONAPACH Congress of 1998

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Appendix I: Finance provided by the State for Artisanal Fisheries

- (a) Social Programmes
- (b) Production-Oriented Programmes

Appendix II: Women's Projects

Bibliography

*By Conapach,
June 2000*

Summary

Since pre-Hispanic times, the coastal zone of Chile has been populated and exploited by indigenous peoples. The tradition of fishing, and seaweed and shellfish gathering, continues to this day.

In Chile, there are 436 officially recognized fishing *caletas* or settlements, dispersed along the entire coast. Of these, 76 per cent are classified as rural *caletas*, even though many of them possess the port infrastructure required for artisanal fisheries. The total workforce in this sector is approximately 400,000. Women represent about 10 per cent of workforce although this figure is open to debate, given that women play multiple roles in the fisheries sector. It is likely then, that the real number is much higher. Even though women participate in many ways, there are few official statistics that reflect this reality since their work generally goes unrecognized. Therefore, neither fisheries policies nor social policies specifically make mention of fisherwomen.

In terms of production, the traditional jobs women undertake are as *encarnadoras* (preparing and baiting longlines), *recolectoras de orilla* (beachcombers), *mariscadoras* (shellfish collectors) and *algueras* (seaweed collectors), the latter being almost exclusively comprised of women. In most cases women take care of marketing the produce, processing, and keeping account of the money generated by the sales. Where they are barred from such activities—which is common in the rural *caletas*—the fishermen have little option but to accept the prices dictated by the middlemen.

The artisanal fisheries of Chile are highly diverse; thus there are various aspects to the problems confronting women. On the basis of this alone one can classify at least three groups of women: those of the

Southern Zone who are mainly involved in algae collection and aquaculture; those of the Central Zone mainly working in longline-baiting and general labour; and those of the Northern Zone who have now begun to get organized, and are gradually joining trade unions.

Although the meaningful participation of women is still at a very early stage, trade unions and associations are beginning to appear. Other kinds of organizations are also being set up to formally market products and develop specific projects. However, the woman's face in artisanal fisheries continues to remain hidden due to the fact that the organizations involved have never bothered with women's issues in their policies.

This document contains a detailed analysis of the position of women in the Chilean artisanal fisheries sector, and deals with community, legal, economic and political aspects.

1. Gender in Artisanal Fisheries: a Cultural Framework

In Chile, the role of women in artisanal fishing communities has historically been limited to the domestic arena. Even though they have been active outside the house, their work has not been recognized as productive, insomuch as they are either not financially rewarded, or else are clubbed under the category of food providers who help sustain the household.

It is within this socio-cultural framework that the women of Chile's *caletas* must be viewed. We have observed that their roles are influenced by two sets of factors:

One, whether they are from urban or rural *caletas*. In rural *caletas*, the conditions of daily living cement the family into a tight knit unit, and social relationships also flourish. Women tend to develop activities to supplement men's work since the

...the woman's face in artisanal fisheries continues to remain hidden due to the fact that the organizations involved have never bothered with women's issues in their policies.

possibility of finding work outside the *caleta* is remote. By contrast, in urban *caletas* women do not necessarily do work associated with fishing, but instead take on jobs as domestic help, or take up tailoring, knitting, etc.

Two, the productivity of women varies due to regional differences between the northern, central, and southern parts of the country.

This clearly goes to show that it is not possible to make any generalizations about fisherwomen in Chile, as the roles they play are determined by a number of external factors.

1.1 Regional Characteristics of Women's Work

Coastal regions are amongst the most productive in the world, and the dynamics of these ecosystems are governed by the interaction between land, sea and air. This led Geidoefer *et al* (1992) to come to the conclusion that this vital ecosystem has allowed its inhabitants to undertake diverse, yet closely related activities. In Chile, artisanal fishermen have maintained a characteristic lifestyle within this space, known as the *caleta* (Mella, 1998). Balanced and stable social conditions have allowed them to hand down through generations fishing techniques, traditions, customs and collective memories to their progeny. It is in the *caleta* that the fishermen keep their boats and fishing equipment and often, together with the women, process and sell their products. It is also a place of 'life and death', where the people of the community relate to the environment, cherish its flora and fauna, and where the older generation keep alive their rich heritage and traditions by way of retelling myths and folktales. (Paes, 1999).

The productivity of the vastly diverse ecosystem of the coast—the estuaries, lagoons, bays, gulfs, straits, canals etc—

is dictated by changing climate patterns and even their relationship with man rests on a delicate balance. Human interference (pollution, oil spills, overfishing, disregard for the five-mile conservation zone reserved for artisanal fisheries, and the poor administration of fishery resources) causes disturbances, the short and long-term consequences of which we have begun to understand and evaluate only recently.

In the **northern region** artisanal production takes on distinctive characteristic types. The first is where fishermen migrate to fishing grounds in search of fish, setting up temporary fishing camps where there is no role for women.

The second is found in urban *caletas*, where women are responsible for baiting the longlines, selling the catch, working in fish processing plants and, seasonally, harvesting seaweed. These jobs, are not necessarily restricted to women, but they (the women) serve as the productive link.

In the **central region** women have a more direct relationship with fishing activities, and in the absence of the temporary fishing camps of the northern region, their social roles become defined by the rural or urban setting of the *caleta* itself.

In rural *caletas* women collect and sell seaweed to help contribute to the family income. By contrast, women from urban *caletas* (San Antonio, Valparaíso and Coquimbo) work at baiting hooks, processing and selling fresh fish and shellfish, and work in fish processing plants. A greater proportion of women workers bait hooks for longlines and, for the most part, they are 'women heads of households' with no family ties to the fishermen because of which social stigma is attached to the very work they undertake.

It is in the **southern region**, especially in the regions VIII and X, where one

The variety of jobs carried out by women, especially in rural caletas, is significant in terms of productivity both at the family and village levels

finds the largest workforce of women in the country. The cultural make-up of this area is such that rural activities are the most important, and this is reflected in the way in which each member of the family performs a number of functions within the fishing community; income from agriculture supplements income from fishing. Women undertake a wide range of activities such as the collection of seaweed and shellfish, net-weaving, fish and shellfish processing, longline baiting and, to a lesser extent, fishing and diving. Along with these activities women also do a little bit of cultivation and look after livestock. In the *caletas* close to urban areas, women are slowly beginning to find work in aquaculture and industrial fish processing plants.

The variety of jobs carried out by women, especially in rural *caletas*, is significant in terms of productivity both at the family and village levels, most of the skills having been learnt when they worked as children with their parents. Other women from outside, who have come to live in the *caleta* as a result of marriage to fishermen, have picked up these skills too.

The participation of women in fisheries in pre-capture, capture and post-harvest activities is summarized in Table 1.

Women are, therefore, involved in a number of activities in artisanal fisheries. These are related to the seasonal capture of coastal species, known to them by their local names. The women keep a book—given to them by the National Fisheries Service (SERNAPESCA)—to register capture. Each species (fish, mollusc, crab, equinoderm and seaweed) is given a three number code. To obtain this code, fisherwomen must hold an Artisanal Fisherman's Card issued by the Port Authorities to those who undergo a practical and theory exam. They can also hold the position of 'fisherman's assistant' which after four years, with authorization by the Port Authorities, can be changed

to that of 'fisherman'. Women also work in pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest aquaculture activities, all recent occupations in the artisanal fisheries sector.

The work of women in Region VIII and X is detailed below:

Region VIII: For part of the year women in this region work in pre-harvest and post-harvest activities of the following species, and only in exceptional cases are they involved in the actual capture of fish. During capture, they are accompanied by their husbands, grown-up sons or brothers.

| Species | Scientific Name |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Congrios</i> (Conger) | <i>Genypterus spp</i> |
| <i>Jureles</i> (Horse Mackerel) | <i>Trachurus symetricus murphy</i> |
| <i>Pescadas, Merluzas</i> (Hakes) | <i>Merluccius gayi gayi</i> |
| <i>Cabrillas</i> (Bass/Wrasse) | <i>Sebastes capensis</i> |

In winter, the women work in the pre-capture, capture and post-harvest of the following species:

| Species | Scientific Name |
|---|------------------------|
| <i>Jaibas</i> (crabs) | <i>Cancer spp</i> |
| <i>Chapes, Lapas</i> (limpets) | <i>Fissurella spp</i> |
| <i>Machuelo, Machas, Navaja</i> (razor clams) | <i>Tagellus spp</i> |
| <i>Caracoles</i> (whelks, winkles) | <i>Tegula atra</i> |
| <i>Luche</i> (algae for home consumption) | <i>Porphyra spp</i> |

During summer, 55 per cent of the 23 fisherwomen interviewed (Quiroz and Lopez, 1993) indicated that they harvest carrageen-producing seaweeds such as

Table 1: Women’s Work in Fisheries and Aquaculture

| Fisheries (Women of Central and Southern Chile) | Aquaculture (Especially Women of Region X) |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Pre-harvest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mending nets and traps, baiting longlines for fishing and crabbing, cleaning boats <p><i>Harvest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting seaweed and shellfish along the coast • Setting nets and traps for fish and crabs in small boats • As owners of boats <p><i>Post-harvest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storing seaweed, shellfish and fish • All stages of processing i.e. drying, salting, smoking and cooking • Selling seaweed, shellfish and fresh and processed fish—activities almost exclusively undertaken by women | <p><i>Pre-harvest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of seaweed, handfuls of fronds are buried in the sea floor or spores are seeded on to systems of suspended lines • In the case of molluscs, seeding is done with ‘seed’ acquired from hatcheries with controlled environments or from the local collectors who harvest from the spawning stock. There are several different seeding techniques. During growth it is necessary to thin out the molluscs attached to the lines or in the growing boxes. The installations have to be monitored and guarded 24 hours <p><i>Harvest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of seaweed, the main season runs from spring up to early autumn, and depending on growth there may be several harvests • In the case of molluscs, harvesting is seasonal <p><i>Post-harvest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning the grow-on systems. Preparing the spawning stock (<i>choritos</i>, <i>choros</i> and <i>cholgás</i>—varieties of mussels) and placing seed collectors for the next season • Marketing <p><i>Observations:</i> Divers are required for planting seaweed, preparing collectors, harvesting and cleaning. This is done by both men and women. Women have begun to develop an interest in learning to dive.</p> |

Source: Visits made to fishing communities in *caletas* of the V, VII and X Regions

luga-luga (Iridaea spp) and *chicoria (Gigartina spp)* to sell to exporting companies.

On sandy beaches, close to estuaries, the poorer members of the *caleta* harvest napes (*Callinassa spp*), which they sell as bait to weekend anglers who fish for corvina and other species.

Region X: Aquaculture, is a recent but well-developed activity in Chile, and the main centres are located in Region X thanks to appropriate conditions and abundance of sites (islands, bays and archipelagos). Since the beginning of the 20th century, oysters and mussels have been cultivated here. In this Region there are many fishermen's organizations (unions, associations and co-operatives) many of them formed by/ for men and women and some by/ for women only. Women work in the following sectors:

- Cultivation centres for *pelillo (Gracilaria spp)* in Maullín, Chiloé (Region X) and in Tubul (Region VIII) with significant levels of production. The algae found here are used in the production of agar.
- Centres for growing bivalve molluscs, on the main and outer Chiloé islands (Region X) for the following species:

| Species | ScientificName |
|---|----------------------------|
| <i>Ostra del Pacífico</i> (Pacific Oyster) | <i>Crasostrea gigas</i> |
| <i>Ostra chilena, ostra plana, Ostra</i> (Flat Oyster) | <i>Ostrea chilensis</i> |
| <i>Chorito, quilmahue, mejillón</i> (Mussels) | <i>Mytilus chilensis</i> |
| <i>Choro, choro zapato</i> (Mussels) | <i>Choromytilus chorus</i> |
| <i>Cholga</i> (Mussels) | <i>Aulacomya ater</i> |

1.2. Background and History

Since pre-Hispanic times the indigenous people along the coast of Chile have exploited fisheries resources. They have a long tradition of seaweed harvesting, shellfish collection and fishing which continues to date, especially in the centre and south of the country.

When the Spanish arrived, these groups were food gatherers who lived along the coastline and used raw material such as sea lion skin to make rafts, the teeth for *artesanía* (craftwork), seaweed and fish for fertilizer etc. These were sold inland and elsewhere. In the South, the *Chono, Alacalufe* and *Yagane* people were excellent fishermen and gatherers of shellfish, including the women who dived to collect *cholgas* (mussels) for family consumption (Viviani, 1979).

Other studies (Mosbach, 1999) describe the use of marine products by the *Huichiche* and *Mapuche* people who had a long tradition in harvesting marine seaweed for food and fertilizer, (the original *quechua* and *mapuche* terminology is still in use in present day coastal dialect). Since the early times women and children have harvested coastal seaweed and shellfish during spring tides, while the men have concentrated on sea-based work.

The distribution of fisheries-related activities within coastal communities is shown in Table 2. Men and women share the labour of carrying out activities that range from boat building to marketing fish products. These activities continue in a majority of the rural *caletas*, and to a lesser extent in the urban *caletas* in the centre and south of the country.

A sex-wise classification of these activities in fisheries has shown a marked reduction in manual labour and increase in mechanization. Women are not given preference over men but rather, along with menfolk, are taken on as seasonal workers to prepare and process fish for various markets.

Table 2: Division of labour by gender in artisanal fishing communities

| Activity | Gender |
|---|--|
| Boat building | Men |
| Maintenance of motors and fishing equipment | Predominantly men |
| Preparing for fishing trips | Women, making and repairing nets |
| Fishing | Men Women in small boats close to the coast |
| Processing fresh products, cleaning and filleting fish | Predominantly women |
| Preservation: salting and drying, smoking fish and shellfish and drying seaweed | Predominantly women |
| Cooking produce that cannot be sold fresh | Predominantly women |
| Marketing of fish, shellfish and seaweed | Predominantly women |

Source: Adapted from CIID 1993

1.3 Gender as Development Strategy

The United Nations (FAO, 1984) has recommended that fisheries development should:

- a) Include women, given their productive role in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture;
- b) Train women, and where necessary, provide specialized training.

Women and gender as a focal issue in artisanal fisheries started interesting academic circles and public and private institutions in the beginning of the 90's, but the lack of reference material made it difficult to clearly define the true value of the productive potential of women.

Nauen (1995) undertook to analyse the role of women in artisanal fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and also evaluate their involvement in industrial fish processing where they are often employed as seasonal workers. The study took into account:

- a) Reports and technical documents on fisheries and aquaculture;
- b) Socio-economic reports on developing countries;
- c) Anthropological publications with references to women and gender in artisanal fisheries.

In Chile it was necessary to initiate action with the following objectives:

- a) To stimulate multi-disciplinary interaction, to investigate ecological problems, and build on the existing understanding;
- b) To involve women in fisheries and aquaculture activities in order that they themselves recognize their productive capacity and thereby, their importance to the community, and adopt the best strategies in order to achieve their objectives and goals.

In this context, seminars and workshops were held in Chile and Venezuela where the principal findings were as below.

Chile

A workshop, *The Integration of Women in the Artisanal Fisheries of South-east Pacific*, was held in order to understand and analyze the position of successful women in artisanal fisheries, whether working independently or in organizations (Mora *et al* 1990; FAO, 1996). As well as fishermen and fisherwomen, experts from other Latin American countries were invited. Professional women and technical experts belonging to government organizations dealing with fisheries participated and made presentations on relevant topics to guide the working groups and plenary sessions.

This event and others of its kind took place in Chile between 1993 and 1995 and showed that the use and understanding of terms such as **gender, development, responsible fishing, food security, quality of life** by fisherwomen was gradually increasing. This having been achieved, it will now be easier to introduce the gender issue into future development projects and programmes involving coastal communities.

In general, all such projects have been targeted at fishermen (FAO, 1998), and it has been assumed that the benefits would be shared by the entire family. In reality,

however, women have been ignored in these programmes (Celedon and Kliwadenko, 1990) despite their being involved in productive labour, especially when men migrate to better fishing areas in other parts of the country.

Given the economic situation in the *caletas*, women need to have paid work since income is important to them. Based on discussions with women's groups in the north, centre and south of Chile, factors limiting women's involvement in artisanal fisheries were identified. (Mora *et al*, 1990). In a field survey 56 women were interviewed, of which 57 per cent received payment for work and were independent. 50 per cent were married and 58 per cent had completed at least sixth grade schooling. The women agreed on the following factors as the ones that kept them from greater involvement:

- Multi-dimensional role as home makers and income earners
- Lack of communication between husband and wife (*machismo*)
- Lack of social interaction and education
- Problem of delinquency
- Climatic factors and health problems
- Discrimination in membership to fishermen's organizations and lack of access to new technology
- Too bound by traditions, taboos and myths
- Fish scarcity owing to poor management of resources
- Uncertainty in finding employment due to the seasonal nature of fisheries
- The problem of night-time security and lack of equipment (boats) for cultivation

- Inadequate infrastructure (to bait lines, dry seaweed and clean fish)
- Poor facilities for disposal of fish wastes
- Marketing problems
- Problems in obtaining the right kind of training, loans; inability to save and get insurance benefits; long working days which often mean going without food, coping with the cold, etc.

Following were the suggestions made to overcome these problems:

- Help from the husband and family in looking after the children and sharing household chores.
- Better communication between husband and wife, and also with the rest of the family
- Marine concessions close to the *caleta* and employing someone to guard the area.
- Better education
- Be more assertive and demonstrate that a mixed organization is capable of working as well as a men-only group.
- Be strong and take risks
- Need for cultural centres, libraries and community organizations

In the 1990s there were significant prospects for development in the fisheries sector—aquaculture restocking techniques and management programmes now had financial support from national and foreign institutions. Advance in science and technology meant that specialized hatcheries for egg-production and other such projects were being instituted to cultivate and grow species

of high economic value (Corfo, Ifop 1988; Ogawa *et al* 1990).

Then, as now, there was no attempt to incorporate economic and social variables into research projects on artisanal fisheries, and funds were only made available for studies that dealt with management of technical and scientific aspects. Above all, no effort was made to gauge the productive potential of coastal areas from the point of view of **fishermen/women**, and chart out, **with them**, clear development goals, as is the case in the northern hemisphere, most notably in Japan, a country which produces most of the experts on aquaculture and restocking (Ogawa *et al, op.cit*).

Venezuela

A workshop on the experiences of women in artisanal fisheries, aquaculture and rural development was held. There were representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela (FAO, 1996). Based on the experiences of participants who included fishermen and women, professionals and extension workers, the workshop went into all aspects of artisanal fisheries and aquaculture-related activities, with a special focus on gender. The issues discussed here, supported by observations in the field, emphasised on the importance of:

Training

Receiving technical aid that demonstrates in practical terms how to bring about improvement in the quality of work. In order for extension workers to successfully engage with groups of fisherwomen, it is necessary to understand the language of the community keeping in mind the level of education. Training programmes must concern themselves with women's activities, provide management specialists, promote personal

There was no attempt to incorporate economic and social variables into research projects on artisanal fisheries, and funds were only made available for studies that dealt with management of technical and scientific aspects.

and organizational development so that the fisherwoman is prepared for the problems that occur in real life.

Organization

Creating an organizational structure that takes women into account, where both men and women have an equal role in taking decisions that affect the community. Except in exceptional circumstances, women are generally not considered for membership or managerial posts and do not participate in organizational decisions.

Marketing

Increasing incomes by learning about ways to improve product presentation, preservation and sales, a part of the production process where women are involved in large numbers. Generally, development projects and transfer of technology aimed at providing technical support to fisheries management, do not include marketing components which makes it difficult for such schemes to succeed.

Finance

Formulating schemes that encouraged savings be given a boost, that financial modules, such as on managing and administering credit, be incorporated into organizational training to get productive projects going.

Environment

Caring for land and water in order to maintain productivity. Taking into account the condition of coastal resources, participants recommended that regulations be drawn up and that coastal inhabitants be educated about the basic concepts of productive ecosystems and technologies for recycling waste.

Sex-disaggregated Statistics

Introducing in development programmes a mechanism designed to collect

information, in a systematic way on the economic contribution of men and women in fisheries, and to ensure that this information is transmitted through official channels. This will enable those in the field to follow various stages of the project and make a meaningful evaluation.

Other observations included:

Production

How to earn more with little investment.

Accounting

How to control costs, sales and overheads.

Community

How to make sure that the profit generated is transformed into benefits for the family.

Women Producers and Development

While in the 1990s the theme of **women in sustainable development** became popular, it must be remembered that to start with, programmes aimed at understanding the productive role of women in rural areas developed slowly.

Statistics based on sex-wise classification of labour are not available, and it has been difficult to introduce the concept of gender on any platform even in other spheres like academics. Also, the importance of using gender-based demographic and production data, especially for development projects and programmes in artisanal fisheries has not been recognized.

Table 3 shows that the participation of women in training and development programmes, (which today are being promoted through country-specific guidelines) has grown at the global level. In the case of artisanal fisheries such programmes should aim to protect the coastal zone and associated fisheries resources.

At the end of the 1975-1985 decade which was dedicated to identifying the role of women in different sectors of society, with an emphasis on production and social development, there was a landmark achievement. Academics provided a creative focus, new (gender) strategies, appropriate methodologies for research, ways to deal with the western economic models being thrust on developing countries, and evaluating the contribution of professionals who work with fishworkers in development projects.

the 1990's. Not only was it reiterated time and again, it was inter-related and non-sectoral, it supported the idea that women had a social, political and educational role apart from their role in day to day life. It is, therefore, possible to construct a theoretical framework for future investigations into the productive, reproductive and community roles of women in fishing communities, keeping in mind the experiences of other countries.

2. Women in the *Caletas*

The various events set out in Table 3 have one notable feature: the theme of the role of women was referred to in every one of the conferences and summits during

Over and above the local factors that determine the role of women in the *caletas* the understanding between domestic tasks and those related to

Table 3: International conferences on the theme of women

| Year | Event | Achievements |
|------|----------------------------|--|
| 1972 | UN Assembly | 1975 declared International Year of Women's Integration into Development |
| 1975 | Mexico Conference | First plan of action: eliminating inequalities between men and women. Decade of the Woman declared |
| 1980 | Copenhagen Conference | Evaluation. New action for economic, social and political measures. Themes added on education, work and health |
| 1985 | Nairobi Conference | Evaluation of the decade and the drawing up of new objectives for the year 2000 |
| 1991 | World Conference | Women for a healthy planet. Preparation of Miami Agenda 21 for ECO-92 in Brazil |
| 1992 | ECO-92 Conference Brazil | Environment was the main agenda. Feminist movements in the parallel forum <i>Feminine Planet</i> |
| 1993 | Conference on Human Rights | Demonstrations by feminist groups to protest against the lack to protect rights |
| 1994 | Cairo Summit | New proposals to protect the sexual and reproductive rights of women |
| 1995 | Copenhagen Summit | Discussed the role of women in social development |
| 1995 | Beijing Summit | Principal achievement was to prevent retrograde measures that might have negated previous achievements |
| 1996 | World Food Summit, Rome | Emphasised role of women in maintaining food supply |

Various sources: Lopez et al, 1997

Women have generally had to assume the position of 'head of household' and take on the additional role of food providers during the prolonged absences of the fishermen

fisheries go hand in hand. In addition, women have generally had to assume the position of 'head of household' and take on the additional role of food providers during the prolonged absences of the fishermen while they are at sea. However, it has not been possible to disabuse even the women of the notion that men's work is more productive since it undertaken at a workplace far from home.

The role of women is determined by factors such as the level of formal education they have received and their ability to get jobs which may or may not be associated with the fisheries sector. This is a gradual breaking away of women from the *caletas* as they become better trained in skills other than fishing, and with greater levels of specialization.

Obviously the proximity to urban centres allows women to complete a formal education, in contrast to women in rural *caletas*. On an average rural women attend school for four to six years only because of which the chances of these women obtaining work outside village are very remote. Apart from the usual domestic duties, there are alternate occupations that are well-developed in certain areas of the country, jobs where women are often employed generally within the *caleta*.

The traditional activities are: the baiting of longlines, the processing and sale of marine products, the collection of shellfish from the seashore, and, as a result of an export boom, the collection of seaweed. In more recent years, women have found employment in aquaculture and in processing plants.

2.1 Women and Production

Longline baiting

The baiting of longlines is a slow and intricate job, low-paying and with little job security. Remuneration is on the basis of fishing trips undertaken and is dependent

on the catch. The job is, therefore, not highly valued and is carried out almost exclusively by women. A large number of these longline baiters are also heads of households.

This line of work has become the one least protected within the *caletas*. The women are not given any legal or social support and, in general, do not have any familial relationship with the employer. They are prohibited from forming alliances such as unions or co-operatives which would help protect their interests. This kind of informal ban on women unionising has legal backing because women are not considered artisanal fishermen by the definition given in the Law of Fisheries and Aquaculture (*Ley de Pesca y Acuicultura*).

Processing and Marketing

Traditionally, the women of the *caletas* have been associated with processing—smoking, salting and drying—*jurel* in the central region and *titre*, horse mackerel and hake in the southern region. More recently they have begun to process salmon and some shellfish species.

These products are marketed by the women themselves in local markets in the closest urban centres or sold directly to private individuals. As well as the products mentioned above, some groups of women sell frozen shellfish and clean crabmeat for restaurants and wholesalers. However the cost of renting the equipment necessary for processing often makes business unprofitable. One other form of marketing is the direct sale of fresh produce to the kitchens of local casinos and restaurants that are close to the *caletas*.

Beach Shellfish Collection

This occupation is exclusive to women and children who gather fish along the seashore and rocky areas of the coastline near the *caletas*. The product is sold fresh or semi-processed.

Seaweed Collection

This is the most common occupation for women in the artisanal fisheries sector. The red and brown seaweed is harvested, collected and sold by the women themselves to processing plants or directly to exporters. Women also process other types of seaweed, such as *cochayuyo* and *luche*, to meet the family's needs.

Since the 1970s the export of seaweed to Asia and the United States has seen major growth generating a boom in this sector, with the result that many women from the *caletas* became involved in this enterprise. This, together with the harvesting of *pelillo*, was the first activity where the productive role of women was recognized and where they were not discriminated against. The exploitation of this resource continued to increase over the next two decades. The high income obtained by seaweed collectors and excessive demand by buyers caused a migration of labour from the cities to such areas and resulted in overharvesting and overexploitation. As a consequence, both the authorities and the artisanal fishworkers had to rethink strategies. There was an effort to identify alternate sources of income and to protect existing resources. This led to the development of seaweed culture, and also of the culture of other species, in the hope that this, together with shellfish collection, would provide jobs for women which they could accomplish side by side with their daily household chores while allowing them to be close to their children.

Current statistics reveal that 90 per cent of the national aquaculture activity and 34 per cent of the processing plants in Region X employ labour from the *caletas*.

This was corroborated by our own investigations which reveal that women from the south, to a greater degree than those from the central and northern regions, had been progressively integrated

into this field of work, not only in the private sector but also independently, through the formation of associations and unions.

2.2. Effect of Changes on the Work of Women

Old fishermen will tell you how areas such as Region VIII used to be important fishing grounds; they will tell you that earlier whole shoals of *sierra*, *corvina* and *merluza* would 'throw themselves onto the beach'. They needed few hi-tech aids and the boats used sails. The most abundant and high-priced shell fish, the *loco*, could be collected from rocky beaches without having to dive for them, as is the case nowadays (Recasens *op.cit*).

Pelillo Harvesting

In some *caletas* in the central region there used to be massive beds of *pelillo* (*Gracilaria spp.*) which were never even harvested due to the low price offered for them in the 1940s. Harvesting was almost exclusively done by women to supplement the fish catch of the men. In recent times catches from fishing and shellfish (*loco*) have progressively fallen. The situation has been further aggravated by the presence of large factory ships which now operate in grounds traditionally exploited by artisanal fishermen.

In contrast, the harvesting of *pelillo* has increased over the years largely due to its abundance rather than its price. The 1960s was the most productive period; most of the work was carried out as family enterprise, with few modern aids.

It was in 1978-79 that things changed. The price of *pelillo* shot up, driven by foreign (Japanese) demand as well as its use in food and pharmaceutical industries in its extracted form as agar-agar. *Pelillo* beds were overexploited with no attention paid to the basic factors that limit its

They are prohibited from forming alliances such as unions or co-operatives which would help protect their interests.

reproduction. A great deal of money was generated which resulted in large-scale investment and even greater exploitation. The so-called ‘*pelillo* boom’ resulted in growth in standard of living, allowing the local population to buy furniture and television set. Families of intermediaries involved in buying and selling *pelillo* were even able to afford four-wheelers.

This bonanza did not last long; the beds were overexploited, not only in Region VIII but also in other areas of Chile. This led to the cultivation of the algae, and the Trade Union Association or *Asociación Gremial* devised new procedures to bring the situation under control, different from the individual and family run businesses they had been up until then. This new method involved obtaining titles to the beds and developing artificial cultivation of the *pelillo* with financial, professional and technical assistance. *Asociación Gremial*, was to be in charge of implementation. Women were excluded from this new industry, except in the case of the technique known as *chululo*. According to the men of Region VIII: “the seeding from boats and the care of the beds is men’s work, but the manufacture of *chululos* and the drying of algae on the beach is women’s work”.

The production methods for *pelillo* are as follows:

Winter

Only loose *pelillo* that have broken free because of the currents, and have found their way outside the weed bed are permitted to be collected. Mechanized or oar boats are used for this activity, manned by an oarsman, an engine operator and diver. They collect the *pelillo* in *quiñes* which are made up of pieces of netting, a steel hoop and a handle. They are also used for collecting shellfish. The *quiñes* are then emptied out on the beach where the *pelillo* is dried.

After Storms

Men, women and children go into the water in rubber suits, armed with *quiñes* to collect the *pelillo* which has been dragged by the tides and has got accumulated at the mouth of the river etc.

Using *arañas* (spiders): Youngsters and children stand on the shore and throw hooks (*arañas pequeñas*) attached to ropes of 100 metres or more to catch *pelillo*.

Cleaning the Pelillo

Bundles are made of the *pelillo* and wrung out so that other weeds (*luche*, *huiros*) that have been inadvertently collected along with them are separated from the bundle. Afterwards the *pelillo* are dried on the beach.

Summer

Summer (December to April) is harvest season both in the natural and artificial beds. Boats and divers are used for these operations. The group that carries out the operations. The group that carries out the *primera saca* (first harvest) is composed entirely of men, both for the harvest and the drying process. The money from the sale is divided equally among the members of the *Asociación Gremial*, but only among those who are permanent residents of the *caleta* and who have worked in the harvest.

In the beginning, there were problems with this system because in summer many of the members went away to fish for the *Merluza del Sur* (in Regions X and XI) and were left out from sharing the money. After complaints from the wives of these fishermen, an agreement was reached at a meeting of the *Asociación* whereby women were permitted to harvest *pelillo*. However, since none of them had boats and had to hire them, they decided to obtain their own *permiso de ayudante de pesca* (permit to fish as crew) which in turn allowed them to

become members of the *Asociación Gremial*.

In the days following the first harvest, teams of family members or even friends join in the harvest operations.

On land, men and women work as equals, throwing out the *arañas* and recovering the *pelillo*. Not surprisingly, women are keen that the *Asociación Gremial* continues to be involved in the cultivation of *pelillo* and shellfish because they feel the level of acceptance of women in this organization is high.

Shellfish Harvesting

Shellfish constitutes the second most important resource after *pelillo*, and has the added advantage of being harvested throughout the year. The catch is almost completely meant for commercial sale with only the bare minimum kept aside for the families. The main species harvested are:

| Local Name | Scientific Name |
|---|--|
| <i>Erizos</i> (Sea Urchin) <i>Machas, Navajuelas</i> | <i>Loxechinus albus</i> |
| (Razor Clam) | <i>Tagelus dombeii</i> |
| <i>Chapes</i> (Lapas) (Limpets) | <i>Fissurella spp</i> |
| <i>Piures</i> (Sea Squirts) | <i>Piura chilensis</i> |
| <i>Picorocos</i> <i>psittaccus</i> | <i>Megabalanus</i> |
| <i>Cholgas</i> (Mussels) | <i>Aulacomya ater</i> |
| <i>Loco</i> (Abalone) <i>concholepas</i> | <i>Concholepas</i> |
| <i>Caracoles</i> (Whelks/Winkles) | <i>Tegula spp</i> |
| <i>Apancoras o jaibas</i> | <i>Homalaspisplana;</i> |
| <i>La reina la remadora</i> | <i>Ovalipes punctatus</i> |
| <i>La cachamba, La peluda</i> | <i>Taliepus dentatusy</i> <i>Cancer spp</i> |

The most important species in terms of commercial value is the *loco*, but harvesting is prone to long closed seasons. The greatest sales are those from *Chapes* and *Apancoras* or *Jaibas* (Crabs), especially the last, the meat of which is used to prepare *carapachos*, a popular dish in Chilean restaurants.

In a majority of rural *caletas*, during periods of low tide, women, youngsters and children dedicate themselves to the harvesting of *caracoles* and *lapas*. This integration begins at a young age, almost more as a game than as a training process (Recanses *op.cit*), the same way that their parents started out in fishing. Gradually, children begin to participate with increasing responsibility. This process also serves to mark the beginnings of a sex-wise division of labour. The boys become more familiar with the technical know-how needed to work on the boats and to catch fish while the girls begin to learn about domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and tending to the needs of the men folk.

Socio-economic Aspects of Women's Work

Traditionally, the principal activities that generate income include fishing (for fish and shellfish), of which men are in charge, and cultivation of seaweed beds (*pelillo*), of which the *Asociación Gremial* or *Sindicatos* are in charge. Fishermen's families also earn extra income through other activities such as the sale of *apancoras*, shellfish, different breaded products and *empanadas*, especially in summer.

Women are generally in charge of processing and selling the catch. Sometimes they are able to make use of infrastructure, such as market stalls, that belong to the *Asociación Gremials*, (Celedon and Kliwadenko, 1990). They also sell the produce in nearby localities or in municipal markets of the closest

—————
*Sometimes
it is the woman
who is the
breadwinner...*
—————

cities, for example, Concepción, Talcahuano in Region VIII and Puerto Montt in Region X. Sometimes, women get fish from certain boat owners, normally relatives, which they receive at the terminal and sell at the local market or make home deliveries (Lopez *et al*, 1990).

In other cases women become domestic help and work for wealthier families to obtain a more stable income. They also adopt other survival strategies. Some women from rural *caletas* take up horticulture or chicken rearing (Celedon & Kliwadenko, *op cit*).

Fishermen generally prefer that their wives be “at home dedicating themselves to domestic chores” because “the sea, for a woman, is too much of a sacrifice, involving hard work, being constantly wet and sometimes falling into the water” (Recanses, *op.cit*). This is not always possible. Sometimes it is the woman who is the breadwinner, especially in cases where the husband is not able to go to sea, cannot earn enough money to support the family, or is away at far off fishing grounds for a number of months at a time. Women dedicate themselves to fishery-related income generating activities such as drying and salting of fish, collection, drying and sale of seaweed, cooking etc. With the money they earn, they usually buy non-perishable groceries for use in winter months (Lopez *et al*, *op.cit*). Sometimes they save the money at a store to buy their children clothes and shoes for school.

In Regions VIII and X the absence of fishermen who were away at sea during the harvest of seaweed provided the impetus for women to demand membership to *Asociación Gremials*. Having no choice but to accept the participation of wives during harvest, the association had to give in to the women, although this move is still resisted by the men. However, the situation is slowly changing and there exist today some

Asociación Gremial that are exclusively meant for women. This has allowed them to learn how to work together and hopefully the time will come when people learn that there are advantages to both sexes working side by side.

While women now participate in groups and organizations that are associated with production, social concerns, or community-related activities, there is great resistance to allowing them into *Sindicatos de Pescadores* or Fishermen’s trade unions, especially in the north of the country. The women in some *sindicatos* are forming what are known as ‘Women’s Departments’ or ‘Women’s Committees’. In some cases, women have been permitted membership in order to make up the required number, and some have even gone on to become members of boards of Directors. Women have proved their efficiency and competence in the *Asociación Gremials* that have opened their doors to them. Lately a new avenue has opened up for women—they have been able to set up small businesses that require basic education as a pre-requisite. This will also permit artisanal fisherfolk to keep up with advancements in technology and science. They will be able to comprehend better the problems related to overfishing and pollution, and develop alternate means of production. (Guzman *et al*, 1999).

Women as Wage Earners in Industrial Plants

Export-oriented policies have led to a rise in salaried labour, though working conditions are poor because women are not considered skilled labour.

Conditions of the contract vary depending upon whether one is an employee of the plant or not. Temporary workers are generally paid in cash, an arrangement that liberates the plant from paying taxes or duties. Women are generally contracted during specific stages of production.

While contract labourers are supposed to work in shifts, seasonal changes, company policy, and periods of high production can mean a significant extension in daily working hours. Since these women also have to tend to home and hearth, extended shifts result in damage to both their physical and mental health. Working in the high humidity and low temperature environments of such plants results in a high incidence of illness.

When it comes to trade unions, temporary workers are only allowed to join 'Inter-enterprise Unions for Temporary Workers', and that too only with the formal consent of the employers—though there seems to be very little interest in joining unions, since their association with such organizations could result in loss of job. Women casual labour also lack the time and commitment needed for union work because of their dual role as income earners and home makers.

3. Women in Artisanal Fisheries and Chilean Institutions

The government organization responsible for formulating the laws that govern the fisheries sector of the country is the National Sub-Secretariat of Fisheries, which in turn delegates authority to the SERNAPESCA which implements legislation. The Fisheries Service works closely with the local government bodies (marine departments and port authorities) that issue fishing licenses and fishing permits for workers in the sub-sector.

Decree 430 of the Law of Fisheries and Aquaculture defines artisanal fisheries as an extraction activity that uses marine resources¹. It recognizes four categories: artisanal boat owners, shell fishermen, seaweed collectors and artisanal fishermen. These categories obviously do not include any other kind of work associated with fishing.

Such a definition causes problems, by not taking into account the ground reality in the *caletas*.

Firstly, by not making any mention of women it excludes them from the productive sector;

Secondly, it restricts itself only to four categories without taking cognizance of activities that complement fish capture.

The lack of sex-wise information in the statistical records of SERNAPESCA makes women's participation invisible, and their contributions impossible to recognize.

Also, the lack of gender sensitivity limits women's access to financial assistance from the State for productive activities connected with artisanal fisheries. Other consequences include the lack of regularization of working conditions, the inability to strengthen adequately their organizational capabilities and their inability to form associations.

Under the circumstances, the approval of projects (Appendix I) involving women's groups have been rare. For example, in the six years that the Fund for the Promotion of Artisanal Fisheries has been in operation, 67 projects have been approved, of which only two have involved women (1998). One of these was in Region VI, with the Union of Independent Shellfish Divers and Seaweed Collectors of Chorillo, and the other in Region X with the Union of Pupelde. While there are an increasing number of such initiatives, few have attracted any significant participation from women.

Another problem is the fact that most women, such as those who bait the longlines², work without formal recognition of their contribution, even though such activities are essential to fishing.

While contract labourers are supposed to work in shifts, seasonal changes, company policy, and periods of high production can mean a significant extension in daily working hours.

The lack of gender sensitivity limits women's access to financial assistance from the State for productive activities connected with artisanal fisheries.

Official statistics must reflect clear figures that include women so that we get a good idea of the extent of their participation in the sector. Not only will it help understand the historical importance of women in the sub-sector but would also serve as a positive step towards ending discrimination.

None of these measures, however, are likely to succeed unless crucial changes are made in policies to recognize women as workers, enabling them to obtain fishing permits etc.

To quote Nauen: "The basic requirement, perhaps, is to ensure that women's activities and participation are properly represented in the statistics. This could at least be partially resolved by redefining various kinds of economic activities, and by including other important categories such as unpaid productive work and other house-related work, that are equal to providing goods and services".

Any change must involve all those who are part of the sub-sector—only then will there be a change in perception and cultural attitudes towards gender roles. Progressive steps whether initiated by the state, the private sector or community associations, will only help the artisanal fisheries sector in Chile.

4. Participation and Representation of Women in Organizations

Organization in the artisanal fisheries sector began in the 1920s as an all-male movement where the female labour force was neither recognized nor represented. Article 7 of the Statutes and Regulations of the National Confederation of Artisanal Fisherman of Chile (CONAPACH)³, states that there is no discrimination towards women or women-based organizations. The reality however is that women find it extremely hard to

join the *sindicatos*, since the men, backed by the law, do not generally recognize their work as legitimate.

The norm is that women's groups work as 'Women's Departments' within the *sindicatos*, with no independent management. On the other hand, it is quite common to find fishermen's wives joining *sindicatos* in order to get voting rights to support their husband's power interests within the local organizations.

Only seaweed collectors, principally from the southern areas of the country, have managed to form independent unions or independent associations. But their numbers are still small and do not signify genuine participation in women's labour organizations.

The intrinsically macho nature of such organizations has meant that raising gender issues has proved almost impossible since the sticky questions that arise do not particularly advance men's interest.

It has suited the male-dominated organizations to blame women themselves for the lack of representation in such groups. Women have been seen as lacking in responsibility, inexperienced, and desiring easy lives. Completely ignored has been the fact that unlike men, they have to balance work outside their homes with domestic responsibilities and, in some cases, also with their responsibilities as *sindicato* representatives. To efficiently carry out all these jobs, they have needed the support of their family and their partners. Insufficient women's participation is, therefore, linked to the lack of representation at local, regional and national levels.

4.1 Women's Participation in the CONAPACH Congress of 1998

The last National Congress of CONAPACH in November 1998 saw the

participation of 122 *sindicato* representatives, of which only one belonged to an independent women's organization: the *Sindicato* of Independent Shellfish Divers and Seaweed Collectors of Chorillo, Region VI. In total there were only 14 woman representatives from the entire country, of whom nine were from Region X, which only goes to show how poorly they are represented in base organizations.

At this meeting, for only the second time in the history of CONAPACH, a woman from Region X was elected as an Area Co-ordinator. Even though this was a significant move, it still cannot be said that women are sufficiently represented in the fisheries sub-sector.

An important landmark achieved at the meeting was the establishment of a working group to recommend policy proposals to the government departments responsible for unions, and to CONAPACH. The proposals suggested political measures to recognize the importance of the role of women in artisanal fisheries. The objectives were:

- To organize a Women's Department in the Confederation geared towards assisting the entry and recognition of women in the workforce, and to co-ordinate schemes with base organizations for professional and legal training, promoting productivity and trade, project planning etc.
- Promote awareness among women about the importance of gaining recognition for their work and facilitate their enlistment as union members.
- Open up avenues for participation of women across the entire sector and instill group culture.
- To get the marine authorities and SERNAPESCA to legally recognize women fishers.

These objectives will be implemented at three levels:

- In the base organizations and federations, where representatives should be entrusted with advancing these issues.
- In CONAPACH, which will convene a National Women's Congress
- In the public sector, where SERNAPESCA will be requested to set up a register of the artisanal fisheries sector with sex-wise classification. (*la Caleta*, 1998 Special Edition)

The initial progress made in assisting with the economic development of women was in 1999 when the German development agency, *Pan Para El Mundo* (Bread for the World, see Appendix II) financed four projects. Before this came, training workshops on 'Self-esteem and Group Formation'.

These projects also convinced the management of CONAPACH to realize the importance of having a 'Women's Department', and today resources have been made available for implementing this proposal.

For the year 2000, there are plans to bring together all women who have organized themselves into groups as well as those who are in the process of forming associations for the 'First National Congress of Women in Artisanal Fisheries'. This should provide the impetus to encourage genuine organization, participation, and representation of women at the national level.

CONAPACH'S appeal for changes at the government level is not likely to come to much unless the women themselves get better organized.

*It has suited
the male-dominated
organizations to
blame women
themselves for the
lack of
representation in
such groups.*

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the cultural and geographical diversity of the coastline it is difficult to make generalizations about the situation women find themselves in different *caletas*. Cultural development is heterogeneous and determined by specific local conditions. However, in the southern zone the seaweed collectors have managed to defy the norm and are quite well-organized. In contrast, other women who work in fisheries-related activities find themselves marginalized because of their invisibility both within the sub-culture of the *caleta*, and also in the public institutions that deal with artisanal fisheries in Chile.

State and community have not been able to see how women's productive activities form an integral part of artisanal fisheries. That their work is based on family enterprise which must be valued by every single participant in the chain has gone unnoticed. At the public level this invisibility has had a detrimental effect since it has made it difficult for women to get funds or credit for projects (state or private), and to organize themselves into associations or unions.

The invisibility issue has to be dealt with first, and it can be done by undertaking an interdisciplinary study to analyse the social, organizational and productive role of women in the country with participation from both the Sub-Secretary of Fisheries and the organizations representing artisanal fisheries. As part of this study, a national level meeting of women from the sector needs to be convened, with women themselves as organizers. The objective should be to revalue and reassess the role of women in artisanal fisheries.

Also, given the past history of the organization, not many have confidence in CONAPACH's ability to learn how to listen to its women and to provide, in the

long term, interdisciplinary technical support to the groups that are just beginning to sprout, to help them to use their own experiences to meet fully their expectations from the new century, to build their capacity, to meet challenges and to deal with their weaknesses from a gender perspective.

Appendix I

Finance provided by the State to the artisanal fisheries sector

(a) Social Programmes

National Fund for Regional Development (FNDR)

The FNDR is the principal instrument used by the State to transfer funds to different regions to carry out local development projects and civil works. Its administration is the responsibility of the Sub-Secretariat of Regional Development (SUBDERE). The finance comes from government funds: FNDR 15 per cent, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) 85 per cent, as a result of a loan agreement between the two. While the FNDR-IDB can only finance projects that comply with the technical and economic criteria set out in the regulations of the National System of Investment such as health, education, roads, drainage, rural electrification, flood prevention, rural telephones etc., FNDR uses its funds to finance any kind of independent project in specified fields of activity.

Fund for Solidarity and Social Investment (FOSIS)

Programme Entre Todos: This programme is designed to build capacity and local level participation by training the applicants. It culminates in the drawing up of a project proposal that may cost up to six million pesos to strengthen the capacity of local organizations to handle community development.

*...in reality,
women find it
extremely hard to
join the sindicatos,
as the men, backed
by the law, do not
generally recognize
their role as
workers.*

Programme of *Assistance for Land Management (AGT)*: This Programme complements the work done by the *Entre Todos* and 'Productive Rural Development' Programmes, and is undertaken by a team of professionals who help in project identification, drawing-up of action plans and the design and execution of proposals.

(b) Production-oriented

Technical Co-operation Service (SERCOTEC)

The Technical Assistance Fund (FAT CORFO) for Management Areas: The objective of the fund is to finance basic studies in Management Areas (ESBA), management plans, and to provide follow-up if necessary. Only studies in ESBA and management plans, can be approved, and these include initial follow-up.

There are certain rules for application. Any artisanal fisheries organization which has been legally constituted (unions, associations or co-operatives) and is involved in an established management area can apply. CORFO provides 75 per cent of the finance—the other 25 must come from the applicant organization.

Fund for Helping and Improving Small Businesses

The objective of the fund is to help small businesses achieve sustainable economic development. Applications can come from individuals or associations and, in the case of applications from the artisanal fisheries sector, they must be registered with SERNAPESCA.

Assistance to Artisanal Fisheries

They create special lines of credit and provide grants to undertake technical and economic feasibility studies. They also

offer technical assistance, training and management advice in such areas as port infrastructure (in keeping with SERCOTEC). Any legally constituted fishermen's organization can apply.

The Fund for Improvement of Artisanal Fisheries (FFPA)

The objective of the fund is to improve and promote the development of artisanal fisheries in four main areas:

- Development of infrastructure
- Technical training
- Aquaculture, to promote the cultivation of depleted marine resources
- Promote the marketing of fisheries products

Conditions for applying for loan are the same as for FOSIS.

Appendix II

Women's Projects

During 1999, four women's groups in region X were awarded productive development projects through CONAPACH, financed by the German agency, *Pan Para el Mundo*.

The Women's Group from Amortajado

The island of Amortajado is located near Maullín, in the province of Llanquihue, in Region X. The area is one of greatest producers of *gracilaria* in the south of the country.

This women's group has traditionally collected seaweed. The project was designed to improve marketing. They have, however, subsequently had difficulties making the most of their loan because of low prices and an inability to find new markets.

The Association CULTIMAR of Caipulli

Caipulli is located in a rural area on the eastern bank of the river Pudeto, 10-km from Ancud, Isla Grande de Chiloé. This project will entail the repopulation of species in the Pudeto river. It is meant to finance the cultivation of two ropes of Japanese Oysters, *Chorito* and *Choro Zapato* (varieties of mussel) and basic equipment such as a boat.

The women from CULTIMAR were trained in mussel and oyster cultivation by Dr. Ingrid Bahamondes and marine biologist José Muñoz as part of a CIDA/MUN/UACH project. The proposed activities have more than fulfilled their objectives. Moreover, in addition to the two cultivation ropes provided by *Pan Para el Mundo*, two more ropes have been provided by the CIDA/MUN/UACH project. At present, the women are involved in the cleaning and maintenance of the ropes until the molluscs are large enough to be harvested and sold.

The Niebla Women's Group

Niebla is located on the coast, some 15-km west of Valdivia, in the estuary of the river Valdivia. The project was awarded to a group of seven women longline baiters from the Niebla Fisheries Terminal, to create job opportunities for women who are heads of households. The principal objective of the proposal was to assist in the creation of a small business—running a restaurant in the fish terminal belonging to FIPASUR (*Federación Provincial de Pescadores Artesanal Sur*) in Niebla.

The activities planned included training in food handling, business management and the running of the restaurant. These activities have been carried out, but with FIPASUR intervention. This resulted in poor participation of women in the decision-making process.

On starting the restaurant, the women were required to pay a rent of US\$600 a month to FIPASUR. The contract was signed for one year, beginning November 1999. Once the year is up, the decision as to whether or not the women continue will depend on the board of directors at FIPASUR. If the federation decides not to renew the contract, or signs a contract with someone else, the women will lose their rights to the equipment financed by *Pan Para el Mundo* because, as per the terms and conditions of FIPASUR, the project was actually awarded to them.

In spite of the difficult situation there are presently five women still working on the project. They have organized themselves into working shifts that start at 10 in the morning and go on until 12 midnight. So far they have managed to keep the restaurant running satisfactorily, pay the rent, and still have a small profit of between US\$160 and US\$180 left over, depending on sales. However, with the onset of winter when there is little or no tourism it will get harder, and even paying the rent will become a tough proposition. If they fail to make it, the women will have little choice but to return to longline baiting to earn money.

The women of Niebla are just one example of women in this sub-sector—victims of abuse of power, discriminated against and abandoned, not only for lack of professional and technical assistance, but also because there is no union or organization to protect them.

The Women's Group from Carelmapu

Carelmapu is a *caleta* located 17-km from Maullín. This project belongs to a group of wives of artisanal fishermen from the Union of Artisanal Fishermen of Carelmapu. The objective of the project is to obtain a space in the fishing terminal and install a kitchen and two small businesses. The *Pan Para el Mundo*

project has provided a capital of 1.3 million pesos to the women. This has also been supported by contributions from the fisheries terminal and the Municipality of Carelmapu, bringing the total to five million pesos.

At the moment, the project is still in the primary phase and construction work in the terminal is still not complete. The women have taken to temporarily shelling *piures* and selling them to local buyers in order to keep the group intact.

End Notes

¹Extractive fisheries activity undertaken by any person, who works full-time as artisanal fishermen. For legal purposes, fishermen will be classified as follows: artisanal boat owners, shell fishermen and collectors, seaweed collectors and artisanal fishermen. These categories are not mutually exclusive, and one person can take part in two or more of these activities at the same time as long as it is carried out in the same region, with the exception being those that fall under Section IV of the Law. An *artisanal fisherman* is one who works on board a fishing vessel as either captain or crew, whichever be the method of capture. A *shell fisherman* is one who extracts molluscs, crustaceans, equinoderms or shellfish in general, with or without

the use of a vessel, while a *seaweed collector* is one who collects and dries seaweed, with or without the use of a vessel.

² One of the least protected activities in fisheries is that of the baiters of longlines, who are not considered artisanal fishermen by the above definition, and as such cannot form unions or associations in order to protect themselves.

³ The Confederation is bound by the objectives set out in its statutes, which prohibit taking up activities that are linked to party politics. Its general body must exhibit no discrimination on the basis of ideology, religion, gender or race, and it must operate as a non-profit organization.

Bibliography

La Caleta, 1999: Congreso Nacional de La CONAPACH, 1998 Edición Especial. Valparaíso, Chile.

Nauen, Cornelia, 1995: La Participación de las Mujeres latinoamericanas en el Sector Pesquero, una Cuestión Estratégica. Ed. C Tassara CISP MOVIMONDO. Edic. Colombia.

SERNAPESCA, 1998: Anuario Estadístico de Pesca. Ed. Por Servicio Nacional de Pesca, Ministerio de Economía Fomento y Reconstrucción. Santiago, Chile.

Délano, Priscilla and Lehman D, 1993:

Women Workers in Labour Intensive Factories: The Case of Chile's Fish Industry. In the European Journal of Development Research.

Ley de Pesca y Acuicultura, 1993: Editora Jurídica Manuel Montt S. A. Santiago de Chile.

Araya. Gabriela, 2000: De Mar y De Tierra. Práctica profesional para optar al Título de Antropóloga Social, Valdivia, Chile.

Oficina de FAO para América Latina y el Caribe, 1997: Informe Del Taller Sobre El Impacto De Proyectos De Ayuda

- Externa Al Desarrollo De La Pesca Artesanal En América Latina Y El Caribe.
- Fondo de Fomento Para la Pesca Artesanal, 2000: Informe Interno.
- CONAPACH, Documentos Internos, 2000:
- ___Consejo Regional de Pescadores Artesanales de la X región .
- ___Por el Primer Encuentro de Pescadores Artesanales Acuicultores de Chile. Valparaíso, Chile.
- ___Conceptualización y Rol del Dirigente, de la Pesca Artesanal.
- ___Revisión Histórica de los Movimientos Sindicales en la Pesca Artesanal en Chile.
- ___Módulos para Taller de Capacitación en Formación de Líderes.
- ___ENSIPA Escuela Nac Sindical de la Pesca Artesanal.
- CELEDON y KLIWADENKO, 1990: Rol de la mujer en el desarrollo pesquero artesanal. En "Pesca Artesanal, hacia un desarrollo integrado" Mem. II Sem. Latinoamer. de Pesca Artesanal. Ed. A Arrizaga : pp161- 177.
- CIID, 1993: Les femmes et le developpement des peches, Ministerio Relaciones Exteriores CANADA, 12 pp.
- CORFO-IFOP, 1988: Programa Nacional de Repoblación y Cultivo de Recursos Bentónicos para el Desarrollo del Subsector Pesquero Artesanal, Taller Santiago, Chile.
- FAO, 1984: Informe de la Conferencia Mundial de la FAO sobre Ordenación y Desarrollo Pesquero, 63 pp. Anexos A,B,C,D y E, FAO-ROMA.
- FAO, 1996: Informe del Taller "La mujer y el enfoque de género en la pesca artesanal y la Acuicultura costera. Tunapuy, Venezuela, 8-10 julio 1996 DERU-58 PES 28.RLC/ 96/35, Santiago Chile, 47 pp.
- FAO, 1998: Informe del Taller sobre Impacto de Proyectos de Ayuda Externa al Desarrollo de la Pesca Artesanal en América Latino y El Caribe, Valparaiso, Chile PES-29, Santiago, Chile, 13 pp.
- Lopez MT, Saavedra PA, Lagos I and Pinto MA, 1997: Las pescadoras artesanales y el manejo de áreas costeras. Experiencias chilenas Documento Técnico (CD).
- Mora O, Lopez MT, Witham P, Neira C and Savedra A, 1990: Informe del Taller sobre la integración de la Mujer en la Pesca Artesanal.
- Pacífico Sur Oriental Septiembre, 1990: FAO/ NORAD/ Universidad de Concepción, Chile, 58 pp.
- Mosbach de E.W, 1999: Botánica indígena de Chile, Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino. Fundación Andes Editorial Andrés Bello, 140 pp.
- Nauen C, 1995: La participación de la mujeres latinoamericana en el sector pesquero, una cuestión estratégica. En Pesca Artesanal, Acuicultura y Ambiente. Experiencias y perspectiva de desarrollo. Ed. C Tasara CISP MOVIMONDO, 263-279 ECOE Ediciones Colombia
- Ogawa J, Kino S and Kani K, 1990: El informe final de las investigaciones de la repoblación y cultivo de la ostra chilena y del erizo en la isla de Chiloè en la República de Chile Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Foundation, 294 pp.
- Viviani C, 1959: Ecogeografía del litoral chileno Studies on Neotropical Fauna and Environment 14, pp 65-123.

2. Background Paper : Chile

Women Fish Plant Workers

Hazards in the Workplace

Introduction

Fishing has long been a traditional activity in Chile. The country has a coastline of 4,200 kilometers along the Pacific. Thanks to the Humboldt current, the waters off Chile are considered one of the most productive. For many years, fishmeal (from pelagics like anchovies, sardines and jack mackerel) was the main export with catches totalling 1,200,000 tonnes. In 1988, Chile was the second largest producer in the world, after Peru. However, since the mid-80s, there has been a diversification towards salmon production from aquaculture that, since 1992, placed the country as the second largest world producer after Norway, with a production of over 200,000 tonnes valued at US\$700 million. The main markets for Chilean salmon are the United States, Japan and the European Union, mainly in its fresh, cooled and frozen forms. This activity is mainly concentrated in Region X of Los Lagos.

The labour force employed in the industrial fisheries sector is estimated to be 55,000, of which 60 per cent is in Region X. Of these, 40 per cent are women. In some processing lines women constitute upto 70 per cent or more of the workforce.

Objectives of the Study

Our recently concluded study (April 2000) had the following objectives:

1. To examine the social conditions and occupational health hazards of women fish plant workers of Region X who are involved in processing salmon and other marine products;

2. To formulate proposals for labour norms and regulations in relation to gender, for execution by the Department of Labour.

Reasons for the Study

- To explore the coherence between the preoccupation with quality of product as compared with an inversely low concern for the work conditions of the employed, mainly female, labour.
- To relate this with commercial agreements (European Union, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, Chile-Canada agreement) that, to some extent, stress on better labour conditions.
- To work towards pursuing higher labour standards (codes and voluntary norms of conduct).

Organizations that Supported this Study

This study was sponsored by the Department of Labour, and financed by the Ford Foundation, through the University of Chile

Units of Study

- 23 fish plants processing fresh, cooled and frozen products were studied, of a total of approximately 100 in the region;
- Most of them were involved in processing salmon;
- There was a high proportion of women in the workforce.
- Plants of varying sizes, with respect to the number of workers they

*By Estrella Diaz,
a Chilean
sociologist*

employed, were chosen for the study—most employed more than 100 workers.

Methodology

Semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to representatives of the companies, workers and members of the health committees.

Women Workers and their Workplaces

- Women workers came from poor backgrounds;
- They were between 20 and 50 years of age;
- 49 per cent were heads of the household (the Chilean average being 24 per cent);
- 71 per cent had completed elementary school;
- Their work did not require prior training and their responsibility lay in product handling, almost an extension of domestic tasks.
- Women were preferred over men by the companies because of their manual skills, obedience, sense of responsibility and patience;
- The workplace was characterized by assembly line operations, monotonous and repetitive, with pressure to keep to time;
- The products were required to be of the highest quality, in keeping with the requirements of importing markets. In general, there was much stress on cleanliness, and general hygiene;
- Remuneration was a low average of US\$240 a month;
- Remuneration depended both on

individual as well as collective production;

- Eight-hour working days were the norm, apart from long hours of overtime;
- Negligible presence of workers' unions. 56 per cent of the plants did not have unions at all.
- Peak production periods saw high presence of women workers (almost four times more than non-peak periods) and extremely difficult working conditions.

Risks and Demands of the Workplace

These are related to a number of factors at the workplace: physical environment, pollution, factors causing physical and mental stress, installations and equipment that could cause health hazards like accidents, illness, and general discomfort brought about by exposure to cold and humidity.

The study focussed on some of the risks related to physical stress:

Posture: Always working standing up, or bent over;

Carrying loads: Such as trays stacked with raw material of upto 25 kg over varying distances;

Repetitive and monotonous work: In cycles of 30 to 50 seconds.

All of these are related to the long working hours, the way in which remuneration is calculated, and the non-ergonomic designs of the equipment at the workplace. This is particularly seen in the kind of jobs that women do. These problems are, in general, invisible to the inspectors, since the prejudice that women's jobs are light still persists. Such difficult work conditions mainly lead to illnesses (lumbago,

tendinitis) which are not visible, as compared with accidents that have an immediate impact. The double workday that turns the woman into an unending worker worsens the physical ailments.

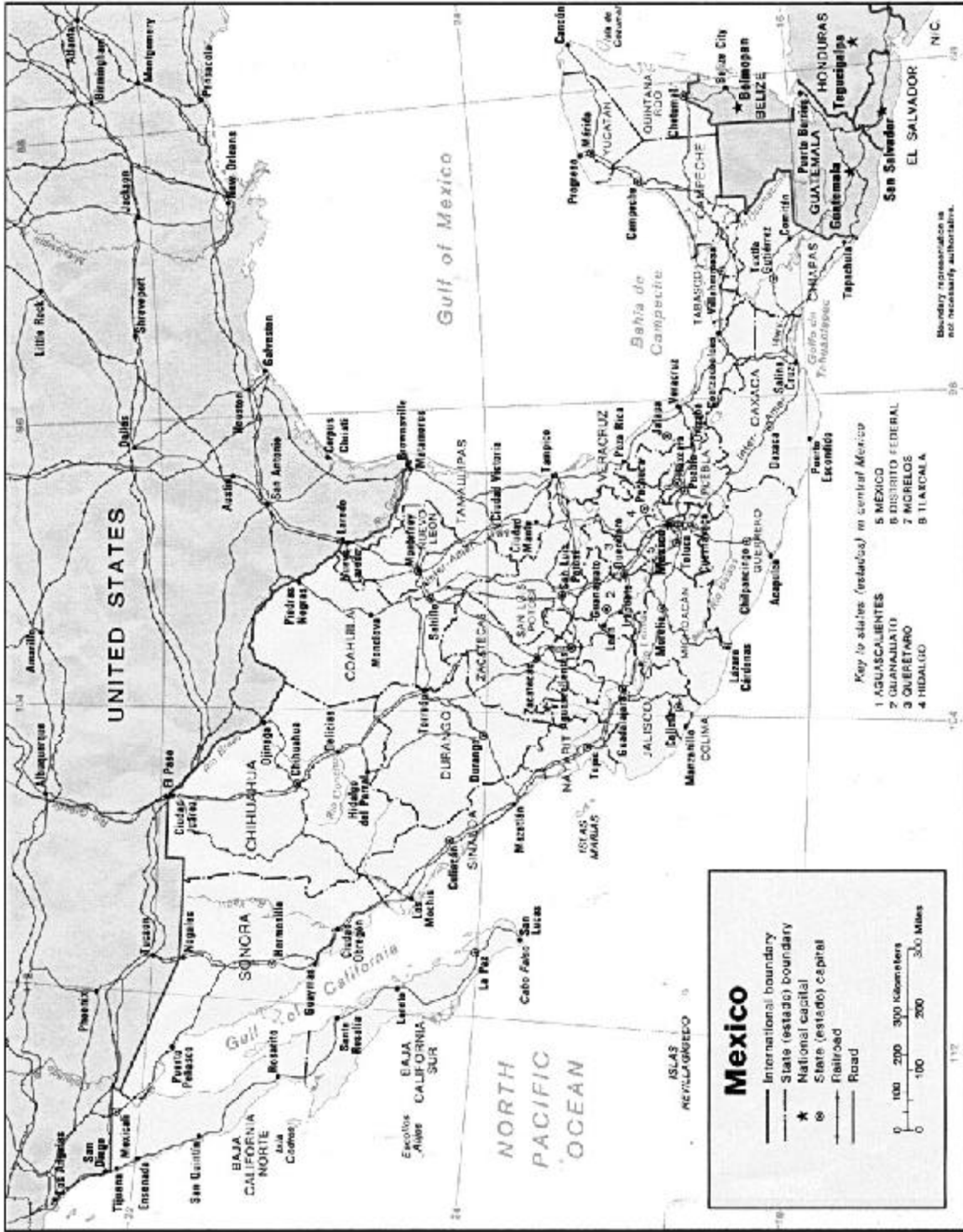
Proposals

- Spell out the working conditions of women workers;
- Introduce qualitative indicators to highlight conditions at work, so that

inspectors, who see things only from a technical perspective, can see the whole picture

- Develop a matrix that clearly spells out objectives, indicators, and means of verification for different levels of activity
 - Set up a bipartite (workers-industry) or tripartite (workers-industry-State) working group to ensure enforcement of labour regulations.
-

Map of Mexico



3. Background Paper : Mexico

Women in Fisheries

Introduction

1. Characteristics of Fisheries in Mexico

2. Public Policies and Gender: Women in Fisheries in Mexico

3. Salient features of Women's Participation in Fisheries

4. Case Studies

- 4.1 Group of Women Crab Processors, Guanosolo *Ejido*, Municipality of Paraíso, Tabasco
- 4.2 Women Crab Processors, Peninsula of Atasta, Municipality of Carmen, Campeche
- 4.3 Rural Aquaculture in the San Ignacio *Ejido*, Viesca, Coahuila
- 4.4 Migrant Tabascan Women Crabmeat Processors of North Carolina, United States of America
- 4.5 Women Fishpackers from the Yucatan Coast
- 4.6 Women Co-operative Members, Commercial Vendors, *Concessionaires* and Businesswomen

5. Conclusions and Proposals

Bibliography

By Hilda Salazar, member, Gender and Environment Network; Itzá Castañeda Camey, Researcher, National Public Health Institute and member Gender and Environment Network; and Laura Vidal, Co-ordinator, St. Thomas Ecological Association of Women. A.C. Hilda Salazar was the co-ordinator of the Investigating Team.

Introduction

This document forms part of the four investigative reports to be presented at the *Workshop on Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America* organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) in Brazil in June 2000.

It has been drafted collectively by a team whose members are experts in different fields, and by organizations with vast experience in studying and tackling issues related to women and men of coastal fishing communities in Mexico.

There are five sections. The first draws from the Mexican fisheries model and attempts to situate artisanal fisheries within this model in broad terms. The macro view has been taken in order to identify the factors that affect the way in which women participate in the sector.

The second makes an inventory of the progress in incorporating gender as an issue in public policies of the country, particularly those which relate to environmental sub-sectors like the fisheries. It also includes some general statistical data that sheds light on the condition of women in Mexico.

The third section discusses the characteristics of women's participation in fisheries. It defines concepts like 'coastal region' and 'fishing community' and uses them as units of analysis with the objective of bringing in a comprehensive vision to observe ground realities by taking into account the economic, social and cultural backdrop. This, we hope, will bring to light aspects that up until now seemed hidden and obscure.

The fourth section discusses ten case studies that illustrate the trends in women's participation in this sector. Five of these are group experiences while the other five are individual cases. These brief

studies demonstrate the manner in which the personal, family, and community lives of women have been modified as a result of their intervention in the fishing industry.

The fifth section focuses on conclusions and proposals for change which we hope will establish fresh perspectives. To this end, it suggests courses of action that might bring about a balance in the lopsided situation arising out of social and gender-related inequities to which women of fishing communities are subjected.

The fisheries sector, on the whole, has never been brought under scrutiny, and investigation into the condition of women in these communities has been negligible. This document is the first of its kind to undertake a detailed analysis of coastal fisheries with a focus on gender. There is no doubt that its pioneering character gives it value, but it is also important to recognize its limitations.

Huge gaps in the statistical information available made it difficult for emphatic assertions and hypotheses. Official information on the sector suffers from certain drawbacks, especially with reference to the social aspects; some indicators from the fisheries sector are clubbed with data from the farming and forestry sectors. There is no sex-disaggregated classification, nor any other indicators that facilitate an analysis based on gender. We tried to counter these limitations by making the most we could of the available gender-related information and some facts and figures relating to rural areas which share several similarities with coastal communities. The inclusion of case studies also attempts to make up for the lack of systematic information.

However, it is necessary to recognize that there is a huge gap between general information with a focus on gender, and the qualitative information documented in the case studies. This makes the task of correlation difficult. Although the case studies are not representative of national

This document is the first of its kind to undertake a detailed analysis of coastal fisheries with a focus on gender.

reality, they are useful in illustrating the trends that characterize the participation of women.

Our investigative report targets the south-east of Mexico, primarily the states of Oaxaca, Tabasco, Veracruz, and Campeche. These states are representative of the country's artisanal fisheries, but not of the medium- and large-scale fisheries of the northern coast which have greater economic relevance. Even though the participation of women is limited or even non-existent in the large-scale fisheries, their presence is significant in fish processing plants. Moreover, gender relations acquire definitive characteristics where fishermen are absent from the domestic scene for long periods, as occurs in the fishing areas of the northern states of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California. Little information is available on the participation of women in the fisheries sector in this part of Mexico which is characterized by a high concentration of commercial aquaculture, large-scale fisheries, and fish processing plants.

The limitations outlined are precisely the ones that led to the formulation of some of the proposals that are presented in the following sections. To 'bridge the gap' between the information produced and its analysis with a focus on gender is a priority for this sector, and this task must involve investigators (from both sexes) from both the government and non-government sector.

Despite these shortcomings, we considered it useful to raise some issues and describe experiences drawn directly from the field in order to state what women of the fishing communities do, what they think, and what they want. They have always been there, but have hardly ever been seen or heard.

June 2000
Hilda Salazar
Co-ordinator, Investigating Team

1. Characteristics of Fisheries in Mexico

Along the coasts of Mexico, more than 300,000 people have made fishing their way of life. For women and men of fishing communities, fisheries is much more than just a means of employment: it is a source of food for their families and supplements their earnings from other activities such as farming and tourism. It is a way of relating to the sea and its many moods. It is around the sea that these people live their lives, working long hours, and building and strengthening communities. Fisheries gives them a view of the world and provides them the all important sustenance they need to fight their battles in life.

Mexico has a great wealth of marine, coastal and inland water resources. The vast coastline stretches along the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The country has almost three million hectares of inland waters and coastal lagoons, and an enormous wealth of aquatic flora and fauna. (Table 4)

However, historically, the importance (or lack of it) attributed to the fisheries has never corresponded with the abundance of resources. Fishing comprises only one per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs only around 1.3 per cent of the population (SEMARNAP, 1995).

Recent history records the dynamism of this sector. In 1940, catches totalled nearly 25,000 metric tonnes. In 1981 these amounted to 1.5 million metric tonnes, which for many years was a record that was equalled only in 1997. During the last 50 years fish yield has multiplied 60 times.

According to 1998 figures, 77.82 per cent of the production went to direct human consumption, 21.15 per cent to indirect consumption and 1.03 per cent to

Table 4 : Mexican maritime and coastal zone

| | |
|---|---|
| Coastline (of Gulf Mexico, Caribbean Sea) | 11,122.5 km |
| Continental shelf | 500,000 sq km |
| Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) | 3,146 million sq km |
| Estuarine area | 16,000 sq km |
| Inland waters and Coastal lagoons | 2.9 million hectares. |
| Coastal lagoons | 130 lagoons* |
| Fish yield | 80% in waters on the Continental shelf 20% in ocean and Continental waters |
| Total average annual catch | 1.3 million tonnes |
| Species with exploitation potential | 300 |
| Commercially exploited species | 25 |
| Exotic varieties | 35 |

Source: Environment Statistics. México, 1997. INEGI/SEMARNAP

*This data has been taken from Contreras, Francisco. Ecosistema Costeros, Autónoma Universidad Metropolitana-Iztapalapa

industrial use. (Table 5) 67 per cent was sold fresh, 12 per cent was frozen, and an equal amount canned.

In the same year, per capita consumption was 10.87 kg, a fall compared with figures over the past ten years. (Table 6)

Table 5: Fish production, by species and destination, 1998

| Species | Volume | % |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Direct human Consumption | 959,727 | 77.82 |
| Tuna | 117,823 | 9.56 |
| Sardine | 100,727 | 8.17 |
| Shrimp | 90,335 | 7.32 |
| Tilapia | 77,671 | 6.30 |
| Oyster | 34,762 | 2.82 |
| Carp | 31,450 | 2.55 |
| Squid | 26,682 | 2.16 |
| Mackarel | 22,990 | 1.86 |
| Crab | 19,423 | 1.57 |
| Barrilete | 17,698 | 1.43 |
| Indirect human consumption | 260,902 | 21.15 |
| Industrial | 245,956 | 19.94 |
| Sardines | | |
| Industrial Use | 12,662 | 1.03 |
| TOTAL | 1,233,727 | 100.00 |

Internationally, Mexico stood sixteenth in terms of production volume, third in Latin America and fourth in the continent.

In 1998, Mexico exported 14 per cent of its catch, imported around 60,000 metric tonnes, and had an overall favourable balance of trade. Shrimp, tuna, and sardines represented 60 per cent of exports. In terms of export value, shrimp was without doubt one of the most important products because it alone accounted for 80 per cent of the total income from fish exports.

Table 6: Per capita consumption of fish in Mexico

| Year | Kg |
|------|-------|
| 1988 | 14.69 |
| 1989 | 15.85 |
| 1990 | 15.41 |
| 1991 | 15.02 |
| 1992 | 13.88 |
| 1993 | 15.76 |
| 1994 | 15.33 |
| 1995 | 12.63 |
| 1996 | 11.47 |
| 1997 | 12.96 |
| 1998 | 10.67 |

Source: Anuario Estadístico de Pesca, 1998, SEMARNAP, 1999

Table 7: Distribution of vessels

| Type of Fishery | Pacific Coast | Gulf, Caribbean Coast | Area Without Coastline | National Total |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Large-Scale Fisheries | 1,616 | 1,372 | - | 2,988 |
| Shrimp | 1,313 | 658 | - | 1,971 |
| Tuna | 86 | 23 | - | 109 |
| Sardine-anchovy | 68 | 1 | - | 69 |
| Scalefish | 149 | 690 | - | 839 |
| Artisanal Fisheries | 56,412 | 43,392 | 3,003 | 102,807 |
| Total | 58,028 | 44,764 | 3,003 | 105,795 |

Source: Anuario Estadístico De Pesca, 1998, SEMARNAP

The US market is the prime export destination to which nearly 70 per cent of the volume exported is sold. This works out to 86 per cent of the exported value. Other export markets include Spain, Colombia, Japan, and Singapore. What is imported also comes primarily from neighbours in the north (almost 50 per cent of imported volume and value).

Of all registered vessels, 97 per cent are small boats of less than 10 metric tonnes (small-scale or artisanal fishing boats). This apart, there are nearly 3,000 large-scale fishing boats, of which 1,971 are shrimp boats, 109 are tuna boats, 69 are anchovy boats and 839 are scale fish boats (Table 7).

In 1991, only 3 per cent of bank loans were made to the fishing sector. In 1998, of the total financing received by this sector, 15 per cent was for capture. Fish farming received less than one per cent, while industrial and commercial aquaculture each received 26 per cent.

This is a very broad overview of fishing in Mexico. It does not quite take into account the large scale irregularities that have characterized the historical development of this sector in the country. Fisheries has been at the receiving end of often contradictory policies, getting attention on and off, but more often than not forgotten. This has resulted in polarized

and lopsided fisheries development. The features of the prevailing model explain, to a great extent, the characteristics of the participation of women in this sector. For this reason we have included a brief description and analysis of the salient features of this sector.

1.1 Export-Oriented Market

The sector has been oriented towards satisfying the needs of the export market and has not been concerned with national development. Foreign exchange earnings have become the principal motive for production. Artisanal fisheries cater to the internal demand for fish and shellfish; however, only in exceptional cases has this sector been the focus of development and promotional policies of the public sector¹.

1.2 Geography and Economics

The fishing regions in the country are primarily divided into three large groups: Pacific Coast, Gulf Coast and the Caribbean, and non-coastal areas. The Pacific Coast is further sub-divided into three parts: north, central, and south. Regional concentration in production is very pronounced: the Pacific North alone accounts for 60 per cent of volume and half the total value of production; the Pacific Central and South together account for 11 per cent and 12.5 per cent

respectively. The Caribbean Gulf Coast accounts for 30 per cent of the production and value of the catch, while non-coastal areas contribute 3 per cent of catch volume and 2 per cent of catch value.

The geographic and economic factors play a vital role in accessing species of commercial value, which in turn dictates availability of finance, technologically-advanced processes and better quality boats (medium- and large-scale). Commercial aquaculture too is concentrated in select regions, just like fisheries. There are two northern states (Sinaloa and Sonora) which account for 85 per cent of the shrimp and kingfish production, representing 64 per cent of the total value of aquaculture production. In the last few years aquaculture production has increased and now represents 30 per cent of the total shrimp production at the national level.

1.3 Exploitation of Select Species

Some 300 marine and freshwater species have been registered in the country—of these only 25 are commercially exploited. Of the 50 species caught in 1998, four accounted for more than 30 per cent of production volume: tuna was first, followed by sardine, shrimp, *mojarra* and tilapia. Had industrial sardine production² been considered, this number would rise to 50 per cent. (Table 5). In terms of fishing value also the concentration is acute; shrimp accounted for 40 per cent of the total production value. If tuna and *mojarra* are included, this could go as high as 60 per cent. In contrast, sardine and industrial sardine (fishmeal) contribute only a little more than 1 per cent of the value despite the high volume of catches.

1.4 Centralist and bureaucratic administrative policy

Government involvement in fisheries has always been insignificant, both in terms of allocation of finances, and in the lack

of institutional facilities and political support. All the State-level bodies involved in the sector—those that at the very least provided the potential for regulating and developing fisheries—have all but disappeared. The post of the Secretary of Fisheries was abolished to make way for the less important post of Sub-Secretary in the Secretariat of Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries (SEMARNAP), established in 1994. Bureaucracy, inefficiency and corruption characterize the workings of the government, specially when it comes to direct dealings with the producers.

All this has made fisheries a marginal activity, strongly polarized and crisis ridden. Even the more dynamic sub-sectors of the industry like shrimp and tuna production are facing major problems. The shrimp fleet is old and obsolete. Besides this, there is a perpetual conflict between large-scale and small-scale fishers.³ To these problems are added the menace of increase in collection and trafficking of larvae, an activity which has been intensifying with the growth in the shrimp industry. On the other hand, tuna production suffered a big blow with the US embargo on Mexican tuna imports, for which the incidental capture of dolphins was cited as a pretext. These problems have led to the closure of a large number of fish processing firms leaving many, mostly women, without employment.

Signs of environmental deterioration are to be seen all over the country. In major parts of the aquatic basins and coastal areas of Mexico, industrial contaminants (petroleum and petrochemicals in the Gulf of Mexico) have combined with pollutants from agriculture, forestry, mega-projects of tourism, and construction of infrastructure (thermo-electric plants and highways). The environmental impact of aquaculture has led to heated debates involving businessmen, environmental authorities and the public. Deforestation and natural disasters have also contributed

to the deterioration of coastal ecosystems. Environmental impact on fisheries has been drastic in some regions,⁴ and there have been demands to stop contamination and be compensated for damages.

The effect of environmental degradation on fisheries is manifested in the general slump in the sector. It has forced producers to prolong workdays, source their product from far-off places and substitute paid help with help from family members, women included, who receive no remuneration for their work.

The increase in the fishing fleet, particularly at the artisanal or small-scale level, has contributed to an overwhelming increase in fishing activity. Thanks to an inefficient administration, this has resulted in the growing impoverishment of the dependent populace for whom fishing has become a source of additional income to supplement money earned from farming, livestock, etc., and a source of food. There certainly exist fisheries that are better managed, but the manner in which they have achieved their ends leaves much to be desired: limitations on, or denial of, fishing permits for many fishermen, prolonged seasonal closures, credit and commercial restrictions. These measures have not been accompanied by other employment alternatives, nor have there been efforts at value addition and promotion of industries related to fishing, which could raise their income level. The result has been a proliferation in poaching and illegal practices in capture and marketing, as well as corruption in dealings between fishermen and lesser authorities.

Income distribution in the fisheries sector is extremely unequal in that a majority of producers receive an income that is below subsistence level, and they live in conditions of extreme poverty. Their access to sources of credit have been restricted and clubbed along with programmes for the uplift of the poor. They therefore have to compete with

agriculture and other equally poor sectors for loans.

The marketing of fish products is done through an impressive network of intermediaries and monopolists who are linked to a very powerful system controlled by businessmen. The latter monopolize a very centralized internal and external market, impossible for the primary producer to access. Attempts to find alternate marketing channels meet with little success. Competition is unequal because the low productivity of artisanal fishers, and the fact that they are widely dispersed hampers their ability to consolidate and negotiate favourable terms and conditions. The intermediaries become indispensable due to the fact that they not only have the economic power, but also consolidate supply. The lack of an adequate structure for storage, and of social sector financing are also obstacles to the improvement of marketing.

Fishing Organizations

Fish production co-operatives, together with legally recognized bodies such as unions, social solidarity groups and fishing groups have been the most important forms of organization in the social sector.⁵ Apart from them, there are the free fishers⁶, *concessionaires*⁷ and ship owners. There are also aquaculture production units that belong to the public sector and sometimes, to private business persons. There also exists a chamber of commerce for the fishing industry.

Because of their origin and the way they developed, fishing co-operatives have not only provided the legal means for producers to get organized, they have also given their leaders toe-holds to political and economic power. In part, this power came from the exclusive rights granted to the co-operatives by the Fishing Law of 1948 to exploit nine commercial species, among them the highly-valued shrimp. The production of all these

The effect of environmental degradation on fisheries has.... forced producers to prolong workdays, source their product from far-off places and substitute paid help with help from family members, women included...

State and national co-operative confederations have traditionally been organizations controlled by elite leaders associated with the ruling party and government functionaries.

species had to be registered by the co-operatives and their sale was legal only if supported by an invoice.⁸

In 1992, as part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, the United States and Canada, the Fishing Law was modified and exclusive rights withdrawn. This was done with the intention of opening up the sector to national, foreign, and private capital investment. (Vasquez, 1991).

State and national co-operative confederations have traditionally been organizations controlled by elite leaders associated with the ruling party and government functionaries. They stick to a vertical style of functioning, be it in taking decisions or naming representatives. The decreased strength of these organizations stems from legal changes and the withdrawal of the State from many activities in this sector, taking fisheries even further away from the national, economic and political scene.

There has been a constant attempt to democratize fishing organizations but the consolidation of alternate organizations at the national or regional levels has not been achieved. The attempt to form a national democratic movement in 1993 through the National Network of Artisanal Fishers, a coalition that emerged immediately after the fishers demanded an end to environmental degradation in the south-eastern part of the country, was laudable. Those years saw strong mobilization and networking of fishers from Tabasco, Veracruz, Campeche, Michoacán, Guerrero, and Jalisco. However, internal conflicts, the fact that the core groups were spread out, and excessive dependence of the fishers on their advisors frustrated this initiative.

Reconstructing the concept of co-operatives on new, more cohesive and democratic foundations and resuscitating the productive culture of the fishing

organizations seems to be the only alternative. This move should provide much needed thrust and increase the power and presence of the artisanal fishing communities in Mexico.

2. Public Policies and Gender: Women in Fisheries in Mexico

The celebration of the Fourth World Conference on Women gave much needed impetus to gender-based policies. In March 1996 the National Programme for Women was started and its executive organization, the National Commission of Women (CONMUJER), was created. But its limitations in terms of competence and its standing with respect to other government institutions, as well as the budgetary restrictions imposed on it have been a cause for criticism and wide debate. However, it cannot be denied that a change has taken place in attitudes, language of discourse, and in public appreciation of gender issues and that, since 1996, public policy and official discourse have been coloured by a 'gender perspective'.

Government action is only in its initial stages, and implementation has not been uniform in different sectors. In the case of the environmental and fisheries sectors, the formulation and implementation of policies based on gender equity have fallen behind in comparison with other sectors. It was not until end-1998 and during 1999 that SEMARNAP made official its desire to promote gender equity in the policies for the sector, as manifested in the 'Declaration of the Secretariat of Environment, Natural Resources, and Fisheries for Gender Equity'.

It has been non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, researchers, and some international organizations which have strongly pushed for the adoption of a gender focus in this

sector.⁹ One also must laud the role of the National Commission of Women who have steadfastly supported this process.

The progress made so far can only be termed a declaration of intent and has not yet been concretized into programmes or actions of great importance. Their value lies in the fact that they are an expression of the official will to foster gender equity in clear and concise terms. At the beginning of the year 2000, the achievements can be summarized as follows (Women and Environment Network, 2000):

- a) A political declaration to boost the issue of gender equity in environmental policy;
- b) Elaborating the gender equity programmes of the SEMARNAP that exist at present as a consultative process between different segments of the sector;
- c) The inclusion of an *addendum* on Gender and Environment in the National Programme for Women;
- d) The creation of a Department of Gender and Environment in SEMARNAP.

Statistics that focus on gender in the fisheries sector do not exist in Mexico. However, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Data (INEGI) has gathered data and indicators with a gender focus that help contribute to the analysis of the condition of women in Mexico. The figures presented in the following section are general in nature. We know that these indicators can change when applied to different geographic, ecological, economic, and cultural environments within the country. Therefore, they are not automatically representative of the condition of women in the fisheries sector.

National Legal Framework and International Agreements

Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution establishes equality of women and men. The General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection also points out that:

Women carry out an important function in the protection, preservation, and sustainable use of natural resources and their development. Their complete participation is essential to achieve sustainable development.

The Programme of Development (1995-2000) calls for the urgent need in social policy

to promote the complete and effective participation of women in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the country in order to consolidate their position, to enable them to take equal part in responsibilities, decision-making and partake of the benefits of development as equals.

On 8 March 2000, the *addendum* 'Women and Environment' was announced by the National Programme for Women.

At the international level too there have been agreements and treaties. Among them, the following stand out—the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, 1992), chapter 24, and the Fourth Global Conference of Women (Beijing, 1995), chapter K. However, both documents lack specific 'cross references' to gender and fisheries. They only make isolated references to fisheries along with other primary sectors.

Other important agreements related to the management of natural resources that refer to gender are the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the

Statistics that focus on gender in the fisheries sector do not exist in Mexico.

Convention for the Struggle against Desertification. The Conference on Population and Development and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) do not talk about women in fishing communities.

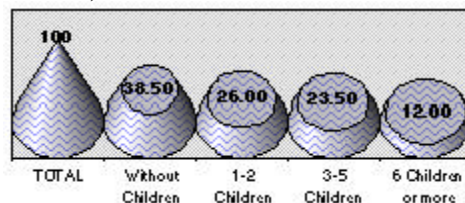
The Fisheries Law and its rules as well as the General Law of Co-operative Societies do not contain any specific reference to women or gender relations. Same is the case with respect to the rules of social organizations of fishermen.

Participation of Women in Economic and Productive Activities

The incorporation of women into economic activities has been accelerating over the last few years. In 1970, only 17 out of 100 women / girls above the age of 12 were economically active. By 1997, this number had increased to 37 per cent. If their role is analyzed in terms of their contribution to monthly income, the figure is greater (44.2 per cent for 1995). If their inputs towards providing sustenance etc. are quantified, it is very likely that their contribution to the running of the house will assume even greater importance.

The participation of women in activities outside the house is closely related to, and conditioned by, gender roles, in particular by the fact that reproductive functions and responsibilities for childcare limit the extent of participation in the formal work economy. This is reflected in statistics on the average age at which women normally join and retire from the labour market, and by evaluating the degree of participation according to the number of children they have (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The economically-active female population according to number of children, 1977



Education is another factor: only 27.3 per cent of uneducated women or those with incomplete elementary school education participate in the labour market. This figure rises as the level of education increases, and is 51.6 per cent for women with a post-secondary education. The extent to which women are employed in rural and urban areas also varies because those in urban areas have better access to education. (INEGI, 2000).

Work Inside and Outside the Home

In Mexico, as in many other countries of the world, there has been heated debate about the advantages and disadvantages of getting women involved in productive activities. It is true that the possibility of having an income of one's own and of breaking through the domestic barriers has significant advantages in terms of autonomy, professional and personal development. However, gender roles in domestic life have not changed substantially, especially in key areas like distribution of chores and decision-making. Even violence against women and children continues unabated. The workdays of women who are employed elsewhere have been extended considerably. In the case of women from fisheries, we find that some work 18-hour days.

Some general figures from the INEGI¹⁰ show that domestic work is still fundamentally women's work, even if they also go out to work.

In 1997, of the 38.5 million people employed, 25 million were men and 13 million women. Of the 13.5 million who dedicated themselves exclusively to outside jobs, 95 per cent were men and 5 per cent women. In other words, only 5 per cent of the women who are in the labour market do not have any domestic responsibilities.

One must point out that the proportion of men who participate both in domestic

tasks as well as formal jobs, has increased—in 1995 only 33 per cent combined both activities, whereas in 1997 this figure had risen to 44 per cent. All of this indicates that while women are still held responsible for most domestic tasks, they now receive more help from men.

A 1997 study showed men dedicated 46 hours to jobs outside the home and 11 hours to domestic work per week; women on the other had did 37 and 27 hours respectively. So while men did a total of 57 hours, for women it was almost 65 hours.

Gender-based statistics also indicate that there is a sex-wise division of labour not only when it comes to productive and reproductive activities, but also with domestic work. To illustrate from the 1997 data: while 85 per cent of women do the daily cooking, only 12 per cent of men undertake this activity. In contrast, when it comes to childcare the margin of difference decreased with 48 per cent for women and 23 per cent for men. This trend is different for chores outside the domestic sphere such as gathering wood, helping with school-related and recreational activities, where men tend to be more active. (Figure 2 and 3).

Women Heads of Household¹

Of the total number of registered households in the country in 1994, 39 per cent, representing 7.6 million households, were rural. Of these, 11.2 per cent were recognized as headed by women, i.e. 825,000 rural households. It is interesting to note that 60 per cent of these women were widowed, 15 per cent separated, and 14 per cent married or living with a partner.

The data indicates the contrast between rural households headed by women and those headed by men. Of the women, 86 per cent declared a civil status that implied the lack of a partner. We found only 5.5 per cent male heads of households in this

category. This indicates that a majority of women heads are in charge of a household, unaided by a spouse. The percentage of such women in rural areas who do not know how to read or write was upward of 45 per cent. We found a lower 21.6 per cent of men in this position. Women heads of household in rural areas work mainly in agricultural activities (35.4 per cent); a great many are self-employed, and only a third earn a salary. More than half the rural households have an income of less than three minimum wage salaries and of these, 62 per cent are headed by women.

The proportion of male heads of household for whom farming is the principal occupation rose to 56.2 per cent, while the number of self-employed men is lower than that of women heads of household. However, 52.4 per cent of male heads of households earn a salary.

The data illustrates the contrast between households headed by women and those headed by men, and the precarious condition women in rural areas find themselves in. The socio-economic problems lead to extensive migration in some states and rural areas of the country. When men migrate, it is the women who have to support the family during their long, sometimes indefinite, periods of absence.

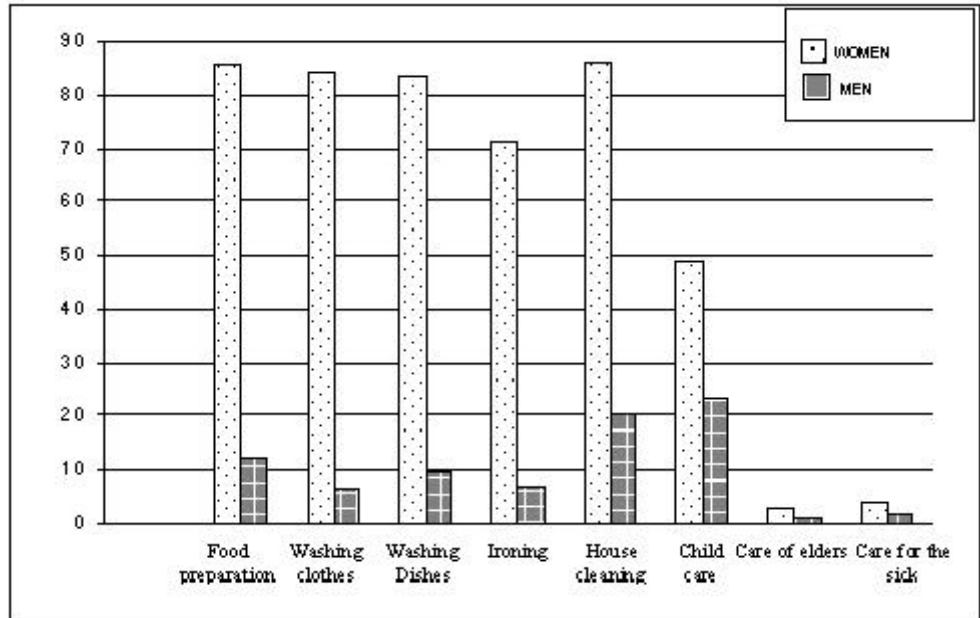
Policies and Programmes for Women in Fishing Communities

If fisheries has been a low priority sector as far as public policies in Mexico are concerned, women from fishing communities have been practically non-existent as subjects or protagonists in programmes for fisheries development. Until recently, these programmes were exclusively directed at the 'productive sector' through recognized organizations or fisheries and aquaculture companies.

It has only been in the last five years, with the upsurge in public policy with a gender

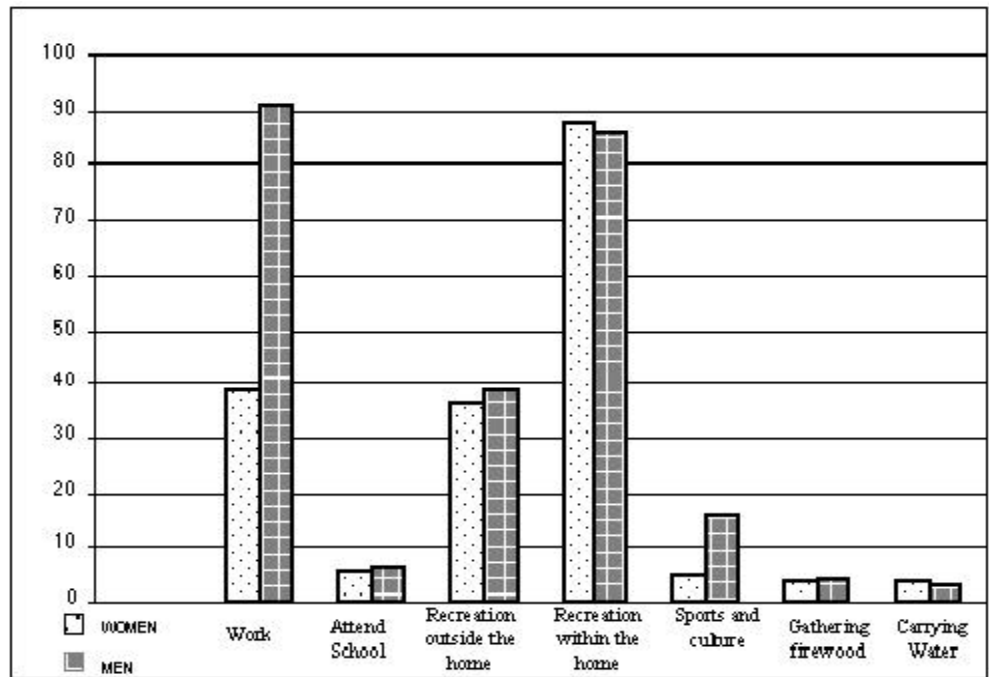
...women from fishing communities have been practically non-existent as subjects or protagonists in programmes for fisheries development.

Figure 2 : Percentage of population over 20 year of age that carries out domestic activities within the household, 1996



Source : INEGI. Mujeres y Hombres en México, 2000

Figure 3 : Percentage of population over 20 year of age that carries out domestic activities outside the household, 1996



Source : INEGI. Mujeres y Hombres en México, 2000

focus, that programmes to enhance production and combat poverty have earmarked resources for women-specific projects. Amongst these are ones that finance women's groups, mainly in order to develop rural aquaculture projects in poor areas.

The National Fund for Solidarity Businesses (FONAES)¹² reported that between 1992 and 1999 it supported 76 enterprises dedicated to aquaculture, in which 535 women participated. These figures seem relatively unimpressive if we consider that they represent only .88 per cent of the total units of production registered in 1999, 1.2 per cent of the aquaculture enterprises in the social sector, and 1.5 per cent of the enterprises that promote aquaculture¹³. The relevance of this support, however, lies in its recognition of women in fishing communities as deserving of finance, and as beneficiaries of specific programmes.

Non-governmental organizations and official agencies agree that the biggest problem in promoting gender-based policies in the fisheries sector, is the lack of reliable statistics supported by an analysis of women's condition in the sector. This is a serious problem, not only because there is no sex-wise data available, but also because information on the sector as a whole is deficient.

On the macro-economic level, the data on fisheries is clubbed with farming and forestry¹⁴. Statistics on the number of persons working in fisheries are rare and inaccurate. For example, the 1998 Annual Fisheries Statistics has only one table containing information on people involved in fisheries activities, of those registered to be working in 'capture and aquaculture fisheries' and in 'controlled systems'. The statistics on artisanal fishermen have to be inferred by the number of registered vessels. Therefore, it is not possible to know precisely the number of people employed in this sector, leave alone figure out the number of women.

The unit of analysis selected to gather information also does not take women into consideration. Statistics focus on 'production units', and what occurs around such units is practically ignored. It is for this reason that in this document and elsewhere, we prefer to speak of fishing communities and women in the fisheries sector and not merely about production units and fisherwomen. We have considered the domestic environment, community life as well as informal income generating activities that have acquired growing importance, particularly in times of crisis.

3. Salient Features of Women's Participation in Fisheries

To understand the role of women in fisheries, it is necessary to identify a broad and comprehensive unit of analysis. We have taken as starting point, the concept of 'coastal region' as defined by Alcalá (1999), who describes it as a region made up of people who carry out activities of production, extraction, capture, and/or recreation and sports in the coastal area and the shallower waters of the sea. This might extend (or not) to activities in the open sea, because the sea has been 'apprehended' in the cultural imagination.

The term coastal region identifies what construes 'home' for the inhabitants of fishing communities. For those who make a living from fishing, their home, in terms of living space, extends beyond the coast to the open sea, as distinct from the living space of a business person, peasant, farmer, teacher, etc. The coastal region concept illustrates that both the sea and the shore are equally important, and that the community's perception is based on their experiences in life, as well as their cultural imagination.

The inhabitants of fishing communities not only dedicate themselves to activities in the fishery, but also engage in agriculture,

*For those
who make a
living from fishing,
their home, in terms
of living space,
extends beyond the
coast to the open
sea*

The women of fishing communities need to be recognized as important participants, not only in fishing activities but also in the social and cultural activities of the community.

tourism and other port-related activities in coastal spaces that were previously occupied exclusively by fishing communities. This has made them redefine their points of reference.

The coastal region is thus home in every sense of the word to the inhabitants of fishing communities—it is where they work, enjoy moments of leisure, of recreation and above all, where they bond with nature.

It is in these coastal areas of Mexico that women of fishing communities have called for the recognition of their existence so that their abilities, initiatives, and aspirations are taken into account. The women of fishing communities need to be recognized as important participants, not only in fishing activities but also in the social and cultural activities of the community.

Women play several vital roles, be it in coastal fishing, deep-sea fishing, or aquaculture. The nature of these jobs varies according to the political, economic, social, cultural and ecological conditions that characterize the very diverse coastal regions and communities of Mexico. Nevertheless, the sources we have consulted and the case studies presented in this report show that there is a certain similarity in the kind of part they play in the community.

The presentation has been divided into two sub-sections. The first elaborates the different ways in which women participate in the chain of fisheries-related activities: capture, processing and marketing; the second considers their existence from the perspective of gender¹⁵. There are no major differences between their income-generating activities and the day-to-day domestic tasks. Frequently these two areas meld, and one can be confused with the other. We have attempted to present the environment of the community—the ‘lived space’, where several activities involving

collective action, social organization, participation in institutions such as schools and churches, cultural and recreational programmes, interaction with government agencies and social and political representation, take place.

3.1 Participation of Women in the Productive Chain

Prior to describing the participation of women in various phases of the fisheries chain, it is important to note the following:

- The presence of women is greater in processing and marketing. These activities take place more often than not in the domestic or ‘informal’ space, that is to say, outside the sphere of established organizations like co-operatives, unions and companies. Women’s work is more like an extension of domestic tasks;
- By comparison, the participation of women in activities of capture is limited. Women do fish in coastal areas, but we have not identified any cases where they participate in large-scale fishing. Women may be members of co-operatives or even hold deep-sea fishing permits, but they do not go out to sea to fish;
- Women mostly find work in processing, storage and packing of fish products. They may be salaried, or seasonal workers who get paid on a piece-work basis;
- Women’s work in fisheries lacks both social recognition and adequate remuneration. Their labour is merely considered supplementary to men’s activity. This leaves them with hardly any say in decision-making.

Capture

Women participate in the following ways:

1. Fisherwomen who are members of fisheries organizations who go out to

sea to fish. Some of these women have become involved in this activity because of the absence of men, having 'inherited' their post in the co-operative. They are few and, in general, are not well regarded by the men since fishing is considered a male domain.

2. Women who collaborate with men (husbands, fathers, brothers). In these cases, the fisherman 'saves' by not paying for an assistant. Women are assigned tasks such as emptying the fish from the nets, watching the lines, preparing the bait. We also documented cases of women who accompany their husbands during the longer trips to cook for them and tend to their needs.
3. Women who catch fish for domestic consumption. They gather oysters, crabs, or fish and shrimp to fulfill the food requirements of their families. This kind of fishing often involves the children of the house.
4. In some co-operatives, there are women who are known as 'smoke screen' members. They have been recommended for membership by leaders who wish to establish a vote bank even though they do not carry out any fishing activity.
5. Women who hold permits and have their own fishing equipment (boats, motors, nets etc). They contract fishermen or lend them their equipment in exchange for quotas and a portion of their catch. Generally, they are traders in the regional or national markets.

Processing

Women's involvement in processing might vary from participating in family-run units where they usually work with children and the elders of the family, to working for large companies.

We will classify this activity as:

1. Processing in the family: Wives, daughters or mothers of fishermen shell oysters, remove meat from crabs or abalone, or fillet fish caught by their husbands or other fishermen in the family. The co-operatives pay the members for the processed products but women do not receive direct remuneration, since it is considered family income. But when they undertake outside work, on order (generally for the co-operative, or some other permit holder) women do receive payment according to the prices agreed upon, and the quantity they turn in;
2. Women who work in small, medium and large-scale fish processing, storage and packaging plants. The number of women who work in such plants varies according to the size and type of business. The largest plants are located in the northern part of the country and include tuna canneries, export-oriented shrimp packaging companies, and fishmeal plants. Some small- and medium-sized businesses in the south-east contract women to remove meat from crabs or shell oysters. Some co-operatives also install small sheds to fillet, smoke or dry fish, for which they contract women on a piece-work basis.
3. Co-operatives and women's groups: We have recorded the existence of a small business started by women for removing meat from crabs in the state of Tabasco. Also in the same state, there are businesswomen who are share-holders in a micro-business that exports fresh and natural products to the U.S. market. This small business recruits and trains women in crab processing, many of whom later migrate to work in the USA.

Marketing

Women's role in sales varies from region to region. In some zones they are practically in charge of the entire marketing, while in others their role is marginal.

1. Most women dedicate themselves to the sale of filleted, smoked or salted fish; fresh, cooked or dried and salted shrimp; and meat from crab, abalone and oysters. Usually fishermen's wives or other women buy fish so that they can process and sell it. Their business is confined to local, or sometimes regional markets. Often they get into this business to dispose of the produce that cannot be sold through the usual intermediary because it does not meet the size or quality requirements. In some states of the south-east, such as Oaxaca and Chiapas, women organize themselves into groups who buy and sell, and they have become pillars of the small-scale trade. Among the problems encountered by women traders is that they do not have sufficient power to negotiate, to acquire quality products at good prices, because of which their profit margins are small;

Among the problems encountered by women traders is that they do not have sufficient power to negotiate, to acquire quality products at good prices, because of which their profit margins are small

2. Women sometimes put up small stalls, restaurants or popular kitchens to sell sea food;
3. Women traders store and sell fish products from various communities. The quantities they deal in are large enough to allow them access to regional markets, including those of large cities like Mexico City, Puebla and Guadalajara. They have the economic resources, the right connections, and negotiating skills that allow them to compete with other intermediaries.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture is one of the activities that has contributed to the increased participation of women in rural areas. The nature of work is such that it is convenient for women to take up. Generally, the tanks are located close to their homes and might even be in their backyards. Maintenance is relatively easy and permits certain flexibility in working hours. The species that are preferred in rural aquaculture projects are tilapia, carp and catfish, and production is for domestic consumption and small-scale trade. The organization of women's groups around aquaculture projects has been promoted as much by SEMARNAP as by the National Fund for Solidarity Businesses (FONAES). The latter dedicated 50 per cent of its resources towards women's projects in 1999.

Management and Administration

Co-operatives and fishing groups are accustomed to contracting women to oversee administrative and accounting jobs in the organization. These women can be registered as members. They look into payment for products and monitor the quantities of the catch.

Profile of Women Participants in Fishing Organizations

The lack of sex-wise classification in the membership lists of fishing organizations makes it difficult to measure the presence of women in these groups. There is evidence to show that co-operatives are male dominated—a fact that can easily be confirmed as there are few women members. Women may enter fishing organizations if they are widows without sons over 18 years of age, provided their entrance is approved by the general assembly. Women may also be admitted when their husbands or other relatives nominally incorporate them to make up the minimum number required by law, or to carry out administrative activities.

Women members have little or no say in the functioning of co-operative societies. Rarely are they elected to leadership positions or taken into account in decision-making processes. Women who participate in fisheries prefer to be part of family associations (or societies)¹⁶ which empower them with greater decision-making authority.

The creation of groups made up exclusively, or mostly, by women has become the most viable alternative in recent years for them to access financial resources to carry out rural aquaculture projects, or activities of trade or processing. Women workers in businesses and processing plants may belong to unions, but many of them are phantom organizations and the workers end up never knowing their rights or even who their leaders are. Also, part-time or seasonal work of the kind women are taken on for does not encourage their participation in such unions.

Women who hold permits or are intermediaries or medium or large-scale traders are the exception to the rule. The nature of their job gives them enough power and prestige in their territories, which are the local and regional markets. But this power is elitist and spawns anti-democratic decision-making mechanisms and social and economic divide. We do not have information on women's participation in the Industrial Chambers of Fisheries or in commercial aquaculture businesses.

3.2 Fishing Communities Viewed from a Gender Perspective.

To understand the rhythm of family and community life in fishing villages, it is important to appreciate the seasonal character of fishing.

The cadence of time and the events that mark change and cycles of activity are unavoidably determined by what people in fishing communities call 'the

temper of the waters', the 'season' of fish and shellfish, the whims of the wind... (Alcalá, 1985, p.49).

The changes in fishing seasons, the varying schedules of different fisheries and their location—water, coastal zones or inshore areas—reflect in the domestic environment, and the ways in which the lives of men, women, children and elders in the family play themselves out.

We went through several studies that had been carried out in various fishing communities in the country¹⁷ in order to see if they could guide us with the cases that are presented here. These investigations document and affirm the existence of the strong bond that exists between the sea—the area of production—and the shore, where the community lives out its life. Through an analysis of relationships in the family, the authors observe that the productive activity influences and affects the lives of families and the community as a whole. The participation of women, children and elders in the chain of production also assumes importance.

Gender Roles

Culturally, gender roles are assigned from a very early age. Small boys play hunting games by catching frogs, *guanajas*, and crabs etc., go out to fish using a simple string and hook mechanism, learn to recognize various species of fish and birds. Girls play house, doll games, and learn to cook as if they were little mothers.

Soon these games begin to imitate real life. Adolescent boys begin to fish, no longer for diversion, but in order to obtain food and income. They start accompanying older men (fathers, brothers or other relatives) on fishing trips and carry out different tasks in the fishery, and thus begin their training. The most common chores carried out by children and women are catching crabs and shrimp, and gathering oysters etc.

Women workers in businesses and processing plants may belong to unions, but many of these are phantom organizations...

The life of women revolves around the needs of men. They rise before the men, get food ready for them to take along and are the last to go to bed at night.

For adolescent girls, younger siblings begin to substitute the dolls. Domestic chores such as fetching water, running errands and shopping become part of their daily routine. In some communities, boys still continue to be given priority when it comes to schooling because it is considered that girls will get married anyway, and education will then not have much significance in their lives.

The life of women revolves around the needs of men. They rise before the men, get food ready for them to take along and are the last to go to bed at night. In addition to domestic chores, they may do some processing work, participate in small-scale selling, etc. The yard around the home in fishing communities is very important. Here, small animals are bred and fruits, herbs and vegetables grown.

While the man continues to play the role of provider, his absences in day-to-day life mean that women assume responsibility for the household, though they may be aided in this task by some other members of the family. Fishing is often combined with activities like agriculture, breeding livestock etc. Men sometimes migrate in search of work as brick layers or day labour during lean periods or off-season. Women on the other hand, find work in restaurants, hotels or as domestic help.

A bone-deep knowledge of every aspect of fishing is the fishermen's most valuable asset; unlike farmers they have no land for their children to inherit and their fishing equipment has a very short life—the boats and motors have to be replaced every five years on average. The honour and prestige of fishermen rests in their capacity to fish, as well as in their bravery and tenacity, especially when fishing in the open sea. Knowledge is, therefore, the most precious commodity that is passed on from father to son.

In a study carried out in Tecolutla, a small port situated north-east of the port of

Veracruz, Alcalá (1985) analyzed family relationships. The extreme mobility of men has meant that changing sexual partners is as much a fact of life for women as it is for men. This illustrates the divide that exists between the role of biological father and parenting father, since it is not always the biological father who assumes parental responsibility. It also contributes to the disassociation of the biological mother from her children—it is commonly the grandmothers, and not the mothers, who bring up the young ones, especially in cases where young women have had children outside marriage.

In various interviews with fishing communities in the states of Tabasco, Campeche and Veracruz, the author observed the relative acceptance of homosexuality and an openness in dealing with issues of sexuality, to the extent of sharing partners within a domestic unit.

All this, however, does not translate into new identities for women or men. Both sexes continue to express support for, and uphold, 'traditional roles'. Women, for example, consider themselves to be mere housewives, even though they work on a number of jobs outside home and often assume the role of providers. There is also the issue of morality or double-standards when it comes to judging others' lives. They might openly talk about intimate relationships and boast of sexual exploits but disapprove of the same when it comes to others, and self-righteously preach monogamous relationships.

Seasonal Closures and Social Security

Fishermen's jobs carry a degree of risk unlike other jobs in the primary sector. Chances of accidents are great, and not just for those who go out into the sea. Every year fishing communities report a number of cases of drowning and disappearances, so much so that there are parents who would prefer their children

to take up jobs other than fishing. But this activity is so deep-rooted in their consciousness that, together with the lack of other opportunities, it forces parents however reluctant, to incorporate their children into the fisheries from the time they are young. They also feel a sense of pride when their children grow older and take over from them.

Widows who have lost their husbands in work-related accidents do not receive any pension. When a member of a co-operative dies at sea, the organization bears the cost and membership of the vacant seat is offered to the oldest son, or in the absence of male progeny of eligible age, to the wife. Authorities in the fisheries sector have instituted accident prevention programmes, encouraged the use of life jackets and flares, and offered courses in swimming. There are also regulations regarding safety requirements that fishermen are supposed to follow. But most of them do not bother to.

The government does not provide alternative employment for fishermen during off season—which in some cases may last up to six months—nor do co-operatives take any step in this regard. Such periods can be trying times for the family.

Incidences of illnesses brought on by poverty, such as dengue, malaria, gastro-enteritis, respiratory problems and oral/dental infections are high in fishing communities. Women's health, especially gynaecological problems like death due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth are common in rural communities throughout the country.

Fishermen and their families do not benefit from social security programmes. Medical services available to them are either private clinics or public health facilities which while accessible face shortage of personnel and quality drugs. In the fisheries sector there is no concept of pension or life insurance.

There are few references to fishing-related illnesses in case studies or other sources of information. Abalone divers suffer from rheumatism linked with changes in water temperature, as well as from circulatory problems due to water pressure. Also, holding of breath for long periods sometimes leads to death. Eye problems are common among divers.

The profile of the average fisherman shows that he drinks hard, is a drug user and womanizer. Lesser known to outsiders is the grave problem of domestic violence that is associated with alcoholism.

The Environment and its Impact on Women

The deterioration of the ecosystem around the coast and lakes affects the quality of life in the communities. This is experienced in different ways by the two sexes, according to the nature of their jobs, their use of natural resources and geographical space.

The pinch from reduction in income due to declining fish stocks, itself a result of contamination, overfishing and silting of mouths of lagoons etc., is most felt by women. For them it means a decline in resources available for buying food and other items of basic necessity. The most common strategy adopted to compensate for such losses is to put in more effort in self-production (catching fish for domestic consumption, gathering food that grows in the wild, stitching own clothes etc.) as well as reduce spending. Women and children also tend to find work outside the house to augment family income.

Impact on health is another problem related to pollution, though there is little documentation available on the subject. There are serious health problems among women of fishing communities located in oil-producing areas. A community in Tabasco, for example, has recorded a high incidence of women with breast cancer.

The government does not provide alternative employment for fishermen during off season—which in some cases may last up to six months—nor do co-operatives take any step in this regard.

There has been no study to show the impact of consuming contaminated food (oysters with high levels of hydrocarbons, lead or mercury) and water, nor have there been investigations into the effect of acid rain. What is clear is that fishing communities are stuck in a vicious cycle of pollution-poverty-illness.

Natural disasters such as forest fires, hurricanes and floods have become more common in recent years, and there can be no doubt that climate changes brought about by environmental erosion are responsible for these phenomena. There is now much debate on the need to take adequate measures to counter their effect. In the forested regions of Mexico, authorities have encouraged the participation of women in preventing fires, and enlisted their aid in the task of reforestation. Something similar should be worked out for the women of fishing communities so that they do not remain marginalized in the effort to preserve and restore coastal resources.

Leadership and Community Organization

In small fishing communities, co-operatives transcend their roles as production organizations to fulfil community, cultural and political obligations. Leaders may wield influence with local authorities and government organizations that deal with social problems like health, food supply, sanitary infrastructure, school grants, etc. If the co-operative is a large one or is involved with other such bodies at the regional level, it may have some say in municipal, state and even federal levels. In such cases, the leaders of the co-operatives may also occupy other important posts in the *ejido* (a legally-recognized form of collective land ownership) or municipal government.

Their importance extends to their wives, as the planning committees for dances, festivals and religious events organized by

women are frequently headed by the wives of community or co-operative leaders.

Fishermen may view positively women's involvement in small productive projects involving health, adult education, cooking, baking, etc. and even encourage their wives' participation in such activities. Nevertheless, conflicts arise when women achieve a certain level of leadership, prestige, economic power and independence. Often conflicts at the workplace between groups of women and the co-operatives are carried over into the domestic arena, resulting in women abandoning projects, separating from their spouses or making alternate arrangements for the family. This friction also takes the form of clashes between women's groups. Women from the community criticize working women's groups for neglecting their homes and fostering immoral behaviour.

Government and non-government organizations that promote projects among women of fishing communities have tried to counter this kind of infighting by trying to get the wives of fishermen to form organized groups. In such cases, it is common to find the wife of the president of the co-operative taking on the leadership of the women's group.

There has been a realization that it is important to work with mixed groups, and with men, to work out a way to ease the conflicts and hope for behavioural changes that will result in greater gender equality in the family, community and workspace.

4. Case Studies

4.1 Group of Women Crab Processors, Guanosolo Ejido, Municipality of Paraíso, Tabasco¹⁸

The Guanosolo *ejido* is a fishing community in the municipality of Paraíso, Tabasco. People who fish in Guanosolo

principally catch a type of crab (*jaiba*), an activity they have carried out for more than 60 years. They also catch blue crab and *moro* during the mass migration of these species during breeding season. Their catches also include other scalefish and oysters and shrimp, when they are available. There are two co-operatives in the zone: the Social Solidarity Society of the Cocal Lagoon and the El Coquito.

The daughters and wives of fishermen occasionally participate in fishing activities along with men. Crabs are caught along the shoreline in places like the Cocal Lagoon, and in nearby lagoons such as La Machona or La Redonda (located in the municipality of Cárdenas). They are caught in a basket-like trap which has an iron hoop about a metre in diameter; it holds a mono filament net to which bait is tied. When the trap is placed in water, it hangs from three strings which are tied to some kind of a buoy, usually an empty plastic bottle. Crabs get trapped in the nets and are collected in baskets. At the end of a working day that normally begins at five in the morning and continues until noon, the fishermen return to their homes where their wives dunk the crabs in boiling water. Once the crabs are cooked, the flesh is removed—the entire family helps out with this chore, although the main responsibility remains with the women, who must also take charge of the selling. Crabmeat is sold locally, which means it does not fetch much given the poverty of the communities.

The low profit margin was the reason women chose to organize into a group and start a project to improve their income.

Project Description

The Crab Processors' Group was created in June 1995 with the support of a non-governmental organization, the St. Thomas Ecological Association, AC. When the initial meetings to form the group were held, the region was hit by two cyclones that resulted in an oil spill. The

leader of the group, Guadalupe Guillén, got the women to submit claims to *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX) for damage caused to their equipment and traps, along with a claim for the days they could not work because of the disaster. Their demands were heard after they held demonstrations (blocking highways and stalling PEMEX vehicles). The company finally consented to provide food and other supplies for 127 families. They also paid the equivalent of two days of daily minimum wage¹⁹ to the women for the length of time it took to clear the highway. Women also received training in making sweets, sewing, and hair styling. They were paid 100 pesos to attend the courses.

In June 1996, the women formed a co-operative society with 17 recognized members. But other women who had participated in the mobilization efforts related to the oil spill were left out in the cold and this has been the reason for the constant conflict between the organized group, the community and the fishermen's co-operatives.

The St. Thomas Ecological Association arranged for funds totalling 20,000 pesos for the purchase of land and office. The National Fund for Solidarity Businesses, the Canadian Embassy and the DEMOS Foundation provided resources for renovating and furnishing the office, for equipment, and training material.

A proposal to work in soft-shell crab collection, which offers higher profit margins, was added to the original idea of gathering, processing and trading in crabmeat.

Crabmeat is sold at different prices for different parts : finger (80 pesos per kg), body and arm (90 pesos per kg) and claw and *jumbo* (100 pesos per kg). The process of removing the meat from the crab consists of cooking them in pressure cookers. They are then placed on tables, where the bodies are separated from their appendices, ('hands'). The upper shell is

removed and stored in plastic containers of different sizes, the body cleaned in water, and the parts refrigerated for about 12 hours before the flesh is removed from the shells (usually the next day). Packing is done in an aesthetic manner in keeping with the demands of the markets.

The processing of soft crab is strictly related to its biological cycle. Live crabs are received, weighed, and placed in a water tank. Only those with certain physical characteristics ('pre-change') are chosen. The crabs are checked every 24 hours, till they show a pink or red colour in their swimming limbs, and are then placed in a second tank. In the first tank they are fed once a day. In the second, they are checked every 8-12 hours until reddening is seen at the edges of the lateral openings ('fractures' or 'breaks'). At this point, they are moved to a third tank. The 'broken' crabs are checked every two hours to prevent them from damaging each other or eating a fellow crab as it emerges with its new, soft shell. Five minutes after they emerge, they are put in refrigeration to prevent hardening of the shell and to avoid reduction in size. Packaging is done according to size and frozen.

The co-operative has only been partially successful in both ventures—removing crabmeat, and soft crab production. It has not been able to establish non-stop production because of various problems: irregular supply of shell crab and its seasonal nature, problems of marketing and loan, organizational conflicts and technical problems. In spite of these difficulties, the installations are well-maintained and regular meetings of the group continue to be held.

Management and Training

The Ecological Association of St. Thomas has helped the group in managing financial resources, in the formation and registration of the co-operative, and in negotiations for purchasing raw material

and marketing the product. The group also obtained a registration from the Secretariat of Health. However, to meet the hygienic conditions required of such a plant, the unit will need a complete remodelling at high cost.

The group has worked together to buy material, acquire fish and sell the product. The treasurer and the president have been responsible for the management and control of money. A minor disagreement between them led the group to split, forcing the treasurer to leave and rejoin the group on three occasions.

The 17 members received training at a crab processing enterprise in Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche. Some of them visited the State of Puebla for exchanging experiences with farming micro-businesses in an exciting tourist project on community land. The group also participated in workshops on organization, self-diagnosis, leadership, self-esteem, conflict resolution, accounting, hygienic processing of food, and the management of soft crabs.

Their involvement in management, participation in courses and negotiations has meant that the group has often had to travel outside the community. This has created some domestic conflict between wives, husbands and children. Nevertheless, the women feel they have learned a lot from the experience and are now far more confident of their abilities.

Experiences and Conflicts

Problems of Internal Organization and Relationship with the Community.

The problems and conflicts that have afflicted the group during their five years of existence have been diverse in nature.

The first meeting brought together 60 women with the sole objective of improving their economic condition through a productive project. At that time, several proposals including installing a

tortilla maker, starting a pig or poultry farm, or running a snack store were mooted. But the one that seemed the most attractive to the majority was that of installing a crab processing unit in the community since this activity was one routinely carried out by women. Furthermore, they knew of a successful crab processing enterprise in Chiltepec (a nearby town) which gave them reason to think that this venture too might do well.

The process of organizing the group was slow and prolonged, and tested the patience of some women who ultimately opted out. In February 1996 the group was finally formed with 37 women. When it was formally made a co-operative society, only 17 members—those that had steadfastly stood by the group—were accepted. They had drafted and adopted strict guidelines that stipulated that any woman who missed consecutive meetings or their turn as watch persons, would have to leave the group. Women who were expelled were critical of such guidelines.

On the other hand, women who had participated in the mobilization efforts following the oil spill felt disowned. Many of them were wives of co-operative members, and the situation was ripe for confrontation between the group of women processors and the co-operative.

The hostility towards the group grew in direct proportion to the finances that poured in to start work and acquire equipment and material. Adverse comments were passed and mocking jokes did the rounds. Some people even ‘stoned’ the installations. This situation forced the group to arrange for someone to keep watch over the site at night, for fear that the equipment would be stolen or furniture damaged. Daily surveillance began in October 1997.

All these problems meant that the group gradually reduced in size. Now there are only nine women left. It is difficult to

understand their enthusiasm or fathom why they even want to go through with the proposal that has meant so much work and so little rewards in terms of monetary returns, which was the incentive to join the group in the first place.

The motives for their persistence are summed up in the following words of two members of the group:

... the community will make fun of us if we return home empty-handed. (Guadalupe, 33 years old, President of the Group of Crab Processors of Guanosolo).

...Our pride keeps us going. (Anaventura, 44 years old, member of the Group of Crab Processors of Guanosolo).

Difficulties in Obtaining Raw Material

The group had planned to buy raw material at the SSS Lagoon of Cocal and Coquito, with the objective of getting the best prices for themselves as well as for the fishermen. Nevertheless, the conflicts with the wives of members of the co-operative who were upset at being left out of the women’s group meant that the two co-operatives decided not to sell crabs to them, a position that had to be respected even by members whose wives formed part of the group of crab processors. They then went to other organizations of fishermen and were able to get the co-operative of Mecocacán (30 km away) to sell them crabs in the shell, but at a price of 10 pesos per kg, which was not cost-effective²⁰. On the other hand, limitations imposed by law prevented them from going to other suppliers since they did not have the permission from SEMARNAP to buy and sell fresh crab. They tried to obtain the permit, but it proved an impossible task since the issuing of fishing permits had been restricted.

Besides these difficulties in obtaining raw material, the group also faces problems

It is difficult to understand their enthusiasm or fathom why they even want to go through with the proposal ...

This co-operative is the only women's organization to be registered in the fisheries sector throughout the coastal zone of Tabasco, between the Tonalá and San Pedro rivers.

in selling their product for the following reasons:

- The buyers, mainly the restaurant owners of Villahermosa, do not pay in cash and are irregular paymasters;
- The group does not have enough capital, and has to wait for the buyers to pay up to be able to reinvest the money. These prolonged periods of non-productivity are difficult for the group. Moreover, they lose market opportunities during high season when buying and selling price tend to be more favourable;
- The consumers in local markets are accustomed to an inferior quality of crabmeat and will not pay more for a quality product. Selling to distant markets like Mexico City and the tourist corridor of Tulum-Cancún is complicated by difficulties in transportation, commercial relations and the financing necessary to maintain the volumes and continuous supply demanded by these markets.
- The co-operative experimented with the production of soft crab from January to May 1998. Problems developed because only half the crabs introduced in the tanks were able to make shells. The technicians consulted felt that the problem might lie in the quality of water. They advised that water be pumped from the lagoon, but this would have meant a rise in electricity costs which in turn would make production too expensive for a business of this scale.

The group also took on the seasonal processing and packaging of shrimp. They hold periodic meetings and take care of the equipment. They discuss the possibility of moving to pork processing or rearing chicken with the aim of staying together and consolidating a project that might help boost their income.

Family Organization and Cultural Aspects

Most of the women in this group of crab processors are housewives. They also participate in the traditional processing of crab by hand and buy crab, shrimp and oysters to process in their houses and sell locally. Some sell clothes or fabric. They also gather coconuts, extract the meat and dry it for selling at a later date. There are women who work at shelling oysters in fishing co-operatives of neighbouring communities, for which they receive 20 pesos per thousand shelled. Some take their children along to help them. Only one woman in the group has a formal job as an instructor in the National Institute of Adult Education.

Most of the women crab processors have not even completed primary schooling.

The women crab processors of Guanoso have not succeeded in carving out a niche for themselves in the community, nor have they been consulted in decision making, but they do have a voice, and have expressed disagreement when necessary. This has led the community to demand that the enterprise of crab processing should belong to all its inhabitants. But there are also those who feel that the group should be left alone since they have suffered so much to be able to have their enterprise, and that they deserve to be recognized for the great effort they have made. This co-operative is the only women's organization to be registered in the fisheries sector throughout the coastal zone of Tabasco, between the Tonalá and San Pedro rivers.

The family organization assigns traditional roles. It is the men who work at fishing, assisted by their eldest sons, and this is the kind of participation that receives social recognition. Women's jobs in the processing of fish and shellfish, as with fishing for self-consumption, are seen as mere 'support' activities. The average

workday for women begins at four in the morning, when they get up to prepare breakfast for their husbands, and lasts till nine at night when they wind up the day's chores by cleaning crab or shucking oysters, preparing supper and getting everything ready for the following day.

Ever since the women of Guanosolo started the processing enterprise they have had innumerable family conflicts, primarily because their project takes up precious time which those at home feel would be better utilized in domestic chores and childcare. Almost imperceptible are the signs of 'empowerment' on their faces which reflect the struggle they have endured for five years. Individually, the women have changed. They have withstood economic adversities and problems in the organization, as well as rejection by the community, including their own family members. But their processing plant has certainly given them enough satisfaction to carry out with firm resolve their plans for the future.

4.2 Women Crab Processors in the Peninsula of Atasta, Municipality of Carmen, Campeche

Background

The peninsula of Atasta is in the state of Campeche in the south-east of Mexico. The women referred to in this case study are from six *ejidos* of the peninsula, which at one time formed the heart of the Natural Protected Area of Wild Animals and Plants Lagoon of Términos (ANPFFLT). This region now produces around 72 per cent of the petroleum in the country, and occupies third place nationally in the production of gas. In addition, it is one of the most vital humid regions of Mesoamerica, part of a biological corridor, where an immensely rich variety of flora and fauna thrive.

Statistical records of INEGI mention that in 1995 the six localities under study had

a total of 9,093 inhabitants, of which 4,347 were women, representing 47 per cent of the population. The principal productive activities are: fishing, seasonal agriculture, cattle raising, pig farming, and hunting. The inhabitants of Atasta also seek short term employment in activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors in Ciudad del Carmen.

Family-based employment is widely prevalent in the peninsula. The participation of the local population in petroleum production is negligible. Men work on demand in secondary activities like brick-laying, some work as electricians, while others take up menial work. The participation of women in jobs in the petroleum sector is even lesser than that of men. Some work as cooks in natural gas plants, and others are domestic help in the houses of the petroleum industry employees who come from other states to work at PEMEX on a seasonal basis.

In 1993, the Movement of Fishers and Farmers of the Peninsula of Atasta (MPCPA) was created. They have struggled to protect the natural resources of the region and fought the polluting, anti-environmental and social ills brought on by the presence of the petroleum industry. The movement has been able to bring about changes in the culture of 'compensation'—a tradition where money is demanded in exchange for environmental damages and their impact on productive activities. The MPCPA has adopted the principled stand that the solution to the problem lies in the cause. The 'Agreement for the Sustainable Development of Atasta' was thus signed on the basis of three key issues:

- PEMEX must commit to, and comply with, legislation and environmental guidelines;
- respect the natural environment and make sustainable use of the natural resources;

Women's jobs in the processing of fish and shellfish, as with fishing for self-consumption, are seen as mere 'support' activities.

- Create a Fund for Sustainable Development of the Peninsula of Atasta (FDESPA);
- Implement the Agreement through democratic means.

The FDESPA is funded by PEMEX and the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL). Its objective is to promote productive projects that foster economic development without sacrificing any aspect of the region using the criteria of social and environmental sustainability.

Many of the projects co-ordinated by women are an extension of activities traditionally considered feminine

FDESPA grants funds to producers—both men and women—belonging to the primary sector. One has to enroll his/her name in a list to be a beneficiary. A potential member must be head of the household, should work in some productive activity, and should have spent a minimum of three years in the community. 3,956 such people obtained financing. Apart from a few exceptions, the groups financed were family-based and formed with close relatives—fathers, children, siblings and spouses—of one or two families. The head of the household was selected to represent the interest of the group.

Role of Women

The percentage of women enrolled in the list is 44.9. They play important roles, both within the group and also in project development. Women are representatives for 50 per cent of these groups. However, this has not meant equal rights and opportunities for accessing economic and natural resources, or taking the lead in decision-making in project operations. Many of the projects co-ordinated by women are an extension of activities traditionally considered feminine—backyard chicken and pork farming, for example. Alternatives which explore anything other than this traditional sexual division of labour are rare.

Their integration, however insignificant, into this productive stream has transformed the daily lives of the women of Atasta. Because of their incorporation into the projects financed by the FDESPA women now, besides doing their domestic chores, also participate in chicken, pork and cattle breeding. They value this as a positive experience, especially because they believe they have tried to reconcile the diverse duties that the two work places—home and the outdoors—involve.

In spite of Atasta being an important fishing region, there were relatively few fishery-related projects financed by the FDESPA. Of these, only one, the processing of fish through dry-salting, was co-ordinated by a woman head of household.

Women's participation in the MPCPA began with the environmental problems caused by the petroleum industry, and the resultant deterioration in the quality of life. There was a scarcity of products that meet basic needs, incidences of pollution-related illnesses, decline in fish and agricultural production, and few opportunities to find work outside their realm of experience.

Participation in the activities of the FDESPA, and others related to the 'Agreement for Sustainable Development' created openings in the community to argue for, and reach an agreement on, the intervention of women. This made women rethink their political and social roles which also meant a certain degree of conflict in every home and family.

The women gave in to the demands of the movement and desisted from pushing their own interests. As a result, the projects and actions do not take into consideration the subordinate position of women in the community. Nor are the women allowed to reflect on or question this inequality.

The group of advisors and the technical team that supports MPCPA had not particularly stressed on women's participation, but the democratic process of election saw to the natural inclusion of the 'weaker sex' in this body. This is how some of the MPCPA in the region put it:

*... Women have always participated, but not as much as now. The movement has awakened trust and they have stood up for their rights. This social process generated a revolution within each family, in each community, which has resulted in women transcending traditional roles to take part in the struggle ...*²²

In the *ejido* communities of the peninsula of Atasta, as in a majority of those communities that have an agricultural economy, women's roles are not valued, not even by the women themselves. This fact is revealed in the list of producers, where 87 per cent of the women registered are described as housewives, even though they have always participated in productive activities of the unpaid kind.

Characteristics of Women's Participation

In Atasta, fishing varies according to the species and the period of harvest. Fishing, mostly by men, for scalefish is an intense year-round activity and takes place in protected waters. The most important species are swordfish, whitefish, tilapia and sea bass. Occasionally, when fishing takes place in the lagoons, women as well as children older than 12 also participate. Men also work at dressing²³ and marketing the fish, frequently with help from women.

The catch is sold in Ciudad del Carmen, Mexico City and Puebla via intermediaries. Stocks that do not meet the terms for sale, mostly on account of size, are consumed by the families.

Capture

The division of work in this region is strictly along gender lines. Women's participation in capture activities is restricted to estuaries and inshore trawling. They are not seen in medium- or large-scale fishing.

Processing

Women participate in processing in various ways, depending on the product. We will discuss their role in each of the three ways in which crab processing is organized:

(a) Family work

The main period for catching crab is from December to March. Activities involved include : getting the bait, preparing the trap, catching crab, selling crab in the shell, and processing crabs that are not of commercial size. The last involves various procedures: boiling the crab in salt water, shelling, washing, extracting and selling the meat. All activities prior to boiling the crab are done by men, and they control the earnings. The shelling of crab (not of commercial size) is women's responsibility and the rest of the family is roped in to help. The earnings obtained from the sale of crabmeat goes to the women and is used primarily to meet family expenses. During crab season, the woman's workday stretches from four in the morning—the hour that their husbands leave to fish—to late in the night, after all the members of the family retire for the day.

Women who dedicate themselves to processing crabs in their houses do not generally have the infrastructure for storage and refrigeration and are forced to sell the crab to intermediaries (*coyotes*) who pay them prices one-third of the commercial value. Thus, all the effort that goes into the job is devalued.

In the ejido communities of the peninsula of Atasta...women's roles are not valued, not even by the women themselves.

(b) Piece-work

Some women, whose spouses or fathers are not fishermen, are employed by other families to remove the meat of the crab, de-head the shrimp and dry the fish.

(c) Crab processing plant²⁴

In 1977, one year after the FDESPA was created, the difficult political climate in the Peninsula of Atasta spurred the Regional Office for Fisheries Development—a part of the SEMARNAP—to authorize the establishment of a crab processing plant in the *ejido* of Atasta. The women believed what they were promised by the Fisheries Development authorities:

... You women don't worry. The plant is authorized and we, who are part of the government, are going to make the investment and you are going to participate as associates.

They never kept their word. The workers at the plant never came to know who the owners were, but it was rumoured that the governor of the state of Campeche at that time, Salomón Azar, and his associates, one from the Yucatan and one who was originally from Cuba, were involved.

The promise to create job opportunities for the locals was not fulfilled either, given that people were brought from outside the region to work in the plant. The total number of women workers in the plant was 56, of whom only 18 were from *ejidos* within the Atasta Peninsula; others came from neighbouring areas like Chiltepec and Frontera in the state of Tabasco.

- Profile of women workers: A majority of women workers in the plant were single mothers between 17 and 20 years of age. They did not last long because of the extended workdays.

The workers who came from other towns lived in houses given to them by the company which were located within the premises of the plant, and went home only on Sundays.

- Work conditions: The workers did not sign any kind of contract when employment commenced. The only things the management asked them to produce was their birth certificate and an application seeking employment. The intensity of work varied through the year; there were lean periods when fewer workers were contracted. The salary they received varied according to the work they did. Local women who only worked eight hours (from seven in the morning to three in the afternoon) were reportedly paid a wage of 22 pesos per day—a little less than the minimum wage. In order to earn that amount, they had to process a minimum of 15 pounds of crab per day. Otherwise they would be paid by piece-work—by the number of pounds processed.

Some women worked exclusively at shelling, which is the first part of the process and consists of removing the pincers and shell of the crab. They were paid by volume, using a measure called *tara*²⁵, which comes in many sizes, and were required to shell a minimum of 30 *taras* per day. The person we spoke to calculated that the *tara* used as measure by the company could accommodate around 40 crabs in their shell. This activity began at five in the morning and ended at one in the afternoon.

Gloves are not provided for workers doing this job. As a result, the hands of the women hurt and sometimes even bleed. Since one has to work very fast, the pincers tend to grab and pierce the fingers. They got only half an hour to eat and rest. No female worker received medical insurance, nor did they have the right to bonus or vacation.

Gloves are not provided for workers doing this job. As a result, the hands of the women hurt and sometimes even bleed.

Conflicts

The positive experience of the women who had participated in the MPCPA inspired some of those working in the crab processing plant to get organized, to insist on better working and living conditions.

One group of women called a strike to demand better working conditions and profit distribution. The struggle did not last long and they achieved little. The first action they took was to join a union. Later, they demanded to know the names of the plant owners, a closely guarded secret.

The movement was defeated and the strike unsuccessful, as many leaders were fired. The plant continued functioning in Atasta until mid-1999 and later shifted to Ciudad del Carmen.

The MPCPA movement also weakened. But without a doubt, this movement served to highlight the huge disadvantages that women lived with in the fisheries sector of Mexico. The task of continuing the movement to develop greater gender equity in fishing communities has fallen to the hands of its protagonists.

4.3 Rural Aquaculture in the San Ignacio Ejido, Viesca, Coahuila²⁶

Background

This project has been implemented in the San Ignacio *ejido* municipality of Viesca, in the state of Coahuila. It is 60 km south-east of the city of Torreón, the capital of the state and the financial hub of the northern part of the country. The community has 200 houses and a population of 1,450. Their main occupations are cattle, goat and chicken rearing, farming for alfalfa, sorghum, chilli and *cantaloupe*, seasonal agriculture of corn and bean, as well as the production of wood charcoal, and more recently, aquaculture. These activities are linked to

each other, and form part of a diversified production plan in the *ejido*. A bulk of the income comes from daily wage work in agriculture because of the major trend in migration of people between the ages of 20 and 40. The permanent population of the area is mostly made up of women, youth and the elderly, all of who take on field labour while the migrants travel to centres in the north of the country and to the border cities of USA to find employment.

The *ejido* is located in the semi-arid ecological zone of the Chihuahua desert, on the Mexican Altiplano. Water is scarce and climate changes can be extreme. Water comes from the highly-valued surface and subterranean runoffs. Use of water is strictly rationed: the priority is human consumption, then ranching, agriculture and finally aquaculture. There are severe problems related with the loss of ground cover, (mostly made up of scrub, catkin, prickly pear cactus, mesquite and oregano) and with the high rate of soil erosion and salinization as a consequence of overexploitation of these resources.

The survival of this *ejido* is dependent on the various ways the desert has been put to use. The predominant occupation, that of agriculture by irrigation and livestock rearing, respond to the needs of the regional market. These together with harvesting, hunting, aquaculture and backyard animal husbandry, are the reasons the economy sustains itself despite food shortage. These activities also provide fodder, medicinal products and material for house construction. Seasonal agriculture is the least-favoured since it is dependant on the meagre rainfall; however there is a tremendous potential in this activity when conditions are favourable.

Given that even a combination of all these activities is still not enough to meet the needs of the family, the population is

The permanent population of the area is mostly made up of women, youth and the elderly, all of who take on field labour while the migrants travel to centres in the north of the country and to the border cities of USA to find employment.

forced to seek alternative sources of income. As a result, there is a tendency to send off people of working age, particularly the men, to neighbouring cities/USA on a short-term or permanent basis.

Aquaculture has been introduced in this region to contribute towards improving the living conditions of people through high-protein food production and generating better income. It might also encourage people to continue to stay in their community and not migrate.

Project Description

The production unit consists of a semi-intensive polyculture system to increase the weight of tilapia, catfish and carp. At present, they are grown in a single six-month cycle per year, during which an average weight of 450 grams per organism can be reached. The fish is fed both indirectly and directly—in the former case through the organic fertilization of water, and in the latter through domestic and agricultural by-products.

In order to get this project started, the irrigation infrastructure of the *ejido* was used. This consists of two hydraulic tubs with a capacity of 3000 cubic metres. With a few innovations the tubs continued to serve their original function of regulating the flow and storage of water while simultaneously being used as tanks for fish farming. This helped use water efficiently, without wastage, while diversifying production. Each of the tanks is also furnished with a wire mesh fence, a hold, a cold storage plant, an electric mill for meat, two trawling nets, two gill-nets and two *cuchara* nets, as well as tools for processing the fish.

Structure of the Group

The group is made up of 17 women belonging to the *ejido*. Their average age

is the mid-forties. For the most part they are married (14) although three of them are either single, widowed or divorced.(Table 8 and 9).

The women live in nuclear families with an average of three members per family. This project benefits a total of 53 people. The husbands/partners carry out farming activities with the aid of agricultural day-labourers and migrate to the USA during lean periods. The long dry season is the time when there is a decline in job opportunities. The women support their families at these times by contributing their income.

Table 8: Age composition of women in the group

| Age Group | No. | % |
|-----------|-----|-------|
| 15-19 | 1 | 5.88 |
| 25-29 | 3 | 17.65 |
| 35-39 | 3 | 17.65 |
| 40-44 | 4 | 23.53 |
| 45-49 | 2 | 23.53 |
| 60-64 | 2 | 11.76 |
| 65-79 | 1 | 5.88 |
| 70 and up | 1 | 5.88 |

Table 9 : Level of education of women in the group

| Literacy Level | No. | % |
|---------------------|-----|-------|
| Literate | 15 | 88.22 |
| Illiterate | 2 | 11.76 |
| No formal education | 2 | 11.76 |
| Primary | 14 | 82.35 |
| Junior High | 1 | 5.88 |

Apart from participating in the aquaculture project, women also take charge of farming activities. Their responsibilities in caring for livestock are twofold: managing the extensive grazing lands and overseeing the backyard animal

Table 10: Production from aquaculture farm
(Ignacio Zaragoza, Viesca Municipality, Coahuila)

| Species | 1997 | | 1998 | | 1999 | | Observations |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| | Stock (organisms) | Yield (kilograms) | Stock (organisms) | Yield (kilograms) | Stock (organisms) | Yield (kilograms) | |
| TILAPIA (<i>O. niloticus</i> and <i>O. aurea</i>) | 3,000 | | 2,500 | | 1,600 | | In 1997 there was a natural phenomenon (snow), high level of mortality in the region, and little growth amongst other organisms |
| CARP (<i>Cyprinus carpio</i> <i>Specularis</i> , <i>C. carpio rubrofruscus</i> and <i>Ctenopharing odon idellus</i>) | 5,500 | | 1,000 | | 6,000 | | |
| CATFISH (<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>) | 500 | | 500 | | 2,800 | | |
| TOTAL ORGANISMS | 9,000 | 150 | 4,000 | 550 | 10,400 | 1,820 | |

husbandry. In the formal labour market they are employed in the *maquilas* (assembly plants). They also run businesses from their houses or work in the market.

The principal money generating activities of the 17 women are as follows: five work in a textile *maquila*, five do small businesses (two sell cow and goat milk

locally, one manufactures and sells cleaning products, another sells clothes door-to-door, while the last runs a small rural store), and seven of them obtain a major portion of their income through the sale of the fish from the project. Four of them also count on the support of a government programme called PROGRESA.

Table 11: Institutional support received by the project

| Institution | Kind of support | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| SEMARNAP / PRODERS | Infrastructure | \$ 23,250.00 | | |
| SEMARNAP / RURAL PROGRAM | Technical Assistance and brood donation | 9,000 larvae | 4,000 larvae | 10,400 brood |
| MUNICIPALITY OF VIESCA | Equipment | | \$ 9,000.00 | |
| DIF-SALTILLO | Equipment | | \$12,766.00 | |
| FAO | Operational expenses | | | \$ 33,000.00 |
| CIMO (Integral Quality and Modernization) | Training | | | \$ 1,000.00 |
| ORGANIZED WOMEN'S GP. | Workers | Labour | Labour | Labour |

A
recognition
of the productive
potential of women
and the successful
execution of
aquaculture projects
has led to the start
of several
government
programmes.

In each cases the incomes vary. The *maquila* workers earn between 1,280 and 2,000 pesos per month on the basis of one or two month contracts. The income obtained through the aquaculture project is 280 pesos in cash or 28 kilograms of fish per year per member. This is a secondary source of income for most of the members; however, it is the only one for three of them. The income of the women working in trade are variable.

Results

Table 10 shows the results obtained so far. Table 11 shows the institutional support received.

Conclusions

As with many other projects, women get into aquaculture fortuitously. Their participation is a result of a poor cash flow situation created by the absence of men when they migrate or pass away. Ignacio Zaragoza *ejido* is a case in point. A majority of women here find jobs outside the house to meet their financial needs.

However, aquaculture projects do not take off with the express purpose of promoting women's participation. It is the absence of men or the impossibility of sustaining existing projects that has forced the government to include women in the promotion and execution of these programmes.

Women's response to these projects has been positive. Results obtained have also been good. Women have shown that they can play an important role in attending to the immediate need of providing for their families as well as contributing to household income by taking up various productive activities.

A recognition of the productive potential of women and the successful execution of aquaculture projects has led to the start

of several government programmes. These programmes consider rural aquaculture an activity that offers great possibilities for community development, particularly of women, and, therefore, have directed resources specifically towards this.

4.4 Migrant Tabascan Women Crabmeat Processors of North Carolina, United States of America²⁷

The migration of Mexican men and women to USA has been a regular feature since the end of the last century, but not for those who come from the Mexican south-east, specifically from the coastal areas of the state of Tabasco. A majority of Tabascan women, who initiated the migration to North Carolina, came from the municipalities of Paraíso and Jalapa de Méndez while others came from Comalcalco, Nacajuca and Cárdenas.

The migration process is linked to the setting up of a company—*Mariscos Boca de México* (Boca Seafood of Mexico) in Chiltepec, municipality of Paraíso. It started in 1986 with the objective of exporting fresh and natural crabmeat to USA.

The migrant crabmeat processors say that most of the employees of *Mariscos Boca de México* come from *la ribera* (the strand) Jalpa de Méndez because the women of Chiltepec no longer wanted to work for the company after it became *gringo* owned.

The migration process was initiated in 1989 when 24 women crabmeat processors who used to work for *Mariscos Boca de México* decided to look for work in North Carolina, USA. The first women migrants were strongly criticized in the Chiltepec community and accused of taking to prostitution. Some even thought that the migrants would never return home. But when they came back after the first

season, pockets full of money, confidence in the migratory option grew.

Women work from November to March in the Chiltepec plant, and when the season ends they migrate to North Carolina for the April to November period. The five companies in North Carolina that contract the Tabascan women for crabmeat processing are: Oriental (the biggest one, contracting up to 150 women), Elizabeth City, Fairfield, Mattamuskeet, and Windsor. It is estimated that since 1989, some 1,000 Tabascan women have made the journey across the border to work in the crabmeat processing plants of North Carolina.

There are also other crabmeat processing plants in the US like Captain Neil's Seafood, where the work environment is less stressful than the plants where the Tabascan women work.

Contracting Migrant Women

In 1989, authorized by the owner of *Mariscos Boca de México*, a US agent initiated the process of contracting crabmeat processors to work in American plants. This is done with the aid of women workers already employed by such plants, and who tend to rope in others from their own municipality whenever there is a demand.

The hiring process depends upon the requirements of each company. The selection of employees is based on their ability to work efficiently—according to the contract they should be able to process at least 24 pounds daily. At the same time, an employee should be able to produce a birth certificate, passport, and money for the visa. Potential employees should also have the resources to pay the expenses for their travel and stay and must come recommended by someone recognized as a trustworthy authority by *Mariscos Boca de México*. Finally, they must promise good behaviour.

Plants arrange a brief 2 to 3 day training to teach workers how to cut the crab with a knife and how to select the meat. Men are also hired by the plants, not to process crabmeat, but to take on physically demanding tasks such as boiling the crab and tipping it out onto the tables.

The companies usually provide insurance to the crabmeat processors, but do not take care of medical or visa expenses, nor do they pay their employees air fare to and from North Carolina.

Living Conditions in the Communities of Paraíso, Tabasco

The lifestyles of Mexican women crabmeat processors vary according to their financial status, and the work they do at home.

According to the women crabmeat processors working in the Chiltepec plant:

...here we go in at 3 or 4 am. We don't eat breakfast in the morning. They pay us 800 pesos once in two weeks... (Carmen)

...during summer, we get up at 2 am to be in by 3 am. We don't even have breakfast in the morning. We leave the plant between 1 and 2 pm, or according to how much crab there is, sometimes we would leave between 4 and 7 pm so as to have the Sundays free. Here the people prefer to get up early because of the heat. You see the plant only has fans, and the heat in the afternoon is unbearable. (Andrea)

Such working conditions combined with the responsibility of completing household chores prevent women from bonding with other workers outside the plant or with others in the community.

Most of the women crabmeat processors are married with children. Their schooling

It is estimated that since 1989, some 1,000 Tabascan women have made the journey across the border to work in the crabmeat processing plants of North Carolina.

...the main reasons that led them to migrate were: to supplement family income, to prevent their children quitting school, and to bring about an improvement in the quality of life at home.

barely covers a few grades of primary education. The women say that the main reasons that led them to migrate were: to supplement family income, to prevent their children quitting school, and to bring about an improvement in the quality of life at home. Employment opportunities in these communities are extremely limited and poorly-paid, well below what the labour market in North Carolina offers.

While some women made the decision to migrate on their own, others discussed it with their husbands or parents. Family ties and social networking play an important role in the decision to migrate. Information passed on through relatives and friends in the community makes it possible to check out for oneself the advantages of this type of work and gives women the confidence to make the move.

...My mum has been travelling 10 years now, and she took more people with her. I have two brothers and a sister-in-law up there...(Chuncha)

All the migrant women work two shifts when at home—one at the plant and the other when they get home. They arrive home from work, cook, wash clothes, clean the house, and help the children with their schoolwork. Their day usually ends after 10 or 11 pm. They get little co-operation from their husbands or sons, but help is forthcoming from daughters or female relatives.

In several instances, women also do their bit to contribute to family income through such means as selling food. During their stay in USA, the husband and others in the family (daughters-in-law, mothers, sisters-in-law, or older daughters) assume the responsibilities of the house and children. They also sometimes pay a close friend or acquaintance to take care of these tasks.

Family-related Problems of Migrants

For married women, the major problems arising from their long absences from home include facing their husband's ire over the abandonment of the children, infidelity of the spouse, and an increase in their drinking habits.

...I don't travel any more because of my children and because my husband, Antonio, doesn't want me to. In the first year he told me that he wanted me to go, but when I was there he told me that this should be the last year... (Aurelia)

...When I returned, I found that my husband was always drinking. He would drink for a month and they'd put him in jail. ...leave me with the children. It's like he doesn't love them... (Antonia)

...My son quit school and became a drug addict. Now he's in prison... (Aurelia)

Migrant Life in USA

Living conditions in North Carolina vary from plant to plant. Housing and services provided are inadequate and are based on sharing accommodation, sometimes in large groups. Some migrants rent rooms, but most are housed in trailers where eight to 10 people share the living space. They eat in community dining rooms where they must stand in long queues to get food. Their recreation consists of group outings supervised by the company. Some companies do not let their workers go beyond boundaries determined by them.

...Up there, it's like a prison. You have to line up. There are 140 people waiting to eat. There are only four televisions to watch...(Francisca)

...We would go out on Sunday. They would take us in groups

*of 15 to 20 to go shopping...
(Virginia)*

Living conditions such as these simultaneously foster solidarity and mutual support as well as competition and conflict. Often women form groups to efficiently complete chores like cooking, cleaning the rooms, taking care of the sick/depressed colleagues. Conflicts arise from close proximity and difficult living conditions—fights over use of bathrooms, daily chores etc, while competition is an aspect of productivity at work, specially in piece-work.

Long work days, whether in the Chiltepec Tabasco plant or in North Carolina, are exhausting for the women. However, monetary compensation makes all the difference. In North Carolina the pay is by piece-work and varies between US\$1.28 and US\$1.60 per pound of crabmeat. Some women notch up to 60 pounds a day and earn an average of US\$1,000 every two weeks. In Mexico, they are paid a monthly salary of 800 pesos, the equivalent of US\$80. But it is important to remember that working outside one's country requires one to shell out sizeable sums in rent and food (approximately US\$40 and US\$21 a week, respectively), cover health expenses, and pay for the travel and the accompanying paperwork.

In spite of the difficult working conditions, many migrant women prefer to work in USA, not only because of better remuneration, but because staying away from home has given them a greater degree of independence, self-esteem, and empowerment.

*...Yes, my situation has improved.
I feel good. Before, we were poor.
I have succeeded... (Chuncha)*

*...My husband wouldn't take me
into consideration on any issue.
Now, I've told him that if he doesn't
shape up he can leave, but I'm*

*going to stay in the United States.
I achieved my goal in spite of what
my husband says... (Chuncha)*

*...I feel good about the work
because I have learned it and now
I teach it to others. (Aurelia)*

4.5 Women Fishpackers from the Yucatan Coast²⁸

General Description

This study examines the reasons why women workers in fish packing wish to reconstruct their identity. The study analyzes the relationship between the new roles they have assumed and the social obligations and duties they inherit by virtue of being women.

Location

Progreso, with its sheltered port of Yucaltepén, is a leading centre of production for the fishing industry in the state of Yucatán. Currently it has 24 fish and shellfish packing plants. 80 per cent of seafood produced from the entire Yucatán coast goes through these plants for processing and later, sale. Approximately 1,000 workers (50 per cent men and 50 per cent women) are employed in packing plants to clean, de-scale, de-bone, fillet, weigh and pack products such as grouper, red snapper, *corbina*, tilapia, *carito*, *sierra*, or shellfish and octopus—processed intensively over a period of eight months—and to a lesser extent, shrimp, lobster and white conch.

Context

Most women who work in the fish and shellfish packing plants and freezer units in Progreso and Yucalpetén come from a place called Ciénaga de Progreso.

The *yucateca* women share important socio-economic and cultural backgrounds because of their participation in similar work.

*In spite of
the difficult
working conditions,
the majority of
migrant women
express a preference
for working in
the USA.*

The women of Ciénaga lead life styles that are distinctly different from the community, in that they seem to enjoy a greater degree of independence than the other women around them.

The women of Ciénaga²⁹ have distinct life histories. Some are immigrants who would prefer to forget life in their home towns. They say they came to the port with relatives hoping for a better life since their husbands or fathers no longer earned a salary as *henequén*³⁰ workers. Therefore, while men tried to find work as fishermen or learn a new profession, the women became the principal support for the family by finding employment in packing plants.

There are also daughters of fishermen who were born and grew up in the port. Their mothers were domestic help, laundry workers or labourers in packing plants. Despite such different antecedents there is something that unites the Ciénaga women. A majority got into bad marriages, and do not receive alimony or aid from their ex-partners to raise their children. Their common history of painful pasts sets these often single women apart from the rest of society. The women of Ciénaga lead lifestyles that are distinctly different from the community, in that they seem to enjoy a greater degree of independence than the other women around them. Nonetheless a certain social stigma has come to be attached with their lives.

Working Conditions

The women labourers sign a contract to work through the year. They receive a fixed salary that varies little from one packing plant to another and is equal to, or a little more than, the minimum wage of approximately 32.5 pesos (US\$3) per day. In the months of high production—octopus season—they also receive a bonus based on the volume produced. The bonus is not calculated on an individual basis but by table, that is, by the achievement of each group.

The salaries are not deducted when there is no work, but to make up for this ‘generosity’ they work as many hours as

necessary when the boats arrive full and the warehouses are flooded with produce. During peak season, they are on their feet 24 hours with little rest. Working hours vary, and the women do not get home at a fixed time—it can be anywhere between 12 noon and 3 am.

Conditions at all packing companies are the same: strong smells, crowded spaces marked by few divisions, usually surrounded by storage areas and refrigerated chambers where there are always piles of whole or filleted fish or shellfish. Women work around tables, while men do the lifting and carrying. Men also do the filleting in one of the cold storage units, while women remove bones and manage the shellfish processing.

The atmosphere at work is happy and cordial. Women listen to music and chat among themselves, as well as banter with male co-workers and supervisors as they work. Conversation is liberally sprinkled with dirty jokes and *double entendres*. Nevertheless the pace of work is furious—not even in this informal environment can anybody afford to become too distracted from their work.

Intervals for rest are the best times to gauge relationships that are established at work. One begins to appreciate the role of the workplace by the way in which the women bond with each other.

Conduct that might fetch admonishment in other places is accepted as natural in these plants and often the friendships here extend to the world outside. The women go out for movies or to the pub for beer with friends from the factory.

Participation of Women in Formal and Informal Spaces

The women workers of Cienaga participate little in the socio-cultural activities of the community such as parties, political campaigns and people’s

movements. One of the reasons for this marginalization is their hours of work. Also, the workers tend not to get involved because they are 'different', and therefore face rejection. The fact that they do not belong to 'traditional' families is held against them.

While women leaders—conventional mothers and wives—in the community get together to raise issues concerning the betterment of their lot, these workers are not invited to participate in such struggles.

Family

The prolonged absences of the women leave them with little choice but to entrust the care of their children to other members of the family. This has affected, in great measure, the relationship and emotional ties between mother and children.

In spite of this, women fishworkers exercise the kind of control over their offspring that would more conventionally be expected of the man of the house. They make the decisions, they determine what food is eaten and how money is spent. They are also figures of rigid authority, strict specially with their daughters who are made to carry out a good portion of the chores. Their power is based on their role as providers rather than on any emotional bond arising from their role as biological mothers.

This situation is the same in the houses of married women workers, whose fishermen husbands are constantly absent from their homes. Control over the family—the money, the schooling, granting permission for activities outside the house—rests with the women.

It is mainly the daughters who do the bulk of the chores. They cook, clean, iron, and attend to their brothers' needs. Boys participate to a lesser degree in these jobs, but where there are no older

sisters or where the boy is the older sibling, they too are made to do some of the routine work, like house cleaning, or doing the laundry.

Conflict and Empowerment

The lives of the women are full of contradictions that provoke conflict within their families, with the community and even within themselves. The social stigma attached to them and criticism of their activities and conduct generates within them feelings of guilt and low self-esteem. However, this does not spur them to transform their lifestyle, which is not without gratification.

They do not fit in with the community's idea of what a woman should be and this leads to clashes with the 'legitimate' classes. The independence and freedom that these women workers enjoy, permits them to be part of social set-ups where they establish new relationships with people who are not from the immediate neighbourhood. Another cause for confrontation is the kind of romantic relationships they form—they get involved with men who are, in several cases, married, and who visit them openly and spend time with their families. A third reason is related to their lifestyle and the way in which they educate their children. On the one hand, they would like their children to study beyond secondary school. However, a daughter's education is not deemed as important as the son's. They are not only entrusted with chores, but also encouraged to settle into matrimony at the earliest in spite of the fact that they themselves are products of broken homes.

The women have ambivalent feelings about their daughters following in their footsteps and joining the workforce. They do acknowledge that it is their job that is instrumental in fulfilling their individual as well as family needs. It also enabled them to distance themselves from extreme

*Women
fishworkers exercise
the kind of control
over their offspring
that would more
conventionally be
expected of the man
of the house.*

The power of these women workers is a direct result of the rupture of their traditional roles as mothers/wives...

poverty and to be a 'somebody'. But it meant being different from the rest of the community for which reason they face ostracisation; their odd working hours have also led to dysfunctional families.

There is also the knowledge that they do not conform to notions of the 'ideal woman' as defined by the society around them. They too accept that a real woman is one who embroiders, sews, has a husband, is obedient, and endures everything life throws at her. But they distance themselves from this kind of existence, leading separate lives, believing in free love and being disdainful of the conventional family set-up.

It is better to be a woman who stays at home but...I think if I did that I would die.

As for the impact of work on gender identity, our investigations revealed that the fact that these women share the same kind of work experience and family life makes it possible for them to construct a common identity, a 'we'—a term that appears repeatedly in their discourse. Their collective existence, when linked to their work, lends them a distinct gender identity. Even so, this identity is riddled with contradictions which came across clearly in their conversations with us—they perceive themselves to be empowered women with inferior identities.

The power of these women workers is a direct result of the rupture of their traditional roles as mothers/wives, which paradoxically, instead of reinforcing their presence in the public sphere, has done the opposite. It has weakened their ties with other women and made it impossible to find anything in common with them or establish any kind of solidarity.

The control that these women have over their body and time, and their role as decision makers in the family affirms that work has granted them power, and that

this power has played an important role in the construction of a new gender identity. However, this new identity has neither broken down the rigid walls of convention nor has it modified the foundations that sustain a socially legitimate view of gender.

4.6 Cases of Women Co-operative Members, Commercial Vendors, Concessionaires and Business women³¹

4.61 Member of the Huasteca Veracruz Co-operative, La Laja

Maria del Carmen has been a member of the co-operative since 1986. She is originally from Cabo Rojo in the municipality of Tampico el Alto. She is 36 years old, and has completed two years of primary school. She is a widow with three children, a girl and two boys aged 18, 16, and 3 respectively. She works in the oyster industry, as an employee in a store and also as a housekeeper.

She fishes for oysters twice a week and contracts one person to help in the task. She shells oysters from 7 am to 5 pm. During lean periods in fishing, she helps in a small general store that is owned by her *compadre* (godfather of her child), where she works from 8 am to 6 pm. She also works as a housekeeper, washing and ironing clothes. Her daughter is a housekeeper and her 16-year-old son studies in high school. Her mother lives with her and helps with the chores and also shares some of the expenses with the help of money given by her other children.

Maria's income is minimal. From oyster fishing she earns approximately 50 pesos a week. The co-operative pays 35 pesos for a sack of oysters. From this amount, she has to pay 20 pesos for the hired labour. Some money also goes towards expenses for gas. The maximum Maria manages to gather is two sacks a week.

At the general store, she earns 35 pesos a week if she works full-time. The shelling of oysters is part of her work as a co-operative member, and she receives no payment for this. But sometimes, she shells oysters for other people who contract women to do this kind of work. They pay six pesos a sack.

When her husband died, she requested the co-operative to grant her his co-operative rights. This request was considered by the assembly, and since she had no other means of survival, it was accepted. She was the first woman to enter the co-operative as a full member. Other women in similar situations have since done the same, and now there are more women affiliated with the body. The co-operative has been divided on this issue, since there are some men who do not want women members and are hostile towards Maria. They worry that the co-operative will accept more women and believe it will be a bad move to do so, since fishing is considered man's work.

Maria does not own her own boat or fishing equipment. She goes oyster fishing with other members with whom she shares the gasoline expenses. She does not use clamps because they are very heavy. She hands over her entire produce to the co-operative and sometimes keeps a small portion for her family. She could try and obtain credit for boat and equipment—she is not limited by the fact that she is a woman because as a co-operative member she has the same rights as any of the male members. The difficulty in applying for a loan stems from the fact that her financial condition is precarious. However, the co-operative has transactions with the Banrural bank and Maria hopes to obtain a loan on reasonable terms for a small boat.

She participates in and exercises her right to vote at the co-operative board meetings that are held every three months. She feels that it is very important for jobs to be

specifically created for women since oyster fishing is a very difficult job for them. Maybe other activities related to the capture of oysters would be fine, although she is not sure exactly which ones.

4.62 Fish Concessionaire of Villa Sánchez Magallanes, Tabasco

Hortensia is one of the three fishing *concessionaires* of Puerto de Sanchez Magallanes. She owns her own equipment and has the capital needed for marine fish capture. She is the wife of a fisherman who is member of the Santa Ana Fishing Production Co-operative Society (SCPP). 36-year-old Hortensia originally hails from a neighbourhood town, Las Flores, in the municipality of Cardenas. She only studied as far as third grade and got married at the age of 17 and came to live in Villa Sánchez Magallanes 20 years ago. She has four children (two girls and two boys); the three older children have finished primary school and help with the *concessionaire* work. The youngest, a seven-year-old daughter, does not attend school because of problems with her eyesight.

Hortensia has worked five years as a *concessionaire*. Her husband could not be one, since he is a member of the Santa Ana co-operative. With the aid of a friend, she obtained her fishing permits and made arrangements for the products to be transported to Mexico City. At present she owns five boats and four motors. All the boats are five years old and she does not have any loans to be paid off. The *concessionaire* job has brought her good money, but she also works very hard. She is often up till late in the night arranging for ice for the boats which arrive at about 1 am.

In Sánchez Magallanes, the government has many loan schemes for co-operatives, but they have not taken advantage of this. Hortensia points out that government

loans have helped her in her work as a *cessionaire*. She earns between 12,000 to 15,000 pesos per month, owns two plots of land with houses (which she has inherited), as well as her fishing equipment.

Hortensia points out that she has serious problems with male *cessionaires* who buy the catch without a permit and evade taxes. Conditions are fiercely competitive because illegal buyers swarm the landing sites to avail first rights to the catch. Hortensia has complained to the Federal Authority for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA³²) and to SEMARNAP, but the inspectors from these agencies are equally corrupt.

4.63 Vendor of Fish Products from Frontera, Tabasco

Norma Guadalupe is 22 years old and has a one-year-old daughter. She completed her fourth semester of high school through distance education. She is originally from Frontera and does not much care for either this port or Villahermosa, Tabasco. She has thought about signing up in the Mexican Army. She has also studied to be a programme analyst.

Norma markets fish products. She works in a store where her schedule is not rigorous—she helps around the store, attends to clients looking for fish and can also pack and sell truck loads of the catch. She has been a licensed seller for two or three years and is now trying for permission to sell bass, tilapia, *bandera* and shrimp. She shares the store space with her mother who is the secretary and founder of a fishing organization. The shop serves as a storage and retail outlet and Norma's products are sold in Mexico City, Puebla, Jalapa and Tlacotalpan, Veracruz.

Norma started work when she was eight years old, helping her mother who worked as a *cessionaire* and commercial

vendor. She, therefore, knows the business well and is considering working as a *cessionaire*, since it will give her greater autonomy and she will not have to depend on the fishers to obtain the invoice. This in turn would save her the periodic squabbles with institutions like the PROFEPA and eliminate the risk of being accused of selling illegal products. She will also be able to make more profit. But the permits are expensive, up to 3,000 pesos.

Norma Guadalupe explains that she does not receive a salary for her work. On good days she earns 150 pesos a day. When sales are low, however, she gets very little and has to live off her savings. In Frontera, the unemployment situation is grim and bars and prostitution have given the place a seedy atmosphere. There is no effective police vigil, the roads are in bad condition and the port is gradually deteriorating.

4.64 Member of the SSS 'Los Claros' in Villa Sánchez Magallanes, Tabasco

Olivia has been a member of the SSS 'Los Claros' since 1995. She is 34 years old and a native of this community. To be a member has advantages and disadvantages. As a woman member of the association she receives the benefits that are granted to all members. However, she will not be eligible for pension when she retires because she will not meet the age requirement or have the seniority. She had earlier worked as a secretary in the Chamber of Seafood Conservation. Her present work is that of administrative secretary in the triple 'S', and she is well acquainted with the workings of a fishing organization.

Olivia's day begins at 7 am with breakfast. She then takes her daughter to school and comes back to clean up the house. Her work in the fishing organization keeps her busy between 9.30 or 10 am to 5.30 or 6 pm. When she returns home, she tends to her poultry and her pig.

Norma remembers that she started her work when she was eight years old, helping her mother who worked as a concessionaire and a commercial vendor...

Domestic chores such as preparing supper take up her time and later she entertains herself watching television until 10.30 pm. The family income is dependent on the 800 pesos per month that she earns at the triple 'S'. She also supplements her income through other means—she breeds turkey for domestic consumption and earns a tidy profit from the annual sale of a pig.

Olivia says that when she was voted by the General Assembly to be incorporated as a member of the triple 'S', she found easy acceptance among most of the members. She thinks the reason there was no opposition is because she had worked in the association for a long time and she did not have personal problems with any member. Although she is only the administrative secretary, she is familiar with the way things work in the organization and knows that it will be very difficult for her to become a member of the governing body of the triple 'S'.

Olivia says that she will never marry any of her fellow co-operative members, not because they are fishermen (fishermen now manage to save enough money and can be fairly safe bets in the marriage market), but because a majority of them tend to keep two or three women.

4.65 Businesswomen of Chilitepec in Paraiso, Tabasco

Cristina is 44 years old, and single. She is a licensed accountant originally from Palma, Michoacán and has lived in Tabasco for 12 years, where she has been working for *Mariscos Boca de México*. She began her career as secretary and, with time, acquired a good knowledge of crabs, octopus processing, seafood transport and sanitation/hygiene in seafood plants. She received training in crab processing in USA and only works between the months of January and June, earning a monthly salary of 12,600 pesos plus room, board and transport.

Boca de is a certified export house. The plant is capable of processing 7 tonnes of crabs per day. They process 120 tonnes of fresh crab a month in the proportion of one kg of soft crab for every eight kg of shell crab. They work with four different 'presentation cuts' of crab: *lomo* ('back'), *costilla* ('rib'), speciality and claw. The commercial value for the products in the U.S. is : *lomo*: US\$12 per kg, *costilla*: US\$9 per kg, speciality: US\$7 per kg, and claw: US\$ 4 per kg. The company exports a total of 60 tonnes of soft crab in different presentations each season.

Cristina declares that while in the earlier days she always felt like an employee, today she is preoccupied with the development of the business. She is in charge of recruiting women for crab processing in North Carolina and provides references to workers. The women work from May to November each year and Cristina is their link between the two communities—those who are employed in the packing industry of Mexico, and those who seek work outside the country.

5. Conclusions and Proposals

Final Analysis

The participation of women in fisheries is linked to survival strategies like increasing family income, improving diet, and seeking a better quality of life. Women's participation in artisanal fisheries can take on many forms. Each one is determined by the relevant features of the Mexican fishing model.

Artisanal fishing communities are poor, and receive little official attention. There have been few technological changes in their methods of production, and the species caught are of low commercial value. Artisanal fishermen confront and attempt to tackle the environmental problems that have affected the water bodies and the fisheries, but the heightened competition for declining resources has led to overfishing. Fishermen also face

*Artisanal
fishing communities
are poor, and
receive little official
attention.*

difficulties in marketing their catch and have to deal with a complicated network of intermediaries and *coyotes*. They do not add value to the product except in a very marginal way. Representation in, and management of the organizations and co-operatives is weak, implying that they are practically invisible when it comes to influencing government policies.

Women's participation in fisheries is constrained by the same social and economic factors inherent in all artisanal fisheries. They are subordinates and their work and lives are constantly devalued, burdened as they are by a history of gender inequity. Women receive lesser education than men, have fewer chances of obtaining employment and receive discriminatory salaries. They are almost exclusively responsible for household chores and caring for the family. Yet they hardly have any say in decision making.

This invisibility is not exclusive to women in the fisheries sector, but it is more acute here than in other areas of the primary sector. Studies on rural and indigenous women generally do not mention women in the fisheries sector. There are very few studies on fisheries, and even fewer involving women.

Women work informally in the productive chain of the fisheries, primarily in processing and marketing. Usually their presence is more significant in artisanal or small-scale fisheries, and much less, if not absent, in medium- or large-scale fisheries. The lack of recognition for their work has excluded them from co-operatives in the fishing industry, from loan schemes, from training programmes and from activities related to conservation and restoration of coastal resources. In other words, they are not visible or viable subjects for the government, for fishing organizations, and often, not even for themselves.

Apart from the socio-economic aspect of gender inequity, the cultural factor also

comes into play. The fisheries sector is very masculine in nature for deep-rooted historical and cultural reasons. The risks and dangers that navigation entails, the seasonal nature of fishing which determines the most vital cycle of activity in fishing communities and the mobility that comes with the job, giving the fisherman an instinctive knowledge of his immediate environment—all of this has created the image of a male persona, one that is widely accepted socially. A typical fisherman is projected as courageous, risk-taking and audacious; his recreational life is all about wine, woman and song; he is inconsistent, more absent than present. These masculine attributes and values do not admit women. The launch, the small boat and the co-operative are the exclusive terrain of men. The myth that women bring bad luck and are to be blamed for poor catches is all too pervasive. The very manhood of a fisherman comes under a cloud if such masculine rules of fishing are violated.

The stranglehold that these myths, traditions and customs have on the minds of the people contribute to the blurring or distortion of certain aspects of reality. Increasingly, women for reasons of economic necessity, have boarded small fishing vessels to collaborate in capture activities. These fisherwomen have been able to deal successfully with the risks that fishing entails. At the same time, the case studies of women who hold permits or run enterprises have shown how the more empowered women have themselves resorted to mocking the work of other women. They have thus not taken any positive steps to counter the disadvantages of being women.

To sum up, here are the main features of women's participation in fisheries in Mexico:

- Women participate in this sector and contribute to family income and to the

The myth that women bring bad luck and are to be blamed for poor catches is all too pervasive.

local economy. Nevertheless, their work is not valued nor is it adequately compensated in monetary terms;

- Women are primarily active in fish processing and marketing. Their participation is frequently an extension of domestic work, undertaken in an informal manner and is considered a supplementary activity. Remuneration, when given, is low. In cases where women participate in the formal market, they do so under conditions of occupational segregation, with very low salaries and without the benefit of social security;
- Their formal or informal participation in fisheries activities does not liberate them from domestic responsibilities and as such, their days are extended considerably. This is reflected in their health and quality of life;
- The participation of women in fisheries activities and projects has given them economic independence, a greater role in decision-making at times, autonomy and self-esteem. All of this, however, has not substantially reversed gender inequity, because they have also meant family conflicts, separation from the husband and distancing from children, extended workdays, assigning of domestic work to other women and little social recognition;
- The new roles that women have assumed,—that of providers of material goods for their families, or their belief in themselves and growth in self-confidence have had little effect on socially-legitimized gender identities. That which a woman ‘should be and do’ frequently clashes with, and is contradicted by, what women really are. These changes in their lives and identities have caused conflict as much with women as with men of fishing communities.

Proposals

(a) Guidelines for an Alternative Model that Incorporates Gender Equity

The economic, social and cultural conditions of the artisanal or coastal inshore fisheries adversely affect gender relations in fishing communities. Poverty, limited access to all types of resources, political and social backwardness of fishing organizations and communities, have led to the subordination of women and lack of opportunities for their betterment. Gender equality in artisanal fisheries can only come about with an alternate way to run this industry.

- Artisanal fisheries should combine production for the export market with production for domestic consumption. The objective of achieving efficiency in production should go hand in hand with achieving food security. For this reason, public policies should be oriented towards development programmes aimed at specifically achieving these goals. For both men and women fishers to compete as equals in the market, the authorities have to help them improve their techniques of production through training and technical assistance and facilitate better access to credit and the markets. Women fishers should be encouraged to play roles in other areas of the capture process.
- New technologies are appropriate only when they fulfill the dual purpose of satisfying the needs of the producers as well as protecting and respecting the environment. Combining technological advances with traditional knowledge is a must. Likewise, any training programme should keep in mind the different needs of different regions and the knowledge or lack of it in every social group, specially women.
- Excessive pressure on certain fisheries to produce in bulk can be avoided

In cases where women participate in the formal market, they do so under conditions of occupational segregation, with very low salaries and without the benefit of social security

through a policy of diversification in catch and consumption of lesser-known species. It is necessary to run campaigns, both on national and local levels. After all, children are open to acquiring new tastes and, thereby, influencing family diets.

- Integrating the different stages of fisheries—capture, processing, marketing—contributes to reducing the pressure on resources and fisheries, increases the product value as well as the earnings of producers, including women. Fisheries policies and credit schemes should encourage linking together these different stages of activity and maximize the comparative advantages of each zone.
- Aquaculture is a profitable alternative, requiring cultivation and harvest. Nevertheless, harmful environmental impact must be avoided at all cost. Care must be taken not to replicate the productive, economic and social polarization that has characterized the current fisheries model. Rural fish farming is a commendable option to improve the diet of the poor segments of the population, but it should aspire to production levels that are economically viable. The costs of production should take into consideration the contribution of women (including domestic chores that are not paid for).
- Local economies should be strengthened and policies for social development implemented to improve education, health and environment, which in turn will impact positively on the community ;
- Social security is top priority for this sector. It is unfortunate that a high-risk activity such as fishing does not have even basic access to health services and insurance protection against occupational hazards;

- The model proposed, or for that matter any other model considered adequate, cannot be put into practice if it does not have financial resources. The budget for the fisheries sector should be increased. Development banks should keep aside enough funds to sanction loans for this sector.

(b)The Transverse Nature of a Gender Focus in Artisanal Fisheries

Proposals oriented towards developing the productive potential of artisanal fisheries, improving the quality of life in fishing communities and augmenting the abilities and decision-making powers of its inhabitants, might favour, but not assure, a greater gender equality. It is necessary for the new fisheries model to be designed and implemented with a focus on gender. In other words, a society that is more egalitarian in terms of gender requires favourable minimum social, economic, political and cultural conditions, without which no type of equality is possible. An alternate model for gender equality must explicitly address this objective.

Gender focus does not end with throwing a few crumbs to women in the form of sops in official programmes and projects. It is necessary to incorporate change from the ground level. This implies modifying practices not only within fishing communities, but also in government institutions. It is about changes that do not just embrace institutional structures, but also influence individual and collective attitudes and beliefs.

The proposals that are formulated take, as a point of reference, the advances in the incorporation of gender at all levels. They also consider the factors that contribute to asymmetry between men and women in the fisheries sector and identify the ones that are the most problematic in promoting gender equality.

- In order to plan with gender in mind it is necessary to be equipped with information. The data on fisheries

It is unfortunate that a high-risk activity such as fishing does not have even basic access to health services and insurance protection against occupational hazards

sector should be separated from data on farming and forestry and should carry sex-wise classification. Institutions that work in gender-related statistics need to reconsider the development experience and bring out advanced indices. The concept of 'coastal region' and 'fishing community' are useful for identifying sources of information that have otherwise been omitted.

- Documentation on, and investigation into the condition of women in fisheries must be encouraged, especially in little known regions like the north and central coastal Pacific, along with dissemination of information on existing studies. A foray into the marine and coastal zones with a focus on gender requires the coming together of multidisciplinary teams and the co-operation of governmental, non-governmental (NGO) and academic institutions. Diagnostic models and participatory planning are very useful tools for incorporating gender focus and for ensuring the active role of women and men in communities;
- The formulation of fisheries policies with a focus on gender have, as a point of reference, the advances registered by SEMARNAP through the Political Declaration on Gender Equality and the *addendum* on Gender and the Environment of the National Programme of Women. The guidelines proposed in these documents should be used to work out a concrete plan of action for the fisheries sector in general, and for artisanal fisheries in particular. The government needs to set up special departments to implement these recommendations at the federal, state and municipal level.
- Necessary changes must be instituted in the legal framework of the sector, in order to achieve a degree of balance between what is established in the Mexican Constitution and the General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and

Environmental Protection in relation to gender equality, and sectoral laws. The Fisheries, Water and Co-operative laws do not make any mention of gender. It is also necessary to ensure that the statutes and regulations of fishing co-operatives include clauses that encourage equal treatment and opportunities for both men and women, and that women participate in organizations associated with the fisheries sector, such as the Council for Responsible Fisheries;

- Push for gender equality in the fisheries sector at international forums: The Platform of Action of the World Conference of Women, Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Conference on Development and Population, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Ramsar Convention for the Protection of Wetlands are some such platforms;
- Gender relations, like social relations, are established at all levels of society. However, it is in the domestic arena that they have their foundations. All proposals for gender equality need to analyze family relations and favour changes that bridge these gaps. Some aspects to consider are: equal distribution of labour within and outside the domestic arena, appreciation of the knowledge and skills of women, appreciation of domestic work;
- Any change in gender relations involves men as much as women. It is necessary to propose ways to incorporate men in activities and areas where they do not participate. Men are often resistant to change when the loss of certain privileges are involved. In order to reduce conflict and bring about change in men's attitudes, events such as workshops on masculinity, reflections on violence, family responsibilities and sexuality, should be undertaken. At the same time the authorities should organize publicity

*Any change
in gender relations
involves men as
much as women ...*

*Men are often
resistant to change
when the loss
of certain
privileges are
involved.*

campaigns to change stereotypes, explode myths, and encourage a fostering of positive values in family life.;

- It is necessary to compensate for the historical and cultural disadvantages that have dogged women of fishing communities through affirmative action like the following that might lead to empowerment:
 - Give women equal rights to fishing concessions and permits;
 - Encourage women to register their organizations so that they have the necessary means to access credit and participate in development programmes;
 - Demand better income for women members of co-operatives;
 - Establish investment agencies, banks or credit unions that are managed by women;
 - Design women-friendly technologically advanced devices keeping in mind their physical ability and lack of knowledge.
 - Train women in non-traditional jobs like boat and motor repair, management of refrigeration

facilities, fisheries management, etc.;

- Provide resources to institute projects for women of fishing communities.
- Create opportunities for women to set up businesses in processing and marketing of fish products;
- Encourage women's participation in programmes on conservation and restoration of coastal ecosystems;
- Establish community centres for children, community kitchens and other support services for the care of children and for undertaking domestic chores;

Fishing is inherently a risky business. Death of their men leaves many women without resources to face life after. Also, long periods during which fishing is prohibited (closed season) have adverse financial implications men often migrate in search of other means of income. At such times, women have to find ways to meet family expenses. In order to combat such situations, a programme, 'Widows and Seasonal Closures' has been proposed through the creation of a social fund, which grants resources to widows and provides for alternate income generating activities for women during the closed season.

Endnotes

¹ A historical review of government fisheries policies shows that there have been three significant periods of support for fisheries. The first was during the 1940s, when a powerful lobby pushed for the formation of fishing co-operatives and the promulgation of a law that reserved the right to the exploitation of nine species (among them shrimp). The second was the 'March to the Sea' campaign instigated by the Manuel Avila Camacho government (1952-58); and finally, the

third was during the period 1970-1976 when President Luis Echeverría implemented the 'Mexico Fishing Industry System'; this was also when the 200-mile zone was declared.

² The Annual Statistics for Fisheries for 1998 shows 100,727 metric tonnes of sardine going to direct human consumption and 245,956 metric tonnes of industrial sardines (fishmeal) for indirect human consumption.

³ Operators in large-scale fishing accuse those in small-scale fishing of negatively affecting fish stock by catching young fish; artisanal fishers however allege that the fishing limits placed on them are unjust and favour the larger-scale vessels. The same conflict repeats itself every year and has even resulted in armed conflict at sea.

⁴ In 1993, the state of Tabasco recorded an unprecedented loss of 10,000 metric tonnes of oyster because of the depletion of oyster banks. Tabasco is the second largest producer in the country after Veracruz.

⁵ The reference here is to the co-operatives. The legal structures adopted by the organizations do not differ substantially in their way of functioning.

⁶ Free fishers are those who have been able to acquire their own boat and fishing gear and are not affiliated to any legal body. They work in teams of two or three people in a system where a percentage of what is caught (or its value) goes to the boat owner while the rest is distributed among the helpers. The term 'free' is also applied to those who fish with no official permit.

⁷ These are individuals who possess both economic resources and fishing equipment, and who contract fishers to bring in the catch. They, together with ship owners, provide credit, provisions and materials to co-operatives or free fishers in exchange for the catch at a price previously agreed upon. By doing this they simultaneously fulfill the role of intermediary with the added advantage of fixing the product price, usually below the market value.

⁸ This exclusivity gave way to dealings between leaders of the co-operatives and the intermediaries. The latter controlled the credit grants, the production support, and the product purchase in exchange for the invoiced production for these species. Illegal trade on the sea proliferated, along

with under-quoting the value of produce, especially shrimp. This nexus also involved fishing authorities who under-weigh produce and call the shots in the marketing of these fish products. The problem of under-registering is a major one—official figures estimate that it could go up to 30 per cent.

⁹ At the end of 1998 the Women and Environment Network, CONMUJER, and SEMARNAP convened their first meeting to promote gender equity in environmental policies. It was then that an operating working group that included three bodies was formed. This group has been a major motivational force from the outset.

¹⁰ Women and Men in Mexico, INEGI-CONMUJER, 2000

¹¹ We opted for data on rural women because their conditions are similar to those of women in fishing communities.

¹² This organization falls under the purview of the Secretariat of Social Development and was created, during the last presidential term, to work towards programmes to counter poverty and extreme poverty.

¹³ The aquaculture division of SEMARNAP distinguishes between three kinds of aquaculture in Mexico: aquaculture in small bodies of water and units of production for self-consumption, where species such as tilapia and carp are raised; that of aquaculture for fish where principally species such as carp, tilapia, catfish and *lobina*, are introduced into medium and large reservoirs; and the management in the wild of hatchery species, including crayfish, post-larvae of lobster, tadpoles and such other species, along with controlled systems for production of trout, catfish, shrimp and oyster, all carried out for commercial trade and demanding large investments (SEMARNAP, 2000)

¹⁴ Statistics on the contribution of fisheries to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) provided by SEMARNAP are estimates based on their own calculations. The last census on fisheries done by the institute in charge of the country's statistics (INEGI) dates back to 1989.

¹⁵ We have not included definitions related to gender or focus on gender. When we speak of an analysis of the community from this perspective, we mean that relations between men and women have been taken as the main basis for the analysis

¹⁶ The new law on co-operative societies reduces to five the minimum number of members required for a co-operative, and this has facilitated the growth of family businesses.

¹⁷ Ref. *Notebooks* from Casa Chata. *Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social and Museo de Culturales Populares*. For this research, we consulted issues 111, 112, 113, 114, 116 and 119.

¹⁸ Laura Vidal : Coordinator of the St. Thomas Ecological Association of Women, A.C.

¹⁹ The minimum salary at present is \$32.70 pesos per day (U.S. \$3.55)

²⁰ 6 kg of crab in the shell are required to get one kg of meat. The price that the co-operatives pay is 30 pesos per kg of crab, the market value is 60 pesos.

²¹ By Itzá Castañeda Camey, Researcher at the National Public Health Institute and member of the Gender and Environment Network

²² Interview with Juan Luis Baqueiro, consultant of MPCPA and technician of FDESPA. Carmen City, Campeche, February 26, 1997.

²³ Dressing involves removing the meat and gutting the fish.

²⁴ This information was obtained through an interview with Mrs. Gilda Heredia Pérez, member of MPCPA, and plant worker.

²⁵ *Taras* are rectangular plastic containers.

²⁶ Victor Sánchez Riviera, Proyect Conyinity, Director of Aquaculture in Priority Regions. National Directorate of Aquaculture of the Secretariat of the Environment, National Resources and Fisheries.

²⁷ Laura Vidal: Coordinator of the St. Thomas Ecological Association of Women, A.C.

²⁸ Georgina Rosado: Researcher at the Autonomous University of Yucatan. The case study is a summary of the article "Gender Construction, Political Identity and Work Processes of Packers on the Yucatan coast", in Mummert, Gail and Ramírez Carrillo Alfonso, 1998.

²⁹ The information sourced from the life stories of, and open interviews with women workers of differing ages. Contact with the workers took place in different spaces: the workplace, the home and/or the community. The technique of participatory observation was used in seven fish and shellfish packing plants.

³⁰ *Henequén* is a natural fiber that made up the economic fabric of the Yucatán. It was later replaced by synthetic products.

³¹ Lorenzo Bozada , Scholar at the Oaxaca Institute of Technology.

³² The PROFEPA falls under the purview of SEMARNAP and is in charge of enforcing compliance with environmental law.

Bibliography

- Aguilar, Lorena y Castañeda, Itzá, marzo de 2000: De marinos y marinas, mares y mareas: propuesta metodológica para integrar un enfoque de equidad de género en iniciativas de desarrollo en zonas marino costera. Mimeo, Costa Rica.
- Alcalá, Graciela, 1985: “Los pescadores de Tecolutla: el tiempo cotidiano y el espacio doméstico en una Villa de pescadores”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 119. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Alcalá, Graciela, 1999: Con el agua hasta los aparejos. Pescadores y pesquerías en el Soconusco, Chiapas. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Universidad de Ciencias y Artes del Estado de Chiapas, Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, A.C., México.
- Castañeda, Itzá y Soares, Denisse, 1998: “Caminos hacia la equidad de género y desarrollo en La Península De Atasta, Campeche”. En Revista de la Red de Gestión de Recursos Naturales. Segunda época, número 12 México julio-septiembre de 1998.
- Comisión Nacional de la Mujer, Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca, Red de Mujer y Medio Ambiente, 2000: Programmea Nacional de la Mujer. Addendum Mujer y Medio Ambiente (Propuesta), México.
- Contreras Espinosa, Francisco, 1993: Ecosistemas Costeros Mexicanos. Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Unidad Iztapalapa, México.
- Chenaut, Victoria, 1985: “Los pescadores de Baja California (costa del Pacífico y Mar de Cortés)”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 111: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- DEBASE. A.C, 1993: Reporte de la Inspección de Campo realizada. En la Península de Atasta. México.
- Díaz, Marcial; Iturbe, Galdino; García Imelda, 1984: “*Los pescadores de la Costa Norte de Chiapas*”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 115. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1993: Memoria del Encuentro Nacional de Pescadores Ribereños. Fundación Friedrich Ebert, México.
- González Pacheco, Cuauhtémoc. 1993: “La pesca y la alimentación”. Los retos de la soberanía alimentaria en México. Tomo I. Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas. Juan Pablos Editor, México.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática: Los hogares con jefatura femenina. INEGI, México.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática; Comisión Nacional de la mujer, 2000: Mujeres y Hombres en México. Cuarta Edición. INEGI, México.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática; Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, 1997: Recursos Naturales y Pesca. Estadísticas del Medio Ambiente. INEGI, México.
- Melville, Roberto, 1984: “*Condiciones laborales de los pescadores camaroneros en Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche*”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 112. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología So-

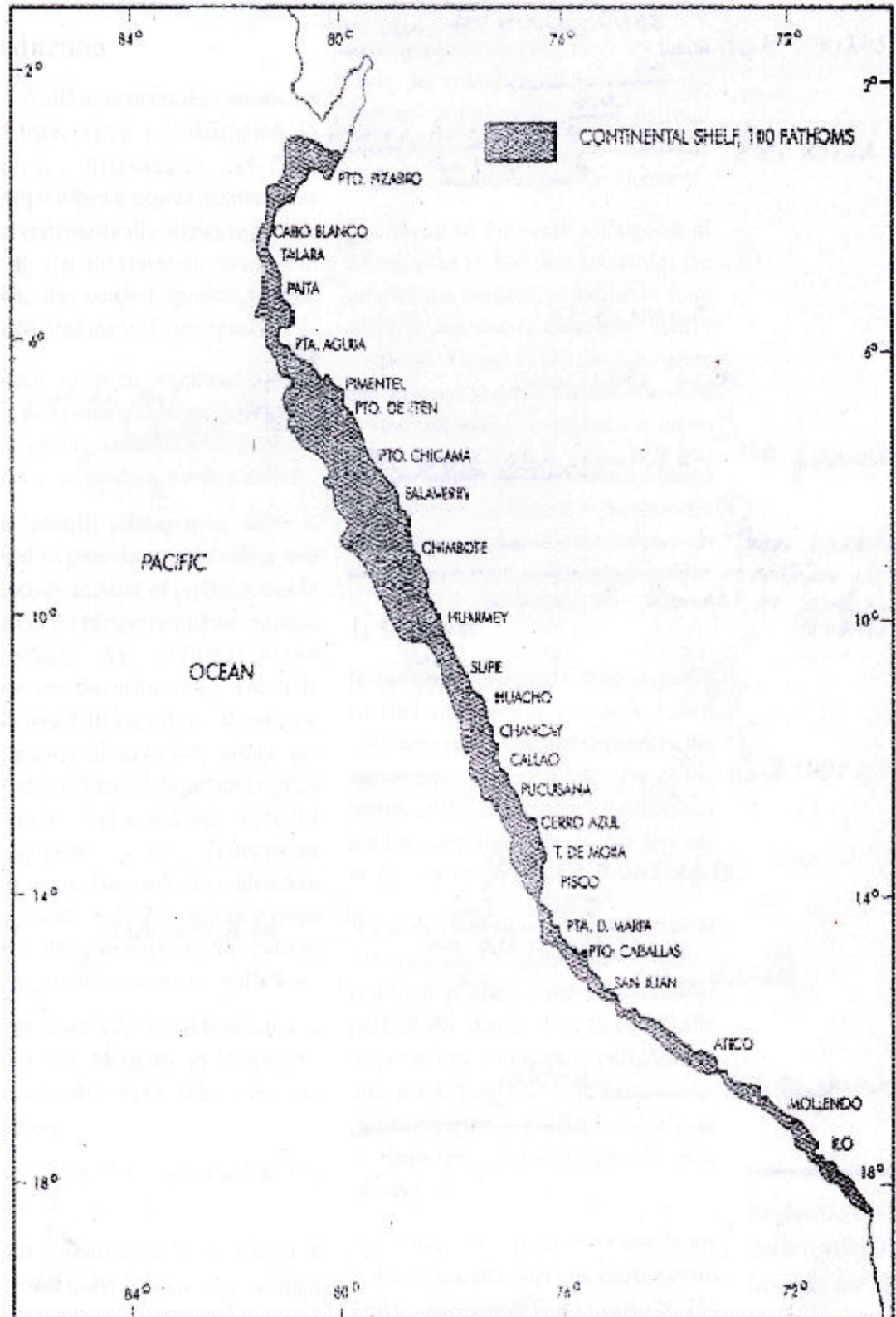
- cial. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Moguel, Julio (Sin fecha): La violencia del oro negro en Mecoacán, Tabasco. Fundación Friedrich Ebert. México.
- Ortíz, Ma. de los Angeles, 1984: “*Los pescadores de la Isla la Palma en Acapetahua, Chiapas*”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 115. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Pérez Espinoza, José Genovevo, 1985: La pesca en el medio lacustre y chinampero de San Luis Tlaxiátemalco. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 116. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Red de Mujer y Medio Ambiente y Coordinación Nacional de Mujeres de Organismos Civiles por un Milenio Feminista, 2000: Informe Alternativo Preliminar Pekín+5. Mujeres y Medio Ambiente, México.
- Rodríguez C, Roberto, 1984: “*Los pescadores de la Laguna de Términos*”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 112. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Rojas Rabiela, Teresa, 1985: “La cosecha del agua en la cuenca de México” Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 116. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Rosado Rosado, Georgina, 1998: “Construcción de género, identidad política y procesos de trabajo en las empacadoras del litoral yucateco” en Mummert, Gail y Ramírez Carrillo Alfonso (Editores), *Rehaciendo la diferencia: identidades de género en Michoacán y Yucatán*. Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán y Colegio de Michoacán, México.
- Sada José, 1984: “Los pescadores de la laguna de Tamiahua”. Cuadernos de Casa Chata No. 113. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares, México.
- Salazar, Hilda, 1999: “Mujer y Medio ambiente: acuerdos internacionales”. Género, sustentabilidad y cambio social en el México rural. Colegio de Postgraduados en Ciencias Agrícolas, Instituto de Socioeconómica, Estadística e Informática, México.
- ___, 1997: “Género y Medio Ambiente. La problemática ambiental de las mujeres de comunidades pesqueras”. Trabajo final del Diplomado La Problemática Ambiental desde una Perspectiva de Género. PUEG/CRIM, UNAM, Mimeo, México, julio de 1997.
- Secretaría del Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca, 1999: Programa de Trabajo. SEMARNAP, abril de 1999:
- ___ Anuario Estadístico de Pesca 1998. SEMARNAP, México, mayo de 1999.
- ___ Programa de Pesca y Acuacultura, 1995-2000, SEMARNAP, México, 1995.
- ___ Declaración para la Equidad de Género de la Secretaría de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca. SEMARNAP, 2000.
- ___ “Avances y prospectiva de la acuacultura en México”, Dirección General de Acuacultura, SEMARNAP, Mimeo, México, marzo de 2000.
- Universidad Autónoma de Campeche. Programa de Ecología, Pesquerías y Oceanografía del Golfo de México (EPOMEX), 1993: Diagnóstico Integral de la Problemática de la Región de Atasta, Campeche. Campeche.

Vázquez Osornio, Violeta, 1993: México en los procesos de integración y la actividad pesquera. Mimeo, México.

Velázquez E. y Meza L, 1996: Explotación

Petrolera en el Área Natural Protegida de la Laguna de Términos, Campeche. En: El Pescador, Revista del Movimiento Nacional de Pescadores Ribereños y Aguas Interiores. Número 3, México.

The Peruvian coastline



4. Background Paper: Perú

Gender Issues in the Fisheries Sector

Introduction

This study has developed along the holistic lines that characterize Peruvian culture, and is quite different from the perspective taken by modern western culture.

This essentially ethnographic work is designed to provide a comparative and introductory account of gender issues in Perú, from the perspective of artisanal fishworkers. Any political views expressed are that of the author. The study is field-based. It involved living with local families, participatory observation, group and individual interviews with three generations of fishworkers, and interviews with representatives of fishworker organizations. The work was undertaken in March and April 2000, with an average of three days dedicated to each of the *caletas* (fishing communities) mentioned below:

- South: Vila Vila and Morrosama in Tacna; Ilo, Matarani, in Moquegua; Islay (Tambo river), Atico, Lomas in Arequipa.
- Central South: Comatrana-Ica, San Andrés in Pisco-Ica.
- North: Zarumilla and Puerto Pizarro in Tumbes; Cabo Blanco, Los Organos and La Islilla in Paita-Piura.

The common feature of these *caletas* is their geographic location—all three are situated in areas of upwelling; that is to say, areas richest in hydro-biological resources anywhere along the coast.

They typify the cultural diversity that exists along the coast—the fishing populations are distinct from each other.

And certain other disparities arise out of the impact of ‘development’.

In contrast to the great willingness of the communities to share their knowledge, the information available from official sources is at present highly restricted. Almost all official documents are confidential in nature.

We were also limited by the paucity of information and studies on the artisanal fisheries sector. This problem is even greater when it comes to gender studies in the sector.

1. Background

In Peru, artisanal fishing is mainly carried out within a family-based subsistence economy and depends on the protection and care of, and consensus between the family and the community, where women are the principal actors. It also depends on the sea and its resources.

We understood that artisanal fisheries are all about dynamic and collective relationships, where women are considered part of a whole. Documenting the activities that women carry out in fishing and marketing alone may not suffice to understand the importance and influence of women in fisheries.

According to information provided by the Latin American Fisheries Centre (Centro Latinoamericano de Pesca), of the 26,475 wives and partners, only 2,002 take part in fisheries. If we compare this figure to the total number of fishermen in the country—41,370—we may conclude that with their presence at no more than 5 per cent, women are as good as not present in the fisheries¹.

*By Amelia Garcia,
Anthropologist,
Institute for Nature,
Society and Culture
(NSC), Lima Perú*

Going by what most fishermen say, women are very important in caleta life.

Going by what most fishermen say, women are very important in *caleta* life. Not only do they support their husbands at home, but also lend their time to a series of fisheries-related activities like marketing, and helping solve the numerous problems that fishermen and fishing communities face.

Above all, to understand their real role, women must be seen in the context of their socio-economic, political, religious and cultural inter-relationships. We must take into account the sum total of all their roles—from their reproductive functions to their interaction with the family and community, and the way they nurture the conditions that give continuity to life in the fisheries.

Although official figures show the opposite, artisanal fisheries are facing crisis—one that has worsened over the last year (1999-2000) as a consequence of industrial fishing for the export of fishmeal. Raw material suppliers—purse seiners and huge trawlers—catch fish within the five-mile artisanal zone, fishing right up to the beaches. Japanese factory ships, of a thousand tonnes capacity, operate in the north between 20 and 50 miles from the coast. North to south, fishermen confirm that such vessels catch species used for everyday consumption such as mackerel, scad, bonito, *pejerrey*, etc., for processing into fishmeal in the factories.

Hernán Peralta, a fisheries specialist, told us:

... from January to April 2000, 3,000,000 mt of sardine and anchovy have been captured from within the five-mile zone because the fish found here are large and fat.

According to the cosmovision of the original cultures every component of the universe is inter-related, inter-dependent,

and nothing exists in isolation. In particular, there is no division between man and nature. Everything has life and soul. For the fishermen the sea is a woman, sensuous, menstruating, capricious and also at times, needing a husband. Like a woman, the sea is a source of life, and thus both are valued and respected.

In Perú, women play a variety of roles in fisheries. These are determined by the predominant culture of each *caleta*, by the culture of their place of origin, by the influences of the customs and values of modern industrial society, by the economic situation and by the impact of national and international development on fisheries and fisheries policies. Nevertheless, the way of life of artisanal fishing communities is essentially a derivative of the Andean culture.

The role of women in fisheries cannot be isolated from the roles they play in the multiple networks of community life. Neither can the culturally diverse nature of the fisheries sector be dissociated from the diversity of Peru on the whole, or from the great heterogeneity of its oceanography, climate and marine species.

2. Cultural Influences of Women in Fisheries

The way of life, customs and values in the *caletas* and ports vary according to the extent to which they are associated with the market; the re-creation and assimilation of the cultural elements of industrial society; and the unity or disparity that exists between that which is 'productive' and that which is 'domestic'. There are *caletas* with strong traditions, such as La Tortuga, El Ñuro and La Islilla, situated in Paita (to the north). There are others where modernity has been recreated and absorbed, along with strong traditional undercurrents as occurs in San Andrés, Pisco (south) and Cabo Blanco,

Paita (north). In other places the tendency is to assume modern ways, as is the case in the ports of Ilo and Matarani in Moquengua (south).

Let us see how the above is reflected in the roles women assume in some of these places:

a) In the *caleta* of La Islilla, the predominant customs are linked to the culture of Sechura and La Unión, in Piura, which is where the people of this fishing community originally hail from. Women and children collect bait—worms that are collected at low tide. This job not only makes it possible for their own husbands or fathers to fish and obtain daily sustenance for the family, but also makes it possible for the whole crew and, therefore, a wider circle of families to do so. In order to get a better price for their husbands' catch, some of the wives sell the fish, either fresh or salted, directly to consumers in Paita or surrounding towns.

All this develops against the following cultural backdrop. It is the custom even from childhood that women learn to embroider and weave. They store away their work carefully so that when the time comes to get married, they are able to show their future in-laws and other relatives of the fiancé how hard working they are. They also gift their fiancé the clothing required for fishing, a set of rugs, covers, tablecloths, etc. for the future home. The godparents—an older couple who have led exemplary lives—are chosen from within the community to be role models for the couple. They have the authority to advise, and watch over their godchildren. As part of this function they are to ensure that moral conventions are strictly followed. All the houses have a main living area where there is a small altar for worship. They keep an open bible there—all of which goes to show that their lives are strongly influenced by religion and convention.

b) In the *caleta* of San Andrés, people's lives are influenced by the age-old *chinchana* culture where women devoted themselves to trade, an activity at which they excelled, running the economy and all aspects of family and communal life. In this village, elements of the culture of industrial society and modernity have been re-created and assimilated.

The women receive the catch from their husbands at the landing site and then sell it to the buyers. They distribute the income among the crewmembers, make the necessary purchases of goods required at sea, pay for the fuel, make the loan repayments for the boat's equipment and give some money to their husbands to buy soft drinks etc. Women, along with their children, accompany their husbands and other members of the crew wherever they go along the coast. In fact, one of the characteristics of the people of San Andrés is their movement along the whole coast, reminiscent of the way in which trade was carried out by *chinchana* women over the ages. The women also take charge of chores like license renewal etc. of their husbands or relatives, besides being in charge of running the family and other domestic tasks.

For governmental and non-governmental agencies, San Andrés is the model for the development of the fisheries sector because these people always like to experiment with and incorporate advances in fisheries, try out new technologies and other innovations that might assure good fishing or additional income. Here we found the only self-managed fuel pump in the country, which belongs to the fishermen and was acquired without any financial support from outside the community.

Despite this community having absorbed elements of the new market economy and aspects of urban development into its

*In the
caleta of San
Andrés, people's
lives are influenced
by the age-old
chinchana culture
where women
devoted themselves
to trade, an activity
at which they
excelled, running
the economy and all
aspects of family
and communal
life.*

culture, there prevail relations of togetherness, solidarity and community support. The people see the cosmos as one unified entity where man and nature are never divided.

c) The ports of Ilo and Matarani are located in cities of the same name. Here there are two types of fisheries: artisanal and industrial. Both national and foreign vessels load and unload cargo here and there are a number of factories and mining industries. In both ports the tendency is towards modernity and a market economy prevails which means that cultural patterns and requirements of the industrial society predominate.

Unlike the previous two cases, neither the family nor the women have any presence in the fishery or in other aspects of public life. The fishermen work on their own with women dedicating themselves mainly to domestic chores. The fishermen say: “women devote themselves to looking after the house, they do not take part before, during or after fishing; they do not go to the landing site; all they ask us for is money, and then more money.” There are fishermen who even prohibit their women from approaching the landing area. The men also work in industrial fisheries and have absorbed the values of the modern market economy.

The income is no longer obtained through redistributing earnings from the catch among the group, but by the sale of manual labour. The women who take part in fisheries activities sell their labour to intermediaries in export companies, toiling under deplorable, unhygienic conditions. Without labour legislation to support their cause they are unabashedly exploited. For example, women who wash and pack the fish are paid less than a dollar per tonne of fish, and for opening and cleaning molluscs all night in the *peladeros* (peeling sheds) they receive a miserly one and a half to two dollars. As payment is based

on piece-work, their income depends on their skill and speed. To make things worse, they do not get paid on completing work, but have to wait for days, weeks or even months to receive the pittance.

We see in these ports the separation of the productive and the domestic life, the separation of the personal and family life. That is to say, fishermen, women, children and other relatives stop being a social and economic unit. They become free to act without restrictions and social control, and sell their manual labour according to their individual capabilities, necessities and whims of the market.

But it is not possible to make generalizations, since in the port of Ilo one group of women act as agents/guides (*guias*) for the boats that go fishing offshore. They are responsible for providing the crew with food, fuel and everything that is required to go to sea, as well as for communicating by radio with fishermen while they are at sea. Also, in some cases, it is the women who are the owners of the boats, and market the fish. Other women, as in almost all the *caletas* along the coast, are intermediary fish traders in the local, regional and national market. They do not act alone, but work together with their husband and sons, running a family enterprise using their own lorries, cold rooms and boats.

Similarly, we have the migrants from Puno, constituting more than 60 per cent of the artisanal fishermen, who come from peasant communities and who, in their new roles, have recreated their traditional culture. Such is the case of the fisherman, Cafecito, whose group comprises 37 people united by ties of kinship or family friendships, and who carry out their work as families in a subsistence economy.

In most artisanal fishing communities, given the concept of unity, there is no sense of competition between men and

There is no sense of competition between men and women but rather a recognition that each one's task complements the other's and everyone is considered equal.

women but rather a recognition that each one's task complements the other's and everyone is considered equal. Fishing is the task of the men, just as nurturing the family, caring for the children and carrying out activities that provide services to support fishing, and managing the house, is that of women. But these tasks are not exclusive to one gender or the other. Given the circumstances, the woman will fish, dive, mend nets, obtain bait, market the fish, etc. Equally, the men will do domestic chores such as cook whether on the boat or at home, look after the children, man their wife's small business, etc.

That is not to say that women enjoy greater social standing, or that the men feel diminished; it is simply that each does what has to be done. In these circumstances nobody is superior to the other, nor is his or her work any more or less important; the tasks are simply considered necessary and need to be completed, no matter by whom. What would the fisherman do without the bait that his son or wife provides? Who will look after the children while the man is away fishing? Which is more important: the sea or the fish? It is like trying to establish what is more important: the soil, the water, the seed, or the task of the farmer.

Women's Roles in Fishing

Before

Women prepare the bait, repair and rig the nets, fix the hooks, buy provisions for the crew, buy fuel and other requisites of a fishing trip and see-off their husbands at the pier.

During

Women work alongside their husbands in fishing along the shore with nets or lines; work on boats; work in the extraction of shellfish (chanques, clams, *machas* etc.), crabs, algae and larvae along the shore; and extract shrimp from rivers. Some go on fishing trips.

Freddy Gogin, fisher from San Andrés, Pisco, told us:

In Cruz, Tumbes, women catch shrimp (langostino) with fine cloth (lallas de tul). Standing at the water's edge they haul their nets, fishing for larvae. The produce is then sold by the ounce.

Thus almost 80 per cent of the work in this activity is done by women and children.

After

Women await the return of the fishermen, having looked for and negotiated prices with buyers for the fish caught by their husbands. They market the fish at the local, regional and national level, manage the finances, clean the *cau cau* (fish eggs) or algae embedded in the nets, mend the nets, stack and dry the fish, pack them in boxes for transport in refrigerated trucks, clean and fillet fish for selling at the port or to buyers, and process sea urchins, whelks and scallops for export. The accounts that follow are based on an interview with Freddy Gogin, the fisherman from San Andres (mentioned earlier):

- In Santa Rosa, Chiclayo, women help sell the fish that their husbands bring in to the cold stores. They mend the nets. This is so at least in 40 to 50 per cent of the cases. When the men bring in the fish, (mackerel, also bonito and jack mackerel) they cut and salt it;
- It is the same in Parachique, Sechura and Piura. When the boats are docked, the entire family, the crew as well as their womenfolk help in cleaning the hull of the boat and prepare it for painting. Men scrape the top while women work on the bottom half, removing weeds that stick to the wood, though they do not do the actual painting;

- In Tortuga, Paita, as in La Islaila and Santa Rosa, the entire family shares the workload;
- In Paita, Piura women work in processing units that fillet hake. 80 to 90 per cent of the wives and children of the fishermen work in such plants;
- In Talara, Paita, when the men return in their boats (*pinteros*), women help them count the fish and sell it to cold storage units. Approximately 30 per cent of the women are involved in this activity. Fishing starts at 3 am and the fishers return at 2 pm. In a departure from the norm they prepare their lines using red wool, as a kind of bait;
- In Cancas, Tumbes, women sell the catch to cold storage units. Those who have their own iceboxes take their produce to Piura. High-value species like grouper (*mero*), trigger fish (*pejeblanco*), rock bass (*cabrilla*) are sent to Lima;
- In San Juan de Marcona, around 30 women help in washing and packing the fish into boxes;
- In Planchada, Arequipa, 30 to 40 women, all from Atico, wash fish and pack. These women work as a group and also cover other *caletas* such as Punta and Gramadal in Atico and Puerto Viejo in Chala;
- In Lomas, women help retrieve the eggs of the *pejerrey* (silver-side) from the nets. They also help wash the fish, weigh and price it; they negotiate with the buyers.
- In Ilo and Matarani women do not go down to the dock to help. They wait for the return of their spouses, who more often than not get home squabbling, all their money spent.

*...it is women
who act in unison,
take the initiative to
take decisive action
in community
assemblies and lead
from the front
in public
demonstrations in
order to assert their
rights.*

When women work in a family/ domestic set-up, they are always happy with the work conditions. The reverse is true when they are contracted to work in factories and plants where conditions can be highly exploitative. Women wash and pack fish into boxes and are paid around 0.85 cents per tonne. And those who process sea urchin are paid 0.14 cents per kilogram.

3. Social and Political Standing of Women

The great influence wielded by women and the respect in which they are held is evident in the leading role they play in decision-making within the community or *sindicatos* (union)—especially so in situations of conflict and physical confrontation that cannot be resolved by men alone. This happens when the community is convulsed by a conflict of interest which threatens the majority—puts in danger their access to beaches, fishing grounds or aquatic resources, or when degradation due to contamination by industrial fishing vessels threatens the regeneration of marine life. At such times it is women who act in unison, take the initiative to take decisive action in community assemblies and lead from the front in public demonstrations in order to assert their rights. Their words and directives are listened to and respected. Men never attack women verbally or physically, so women range themselves in front of the fishermen in demonstrations to avert physical confrontation between the opponents.

The importance of women's roles has been observed in several cases of conflict, as in the ones below. In *caleta* of Laguna Grande in Rancheria, Pisco, those with vested interests in tourism and mariculture attempted to evict the community in the 1940s. Between 1983-86, illegally caught scallops (*Argopecten purpuratus*) were confiscated when there was a danger of

depletion of this species. In February and March 2000 a minority group of fishermen supported by government authorities, usurped for their benefit alone, the concession for mariculture granted to all the members of the union, and at the same time, blocked access to these sites. We also have the case of Puerto Pizarro in Tumbes. In August 1999 industrial fishing vessels were found fishing illegally close to the beaches and in the estuaries, depleting and contaminating the fishing grounds and mangroves with the sanction of government authorities and ignored by local conservation organizations.

Social Organizations

In order to confront problems faced at the community level, there exist different types of organizations: those that are religious in nature, those that offer moral support and those that work for the rights of fishers.

Religious Groups

In the case of Comatrana, Ica, there are about six *sindicatos* in San Pedro, through which women of this area are represented. The *sindicatos* are responsible for the decoration of the sanctum, flower arrangements, fund-raising through various activities (raffles, barbecues etc.), cooking and taking care of guests. These tasks are undertaken to help the *sindicatos* preparations and celebrations of the Feast of the Patron Saint of Fishermen on 29 June of every year.

Asistenciales (Self help) Groups

In general such groups are of a temporary nature and come up spontaneously for a short duration to provide support at the community levels to families who are faced with some kind of crisis, such as sickness, shipwrecks, accidents, detention of their men for having crossed territorial waters etc. Some examples:

- In the *caleta* of Lomas, Arequipa, when someone falls sick, a group of women take on the responsibility of collecting money for the family to enable them to pay for treatment and medicines;
- In Vila Vila, Tacna, when fishermen are detained for fishing in Chilean waters, women in the neighbourhood co-ordinate with the *Sindicato de Pescadores de Vila Vila*, and take on the responsibility of collecting funds to free their fishermen, as well as to help them meet their expenses in the country of detention.

According to the President of the Women's Committee of Vila Vila:

Our Women's Committee has organized barbecues to generate funds now that our boats have been detained in Arica, ... There are not too many fish on the Peruvian side of the waters; there are none in the region around Vila Vila. This results in fishermen being caught. And, especially at the times when schools reopen our husbands and families get desperate. School books, clothes etc. have to be bought, and this is when the men tend to cross over to the Chilean side.

The Peruvian fishermen have to catch at least a tonne or a tonne and a half, in order to be able to take something home, as the expenses involved in deep sea fishing are also high. These work out at around 1,500 to 1,800 soles (approximately US\$428 to US\$515) which lasts for a week, or even up to 15 days. They, therefore, have to bring in a good catch to be able to meet their expenses to buy fuel, ice, provisions, bags etc. After making

purchases they have to deduct costs and take home what is left. It is this problem that causes them to cross over to the other side of the border.

What also worries us is that they must pay a fine there which is not much—I think it is around 100 dollars, but this is not much compared with what is imposed here by the harbour authorities in Ilo. Here too, they are made to pay a fine. They have to go daily to sign and, to top it all, sanctions are imposed on them against fishing. I wouldn't be able to tell you how much the boats have paid till now, but of course, I have heard them talking and wondering what to do. School time is coming around and they still will not let them work; still the sanctions continue for another week.

We are also informed by people in Vila Vila that our Consul in Chile, the Peruvian representative, does nothing for those who are caught there. I don't know why he does not act quickly. He does not help the Peruvian fishermen although they are his compatriots.

In Comatrana-Ica, the disappearance of three brothers (known in the community as 'The Bad Boys') at sea between Cerro-Azul and Cañete, prompted the men and women to carry out a solidarity campaign to mobilize the authorities to search for these men, and put together a small capital for their three wives to help them set-up a small business in order to tide over the crisis.

Also part of the self-help organizations are the *Comedores Populares* (community kitchens) and *Comités de*

Vasos de Leche (literally, 'glasses of milk' committees). Such groups have increased in the last few years, given the worsening situation and the poverty afflicting many sectors of the fishing population. Families of fishers have resorted to participating in such groups in order to survive the fall in fishing activities and the resultant loss of income caused by indifferent fisheries policies.

Through the National Programme for Nutrition (PRONAA), the government supplies food to the *Comedores Populares*. The women have the responsibility of organizing and distributing the foodstuff. They have a management council that is in charge of receiving the supplies, preparing the food, and collecting money to meet other expenses involved in the process. They are also responsible for organizing people to take turns in working in the kitchens.

Pressure Groups (Reivindicativas)

Such groups come up when fishworker organizations are not able to resolve certain problems that affect the entire community.

There is an example of the 'Puerto Pizarro Association of Women in Defence of Families and their Interests'. This was formed as a result of the 12-day strike by the *caletas* along the Tumbes coast in August 1999 in order to fight as a community against ecological degradation; contamination of the creeks, mangroves and beaches; social problems arising out of the presence of foreign purse seiners and their crew; counter the efforts of the *Commandante* of the *Captania* of Puerto de Zorritos to allocate a docking area to the purse seiners; and to protest the indifferent and ineffectual efforts of the local and national level authorities.

According to the Woman President of the Association:

My Association has very fundamental objectives. We were formed primarily to support artisanal fishworkers. Because my husband is one among them...

This strike was carried out in the face of constant abuse of resources by the purse seiners. We had no choice. When we went fishing we only caught 200 kg, of which 100 kg would be finfish. And we earned nothing. The purse seiners on the other hand would come in with 30 tonnes, taking everything, and above all killing millions of juvenile fish, so many small fish. There was so much contamination here in Puerto, but now that these boats are not here, we are able to once again fish in peace.

They came here with their catch, unloaded it and washed out their fish holds here in the port, and all the waste was just dumped in the water. The currents would take this towards the mangrove areas, with the rising tide carrying in all this bloody and oily waste. The falling tide would deposit this muck on the shellfish beds, where it killed all the scallops, the crabs and other shellfish, polluting everything.

The strike involved the entire community because there was so much contamination; there was so much prostitution. Puerto Pizarro is an artisanal fishing area. We fish with lines and hooks, and nets of 4" to 5" mesh size. There isn't even a single purse seiner here in Pizarro. They come from the south; they come, plunder and leave. And what about those who are left behind? It is we who suffer; we are left with nothing.

This is what the fisherman husband of the President of the Association had to say:

The community participated through the Club de Madres (Mothers' Club) and the Sindicato. The fishermen's sindicato formed an association with only women members....with the women in control it was a great success.

After the strike we got a lot of promises from the authorities. They promised us that they were going to take care of our problems, but these remained in word only.

Because the Prefect didn't turn up, it was the Sub-Prefect who promised that Decree 07-99 was going to be complied with. The judge came, making lots of promises. Because we were getting only promises and nothing was being done, the Women's Association was formed. They travelled to Lima and came back with some good results.

President of the Association:

When the strike was called, Mr. Mena from the Sindicato went to Lima but could not come back with anything concrete. We then felt obliged to defend our rights and to also support the fishermen. As they couldn't get results, we tried on our part to do something.

Two purse seiners came in the day after the strike was initiated. They offered to present us with the entire catch if we allowed them to work here, but we did not need anything. Even today we do not want a single purse seiner in the port.

The fishermen's organizations do not have women in their management councils, and

The fishermen's sindicato formed an association with only women members...with the women in control it was a great success.

their bye-laws, in general, make no reference to the participation or rights of women in these assemblies and organizations. But nor are there any prohibitions.

4. Socio-cultural Changes

These may be caused by several factors including the impact of the economic and cultural factors of industrial society.

In Comatrana, Ica, in the decade of the 40s when mules were replaced by trucks for transporting fish, women were displaced from their direct involvement in the production and marketing process. Before this they had the responsibility of preparing and sending all the fishermen's requirements on mules to the beach where they would await their return with the catch. The fish was sold directly to local consumers. This does not mean that women no longer have a role to play in the fisheries—their roles take other forms.

...when the union acquired refrigeration units, women were displaced from fish marketing as fishermen now give their catch directly to the organization.

In Cabo Blanco, after the El Niño phenomenon of 1981 and 1982, the population moved from the seashore to a higher area in the locality. This meant that fewer women now waited for their husbands on the pier to help beach the boats and sell the fish. In the same community, when the union acquired refrigeration units, women were displaced from fish marketing as fishermen now give their catch directly to the organization.

In San Andrés the El Niño phenomenon brought with it a proliferation of scallops (*Argopecten purpuratus*) which export firms benefited from. Women labourers were contracted on a massive scale for processing (de-veining, cleaning, sorting, coding and packing) this species for export under extremely exploitative conditions. This also meant that they had to abandon their responsibility towards their families.

In Los Órganos with the construction of the harbour, the tradition of women and children going down to the landing site, lunch in hand, to await the return of fishermen has almost disappeared. This practice was prohibited by the harbour authorities two years ago in order to prevent accidents. This has had an impact on the family unit and on the education of children. It has also had an impact on the way that the father's work is valued, as other family members can no longer participate directly in their men's experience of going out into the sea. What's more, this ban has deprived fishermen from experiencing the warmth of family togetherness and from the encouragement he seeks from his near and dear in facing the risks that each one of his tasks entails—something that is vital to his emotional wellbeing.

In Lomas, some 10 years ago, when a processing plant was set-up, it led to quite an upheaval in both the local and immigrant families contracted by the firms. In the first place, women had to work away from home and abandon their children. In the second, many couples broke up as the migrant women took up relationships with married or single men from Lomas.

With the growth of the fishmeal industry from the 1960's onwards, fish species began to reduce in number, affecting families and communities engaged in artisanal fishing.

In the wake of the crisis affecting artisanal fisheries, women are now beginning to feel the need to work directly with their men in fishing. For example, they have now begun to mend nets in order to save on what they would have had to pay for this work (approximately three dollars). This is happening in Vila Vila and in places where it was not the general practice that women sell the fish caught by their men. Now, in order to get the best price and also earn a higher income, they themselves

have begun to market the produce. Same is the case in la Islilla. In Puerto Pizarro the number of women and children involved in extraction of black clams for the local and national market is growing.

5. Government Policy and Gender

The state of economic crisis that the country is facing (although official statistics make claims to the contrary) is forcing several families and the community to use the facilities of the *Comedores Populares* and *Comités de Vasos de Leche* more and more frequently. These women-based organizations distribute the free provisions provided by the government to alleviate the misery of the population. This situation is the result of an economic policy favouring multinationals and large firms. The consequences of these policies: closure of factories, legalization of large-scale layoffs, unstable labour conditions, bankruptcy for the farmers dependent on the market because of the import of agricultural products.

There is a decline in fish species in the artisanal fishing zone—a crisis resulting from illegal and destructive industrial fishing within the five-mile zone and throughout the Peruvian waters, sanctioned by the State. In several cases the owners of the large boats and the proprietors of the large industrial fisheries firms are members of the *Marina de Guerra* (Navy) and some businessmen hold high-ranking posts in the government bodies of the fisheries sector. According to the fishermen, this means that petitions filed by organizations of artisanal fishermen at the Ministry of Fisheries, the Port Administration and the Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA) of the Fisheries Ministry demanding compliance with laws, and sanctions against those violating the five-mile zone, are ignored or merely filed away.

In the last ten years, conforming with international agreements on issues of Gender and Development, the State has made legal provisions to support the rights of women, but none are specific to women in the fisheries sector. Programmes and projects have been executed on a multi-sectoral basis by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Health, National Programme for Nutrition (PRONAA), Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Industry and Tourism, in collaboration with some NGOs.

6. Governmental and Non-governmental Programmes and Projects in the Fisheries Sector

The artisanal fisheries sector in Perú is not given as much importance as other sections of the population by governmental and non-governmental organizations. There is little recognition of the role and contribution of this sector to the national economy and to the nutritional requirements of the population. Even less so when it comes to women in this sector. Thus programmes and projects specifically aimed at the artisanal fisheries sector are scarce and the National Statistical Institute, which is responsible for the national census, does not have any data on the activities of women in the fisheries sector.

The Ministry of Fisheries (MIPE) and its National Directorate of Artisanal Fisheries, has no record of any current or past programme or project related to gender in the artisanal fisheries sector. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, the ministry had carried out some joint activities with the Federation for the Integration and Unification of Fishworkers of Peru (FIUPAP) on the issue. Thus it seems there was an initiative to establish Women's Committees in FIUPAP and its

...the State has made legal provisions to support the rights of women, but none are specific to women in the fisheries sector.

member organizations. The first attempt was made in October 1991, at the time of the National Assembly of Delegates of FIUPAP, held in the Port of Paita, an event that was attended by representatives from all the membership organizations. Hilda de Castillo, “Paquita”, was elected the first President of the Women’s Committee of the Federation. Benavides Rosary, an employee of MIPE appointed as adviser to this committee, took charge of all training activities in drying, salting and smoking of fish in some ports.

In 1995 MIPE, in co-ordination with FIUPAP, organised an event of the Women’s Committee in the premises of the Recreation Centre in Huampaní-Lima, along with the National Assembly of Delegates of FIUPAP. That opportunity was used to try and reactivate the women’s committees by naming a new president, but as had happened earlier it remained only an intent. Presumably, because the committees were created artificially, they failed to respond to the concrete problems and needs of *caletas* and to provide solutions.

Women do not need power or public office to exercise influence and authority with their spouses, family and community.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. Peruvian fishing communities are made up of family-based units, founded on traditional culture where women are one of the principal actors in the society and community. Social security comes from nature’s process of regeneration.
2. There is judicious division of labour between men, women and children, based on customs, physical strength and needs with each one assuming their responsibilities in the fishing group, recognizing that every chore depends on the other. It is not possible

to regenerate marine life individually or independently.

3. In the traditional cultures which provide the framework for our fishing society, the roles of men and women are neither specialized nor exclusive. Rather they complement each other and are part of a whole.
4. Women do not need power or public office to exercise influence and authority with their spouses, family and community. They do so from their homes and through natural organizations such as the kinship group.
5. The value, respect and protection given to women depends above all on cohesion in community relationships. Women will be recognized and respected if there is recognition and respect for elders, relatives, figures of authority and all members of the community, marine species, and also if there are strong religious beliefs.
6. Sustaining the family subsistence economy not only provides socio-economic protection for the women, the family and the community, it also promotes the continuity of harmonious relationships between nature, society and culture.

Recommendations

1. Recognizing the role of women, like that of children means protecting the natural and socio-cultural environment that allows them to live in harmony with their surroundings and with themselves. This means not depriving them of their beaches and working areas, the species they fish for, their peaceful *caleta* life. It means that we should not attempt to change their lifestyles which are based on principles like loyalty, affection and respect for others, including women.

2. In any programme or project that deals with gender, the entire process of fisheries and participation of the family must be taken into account. Activities including trade should be situated in such a process. The following should be considered:
 - Provide economic support to fishermen so that they can work, help them purchase their fishing equipment, carry out vessel repairs, share and exchange experiences and knowledge on a fishworker to fishworker basis, locally, nationally and internationally.
 - Help their wives learn how to repair nets, encourage women in different *caletas* to exchange experiences, provide them with credit facilities for fish trading and for acquiring materials necessary for work, such as for smoking fish, craftwork etc.
 - As regards children, work with schools to help them develop a curriculum in keeping with reality and needs of the artisanal fisheries sector.
3. To undertake projects that have nothing to do with fisheries or with reinforcing familial and interdependent relationships is to separate the women from the roles that they have traditionally played in the regeneration of life, the family and the community. The last can only sustain itself by creating contemporary cultural elements geared towards reaffirming and revitalizing our cultural roots in the artisanal fishery.
4. The new experiences that authorities want to promote must take into account the feelings of the fisher people, their historical and cultural context, as well as the experiences and impact of development projects previously carried out in the locality or region.

Footnote

- ¹ The Centro Latinoamericano de Pesca's 'Artisanal Marine Fishing Census 1995-96', is based on the study undertaken by the Marine Institute of Perú (Instituto del Mar del Perú, IMARPE) and completed by the Centre (verbal communication with Hernán Peralta).

Map of Peru



5. Background Paper: Perú

Women in the Fisheries Sector

Traditional Role of Women in Fisheries

Traditionally, the participation of women in the fisheries sector in Peru has been limited to performing jobs to help fishermen. This includes chores like helping in the repair of fishing equipment and selling the daily catch in the local market. Very few women have played significant roles in large-scale marketing. These women have been able to acquire refrigerated trucks and some have even invested in fishing boats in various ports along the coast.

On rare occasions women have participated in small-scale fishing expeditions. Some have worked to collect shellfish along the beaches, while others have fished using *chalanas*, boats with a capacity of half to one tonne. Some women have worked as *pinteras*, using fishing gear that consists of a nylon cord with a piece of lead and a hook with bait. Yet other women have worked as sea-divers.

Thus the participation of women in fisheries in Peru has traditionally been very limited and their roles have not undergone any major change over the years. We can, however, say that now there is a greater interest in actively participating in programmes for defending the fishing zones of the artisanal fisheries sector. Women continue to work within the community and the tendency is to opt for organized work as part of women's committees in every *caleta* or port .

Female Labour in Industrial Fish Plants

Women have worked in large numbers in factories canning tuna and sardines,

filleting, salting or shelling fish and shellfish such as the transparent goby, winkle/snail and oyster, or in de-heading prawns. Women either get paid a minimum wage for their work or get paid by piece-work.

The canning factories or shelling centres where they work are usually located far from their homes. Job security depends on the vacancies that exist in the canning factories or processing companies. The salary is generally much lesser than that paid to male workers.

Labour laws regulate salaried jobs for women. These, however, are generally not adhered to in terms of salaries, working hours, safety, social benefits, unemployment benefits and medical facilities in health centres for the worker and her family (especially childbirth and pre- and post-natal care).

With organized unionization in the main ports of Peru such as in Talara, Paita, Chimbote, Huarmey, Callao, Pisco and Ilo, women have managed to ensure the implementation of some of their rights. But declining fish resources and decreasing job opportunities over the last few years have meant that these rights have once again been lost.

To sum up, women in processing plants work in sub-human conditions. Their workday can stretch from 8 to 24 hours, day or night, including holidays. Their salary is by the quantity (in kilos or units) they process every day. The workers are unfortunately not organized and are unable to do anything about this inhuman exploitation. Except on a few occasions, they have not gone beyond the mere intent to get organized as a group.

By Claudio Nizama Silva, General Secretary of the Federation for the Integration and Unification of Fishworkers of Peru (FIUPAP), the national fishworker organization of Peru, and Cecilia Vidal Baldera, President of the Women's Committee of the Association of Fishworkers of Puerto Huarmey.

Incorporation of Women into FIUPAP

As a consequence of the economic crisis in Peru and the scarcity of fish products, FIUPAP, since its inception in June 1991, has been trying to incorporate women into organizations. Not exactly as workers of the sea—though there are exceptions in some cases, especially in inland waters, such as in Puno in Lake Titicaca, where women even work as skippers of fishing boats—but more as community workers.

To this end an attempt began in 1992 to form a Committee of the Wives of Artisanal Fishermen (*Comités de Damas de los Pescadores Artesanales*). In January 1996, the National Committee of the Wives of Artisanal Fishermen of Peru (*Comite Nacional de Damas de los Pescadores Artesanales del Peru*) was set up. This was during a National Convention on the ‘Role of Women in the Integral Development of Artisanal Fisheries’. This event was held with support from the Ministry of Fisheries, the body responsible for the management of the fisheries sector in the country.

Unfortunately, the executive committee of this national body never began to function and what took such effort to organize was abandoned, partly due to the lack of interest on the part of the then leaders of FIUPAP.

The decline of marine resources due to overexploitation and climatic phenomena like the El Niño, combined with unemployment and economic recession motivated women, among them the wives of fishermen, to organize Public Kitchens and Mother’s Clubs. This was to help deal with the problem of basic nutrition in the most deprived sectors of the population.

Since then, women’s committees consisting of the wives of fishworkers have once again begun to form support

groups in some ports and *caletas*. But now they do not limit themselves to working in the kitchens as they do not receive any remuneration or payment for such jobs. They now work alongside the fishermen towards defending their fishing zones from the greed of the big companies, and from those who use prohibited fishing equipment or methods such as toxic substances and explosives. They also participate in activities to obtain titles to the land where they have built their houses. Various social organizations of fishworkers have women in their management councils.

Women are participating actively and enthusiastically towards obtaining, for their husbands, Life and Accident Insurance and Social Security Benefits. Others are ready to participate more actively with the fishermen. In the ‘Work Plan’ approved by the ‘First Assembly of the New Millennium of the Fishworkers of Peru’, organized by FIUPAP on 3 and 4 April 2000, women’s participation has been declared necessary for the achievement of the much-desired integrated development of the artisanal fisheries sector of Peru.

With a change in the strategies adopted by fishworkers in order to achieve development through training and strengthening of the social organization, women are now showing more interest and the will to participate actively. We believe, therefore, that in the search for a solution to the crisis that has afflicted the artisanal fisheries sector today women will play an important part as well as support and provide the indefatigable strength the fishworker needs to continue with his struggle for prosperity and growth.

Official Data on Women in Fisheries

Based on the official statistics provided by the National Administration of Artisanal Fisheries of the Ministry of Fisheries, we have the following figures:

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Artisanal fishworkers | 28,082 |
| Industrial fishworkers | 12,000 |
| Collectors of clams, prawns and larvae | 5,000 |
| Fishworkers on shore (divers, rope-makers) | 2,218 |
| Fishworkers in inland waters, rivers and lakes | 15,111 |
| <i>Total Fishworkers</i> | <i>50,411</i> |
| Artisanal fish processors | |
| Filleting, salting, smoking etc (estimated) | 5,000 |
| Social Organizations | 289 |
| Unions | 51 |
| Guilds | 33 |
| Committees and others | 21 |
| <i>Total Social Organizations</i> | <i>394</i> |

Analysis of existing fisheries legislation

The General Law of Fisheries No. 25977 dated 7 December 1992 and its amendment of 14 January 1994, are not discriminatory against women working in fisheries. It describes, in generic terms, who a fishworker is and the necessary requisites for obtaining permits—fishing registration cards or the patent of sea divers. In the amendment, these prerequisites are elaborated upon for fishermen as well as for collectors and processors. Neither the Fisheries Law nor its amendment prohibits women from working in this sector.

Women are taking an active part in organizations. Some are administrators and occupy important positions in managing the fishing infrastructure provided by the State. They, therefore, represent fishworkers when it comes to the management of ports and other infrastructure.

Women Fishworkers and Social Security

Women who work in fisheries are considered eligible for benefits, which include not only social security but also life and accident insurance. Both these benefits that were granted in 1999 to fishworkers in the artisanal sector include women in their scope of coverage whether as lawful wives, partners or companions of fishermen.

Attitude towards Women's Participation

In a majority of fishworker organizations in the artisanal sector, there is a strong belief today that the presence of women is a must for their daily struggle to defend their fishing zones. Their participation in the community is seen as vital in achieving the development needed to strengthen artisanal fisheries. This can be achieved through the allocation and management of resources, with the aim of ensuring their rational and optimal participation.

In a majority of fishworker organizations in the artisanal sector, there is a strong belief today that the presence of women is a must for their daily struggle to defend their fishing zones.

Map of Brazil



6. Background Paper: Brazil

Women in Fisheries: North-eastern Pará

This report situates the artisanal fisheries of the state of Pará against the social, political and economic backdrop of the region, with the objective of highlighting the presence of women in this sector. It is based on data collated from field research carried out by institutions, by government and non-governmental organizations, and also from bibliographies on fisheries and fishing communities in Amazonia. This report is to be presented at the workshop on *Gender and Coastal Fishing Communities in Latin America* to be held from 10 to 15 June 2000, in Prainha do Canto Verde, Ceará, Brazil.

1. Background

Pará (Amazonia) is the third largest region in the country in terms of volume of fish production. The estimates available from *Federação de Pescadores do Pará* (Fishermen Federation from Pará State) indicate that there are approximately 100,000 fishworkers in the state. This means that about 500,000 people depend on this activity for a living. Given that the state had a resident population of 5,510,849 in 1996, we estimate that almost 10 per cent are dependent on fisheries for livelihood. This figure does not take into account the importance of fish in the diet, especially in rural areas.

The data in this report refers primarily to the coastal and estuarine regions of the state where the activities of the Women in Fisheries (WIF) project, as well as of the social bodies related to this project—the *Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores* (CPP) and the *Movimento de Pescadores da Zona do Salgado* (MOPESAL)—are concentrated.

According to data from the erstwhile SUDEPE (*Superintendência* for

Fisheries Development, 1988), of the 100,000 fishworkers in the State, around 55 per cent are concentrated in the coastal municipalities of north-eastern Pará, and are engaged in marine and estuarine fishing. Recent statistics confirm this figure. More than half the accounted fish production in the state in 1996 and 1997 came from coastal municipalities, from Belém to Viseu, including the fishing ports from Marajó Island. (Centre for Research on Fisheries in North Brazil-CEPNOR, *apud* Alcântara Neto, 1998).

The state of Pará has both industrial as well as artisanal fishing. For the first, the main focus is the external market (domestic and international). Artisanal fisheries supply the local, regional and national markets. The traditional sector comprises a heterogeneous mix of people and social conditions. The industrial fleet comprises a little over five per cent of the total fleet, and is greatly outnumbered by the artisanal fleet. CEPNOR-IBAMA (the Brazilian Institute for Environment) figures mention that in 1998 there were 3,966 boats in the 15 coastal municipalities of Pará. Of these, only 204 belonged to the industrial sector. A large number of small boats are non-motorized. Wooden boats, up to 12-meters long, predominate. While the industrial fleet practices motorized trawling, both for fish (the *Ariidae*, catfish being the main catch) and for prawns, the traditional fleet employs mobile apparatus, with projections for the netting and *espinhéis*, which are long lines with hundreds of hooks.

Aquaculture is relatively new in this region. The government is making efforts (through the State Agriculture Ministry, for example) to develop the potential in the region which, according to experts is high, given the hydrological conditions

By Ana Laide Barbosa, Josinete Lima and Maria Cristina Maneschy. Anna Laide Barbosa is the Co-ordinator for the Rural Fisheries Council, Northern region (CPP), Josinete Lima is graduating in Social Sciences from the Federal University of Pará and is a member of the Eneida de Moraes Research and Study Group for Women and Gender Relations (GPEM) of the Federal University Pará (UFPA). Maria Cristina Maneschy is Joint Professor of the Department of Sociology in UFPA, researcher for GPEM and for the RENAS Project of the Emilio Goeldi Museu of Pará.

The inclusion of fishworkers in the 'special insurance' category for pensions and social security can be considered a major victory for these movements.

(Moraes-Riodades, personal communication). According to Val *et al*, (Moraes-Riodades, unpublished) there are around 450 aquaculture farms in the state. 16 municipalities cultivate fish and shrimp species. The main native species is the *Tambaqui* (*Colossmoa macroponium*). Hardly 14 native species are being cultivated, which is very low given the rich diversity of the fauna, asserts Moraes-Riodades who goes on to add that a majority of the producers are small and medium. Some fishworker *colônias* (recognized organizations which represent fishermen at the municipal level) in the state, like that of Araní (Z-40), Cametá (Z-16) and Abaetetuba (Z-14) support the practice of aquaculture by fishworker families, since it serves to supplement income in the face of fish scarcity and the difficulty in surviving solely on extractive fishing.

2. Fishing and Fishworkers in Pará: Heading Towards Political Recognition?

In the last few years, there have been a series of governmental measures, implemented or intended, which seem to have led to a better recognition of the fisheries sector. Besides, as a result of the mobilization of fishworkers in movements, support organizations etc, a new dynamic has been established. Studies on the social reality of artisanal fishworkers have recorded their growing mobilization favouring the growth of new forms of organization. (A.C. Diegues, 1998)

The inclusion of fishworkers in the 'special insurance' category for pensions and social security can be considered a major victory for these movements. Provisions such as these mean that men can receive pension at 60 years and women at 55 years, besides availing other social

security benefits, which though limited, are part of any citizen's rights. Also important is the unemployment insurance for riverine and inshore fishers, though this has been restricted to those places where 'closed areas' have been instituted for the reproduction of stocks. In the state of Pará there has been, since 1998, a law regulating the harvesting of crabs. An innovative aspect of this law is the thrust given to the formation of local associations for the protection of mangroves.

Fishworkers have co-ordinated with farmers, those involved in extracting, and other segments of producers from Gritos da Terra to obtain subsidized credit for fisheries. The result of these negotiations has been the creation of lines of financing for social development, like the special FNO *Crédito Produtivo* (Productive Credit). This state government finance programme that offers small credit has also taken to financing production equipment such as boats, nets, motors etc.

PEP (Professional Education Program) is an interesting programme that has been introduced with the help of the Labour Ministry. Hundreds of short training programmes were carried out in fishing communities on methods of fish processing, fish capture and handling techniques. In spite of the lack of opportunities for the practical application of what was learned and the lack of continuity in the programme, this was perhaps the first effort on the part of the government to educate fishworkers on the finer aspects of their jobs.

Meetings, training programmes and round-table conferences have been organized by fishworker movements and NGOs, which reflects the new dynamics. Current trends must be examined and evaluated by the different organizations involved. The efforts made by all the segments linked to fishing—directly or indirectly—are important. There is a need to put into

practice the proposals suggested at various forums so that isolated struggles and victories are consolidated and national awareness on the issue is created.

3. Women in Fisheries

At this juncture we only have the tentative beginnings of the recognition of women in fisheries. A lot remains to be done in connection with their participation in fishworker organizations and ensuring that there is at least a token consideration of their needs when it comes to formulation of policies in this sector. Signs of recognizing the importance of women's inputs are reflected in the events that have been organized of late in Brazil in the state of Pará, where the topic of women in fisheries has been the main theme.

3.1 Historical Perspective

Data available suggests that women in this region have always been active in fisheries in spite of not 'being in the forefront'.

In general terms women used to play far more significant roles in the past. This was because fishing used to be a more labour-intensive process. Among the innovations that altered this trend, the most important was the use of nylon threads in nets from the 1960s onwards. Before this nets and lines were made of cotton thread, requiring them to be periodically dyed, often with vegetable dyes. The current practice of using ice did away with the chore of salting and drying the fish. Though the practice of salting still exists, it is on a much smaller scale. Also, the development of roadways after the 1960s meant that intermediaries could now make their way to the beaches and buy their product as soon as the fishing boats returned from the seas.

Evidently women from coastal communities too had a more regular and active role. Records reveal that in the era of sail boats, fishing used to be carried

out much closer to the land as there were more fish there. With the introduction of motor boats around the beginning of the 70s, and with the advent of the industrial fleet, pressure mounted considerably, making it necessary to go out much farther into the sea, for longer periods. Thus it became difficult for women to participate more fully.

If, on the one hand, the modernization of equipment made work much easier, on the other, the exigencies of survival have continued to necessitate the active participation of women, children, and even elders who are capable of working. Keeping in mind that the purchasing power of fisherfolk has reduced, production for direct consumption (shellfish collection, the production of coal, livestock breeding, farming) has become even more important. In places of tourist importance along the coasts there is always a demand for seafood and many women engage in the harvesting of these resources.

Women who continue to take an active part in fishing are still accorded the status traditionally given them. Their activities are viewed as 'support' for the running of the household. A majority of the *colônias* follow the traditional sexual division of labour. The 'double-workday' of women continues to be thought of as 'part time activity'. A woman involved in the administration of the *colônias* is still considered a little 'out of place'. Their inclusion in organizations—to give the authorities due credit they are now giving incentives to encourage membership—is seen more as a means to avail pension and social security benefits.

3.2 Women: Invisibility and Actual Presence

The pressure on women in the community to contribute to the family income is a recent development. In the cities, where

For even to consider the role of women as 'helpers' is the first step towards their recognition as effective partners in fisheries and in the sustenance of communities.

maritime fishing abounds, and where every fishing expedition lasts about a week on average, womenfolk complain about the inadequacy of the 'vouchers' given to them by their companions for running the household. These vouchers are a cash advance paid to fishermen before the trip by the owner of the boat or the intermediary financing the fishing expedition. Such vouchers are given to ensure that at least part of the needs of the fisherman's family are met during his absence.

Employment options are limited. In tourist centres (Mosqueiro, Salinópolis, Bragança, Ajuruteua, Marudá...) one such option is housekeeping. To find work as domestic help is possible in cities, so are the chances of finding jobs in the public sector. But the fact that women have to take care of the house and the children as well as handle a job outside makes them feel working from home is the best option. The city of Vigia is known for its net weavers. In the west, from Marapanim to Viseu, the collection of mussels and fishing for crabs meant for commercial purposes engages the women of these families. In Vigia, São Caetano de Odivelas and Braganza, the presence of fish processing factories offers opportunity for temporary work, where workers are generally paid on a piece work basis. Farming is carried out in many fishing communities. In places where both farming and fishing are practiced, it is the women who tend to the farming chores.

During the course of our investigations we interviewed leaders (men) of fishworker *colônias* in the nine municipalities that we visited. It was obvious that they acknowledge the role of women as productive workers.

There are women who collect seafood and those who fish with nets. They help their husbands

with fixed traps, they collect sernambi (kind of small mussel), crabs...some of them place traps in the mangrove swamps. They also weave fixed trap nets.
(President of the *Colônia* Z-29)

Such statements, despite being only partial endorsement, do help the cause. For even to consider the role of women as 'helpers' is the first step towards their recognition as effective partners in fisheries and in the sustenance of communities.

The extension of pension rights to fishermen has motivated women to seek these rights for themselves. It is clear that things have changed and that some *colônias* are concerned more than the others about 'professionalizing' their womenfolk. This is the case in the Z-40 *colônia* in Aranaí, in Marajó Island (north-eastern Pará). The secretary of Z-40 says that fisherwomen from the area (riverine fishers) are benefiting from unemployment insurance.

In this region women participate in fisheries in various ways: they fish in shallow waters close to home though they do not fish at all when pregnant or menstruating, giving in to social and cultural pressures. Most of the times the product is meant for sale, as is the case with shellfish collection in the mangrove swamps and beaches. But sometimes it is used for domestic consumption and distribution among a network of relatives. Among other activities related to fisheries, women engage in the making of fishing gear and in processing the 'fruits of the sea'. The absence of regular buyers, low prices and delays in payment are the common problems they face.

It is noteworthy that the presidents of the *colônias* also mentioned the various jobs that women did for the family, especially in connection with sending their men off to sea. They also perform rituals that are

symbolically important, like preparing ‘herbal baths’, chanting prayers and conducting rituals for good luck and protection before fishing expeditions.

If statistics fail to evaluate correctly the productive work of fishermen, they are completely silent on women.

Legislation per se, is not sexist. If a woman is classified as a fisherwoman, she enjoys the same rights as a man. She can hold a license, avail of credit and technical assistance, enjoy equal opportunities and unemployment benefits. In practice, however, things do not quite work this way.

In the first place, the existing definition of what constitutes fisheries is narrow and limited to harvesting of fish in aquatic conditions. In reality, however, fisheries is the sum total of various activities, though according to the definition it is difficult to include related activities carried out on land. But some *colônias* have already begun to encourage their womenfolk to register themselves in associations in recognition of the fact that women perform tasks that are indispensable to fisheries, even in the domestic arena.

When it comes to getting loans, women get excluded because of the fact that credit is extended only to those activities where profit is assured: maritime fishing, purchase of boats, motors and nets.

3.3 Women’s Organizations: New Political Entities?

North-eastern Pará has been witness to a new trend over the past five years. They are seeking alternatives to traditional set-ups like the *colônias*. Several women’s associations have mushroomed where women hold positions of importance. Table 12 presents data about six women groups.

There have been several motivating factors behind this new beginning. The attempt to generate income, and explore

alternative avenues to do so, is one important reason why women have united to form associations. Government programmes and the initiatives of non-governmental bodies directed at small producer groups have also influenced these women’s organizations. Groups that already existed in the community—mostly linked to the Catholic Church (Mothers’ Clubs, CEBs or Grassroot Ecclesiastical Communities)—are enthusiastically supporting these new associations. Where the *colônias* have opened up and admitted women, integration has followed naturally. Once groups are formed, the exchange of ideas and access to new social spaces has meant a reconsideration of traditional roles. Such groups tend to follow examples set by other organizations that have been successful in welcoming women into their fold.

They do face difficulties. The expectations of the members are often too high. To achieve objectives requires time, needs to be aided by market studies and directed by good leadership, etc. while the goals of the group tend to be short-term. It thus takes an extraordinary effort to keep the morale high. How are such groups to obtain funds to keep their independence?

It is too early to say that women are being effectively integrated as productive and professional individuals in class organizations. The readiness of some *colônias* to register women and encourage their participation has not led to any great changes. A majority of the women’s groups that have been constituted are isolated from the *colônias*.

The women, including the leaders, do not see the *colônias* as being their own. And the fishermen do not see women as important agents or representatives. The ‘cultural issue’ of gender roles is still an important one. The goal of recognizing women as legitimate fishworkers has, therefore, not quite been achieved.

The existing definition of what constitutes fisheries is narrow and limited to harvesting of fish in aquatic conditions.

Table 12: Details of women’s associations in six coastal municipalities of Pará state

| Name/ Founding date | Members | Main Objectives | Mains Activities | Credit Obtained/ Courses Followed | Problems |
|--|---------|--|---|--|---|
| Women in fisheries association, City of Vigia 1996 | 25 | Income-generation | Net weaving courses from PEP | Nylon for nets | Lack of place to work, market restrictions, lack of management training |
| Women in fisheries and agriculture from Pereru, 1998 | 30 | Income generation, information, social rights | Crab processing, Small snack bar, Events organization, Wood | Productive credit for crab processing, from PEP preservation | Lack of place to work, market restrictions |
| Women in fishing from Cachoeira, 1996 | 35 | Income-generation, information, social rights | Net weaving, Events organization | 8 credit plans for nylon acquisition | Lack of place to work, market restrictions |
| Women from the fishing area of Maruda | 31 | Income-generation, social rights | Home medicine, handicraft, cultural events | Home medicine laboratory | Need to complete the house for organization of women fishworkers |
| Group from Baía do Sol 1999 | 64 | Stimulating fishermen <i>colônias</i> , income generation, information social rights | Events organization, raising funds for the <i>colônia</i> , community activities, link to women’s movements | Courses from PEP, CPP and GEPEM, organization of a course for fishermen’s children | Lack of resources to develop their activities |
| Women crab processors group in Bacuriteua / Bragança | 15 | Income-generation | Crab - processing | | Lack of place to work, limited resources, need for management training |

Source: Field work of MOPEPA and CPP.

3.4 Women in Colônias: What Leaders Say

The number of women registered in *colônias*, as compared with men, is still small. While presidents of *colônias* talk of the registration of women, the only benefit they are willing to offer them is pension; few consider health and maternity aid.

What stands out in declarations made by the presidents’ is the absence of programmes and projects for the fisherfolk in the *colônias*. The fishermen themselves are ignorant of their rights and duties. In most places the *colônia* is reduced to merely accomplishing basic functions like forwarding claims to the INSS (Social Welfare National Institute) confirming the legitimacy of enlisted

Table 13: Registered fishworkers in the *colônias*

| <i>Colônia</i> | M | F | Total | Members that pay the <i>colônia</i> monthly fee on time | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---|------------|--------------|
| | | | | M | W | Total |
| Z 03 | 2,900 | 100 | 3,000 | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Z 04 | 451 | 49 | 500 | 451 | 49 | 500 |
| Z 05 | 1,970 | 30 | 2,000 | 48 | 2 | 50 |
| Z 06 | 2,250 | 350 | 2,600 | 50 | 100 | 150 |
| Z 07 | 1,908 | 92 | 2,000 | 118 | 92 | 210 |
| Z 17 | 1,501 | 238 | 1,739 | | | |
| Z 18 | 1,800 | 200 | 2,000 | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Z 23 | 490 | 10 | 500 | 50 | 2 | 52 |
| Z 29 | | 40 | 40 | | | |
| Z 40 | 280 | 98 | 378 | | | |
| Total | 13,550 | 1,207 | 14,757 | 917 | 445 | 1,362 |

fishworkers, and other such mundane chores that are part of the bureaucratic process. This demonstrates the fragility of fishworker representation. If this is the way *colônias* handle the problems of fishermen, they fare worse when it comes to the problems of fisherwomen—the perception being that their problems are no different from the usual ones that any fishworker faces. For some presidents even recognizing women as professionals is an act of ‘benevolence’ which they hope will stand them in good stead during election time, a kind of ‘patron-beneficiary’ relationship.

The presidents of *colônias* do not show interest in discussing problems related to women fishworkers, except in a few *colônias* like Z-40 of Aranaí and Z-21 of Santarém, which have set up cells to deal with problems specific to women.

Table 13 reflects the number of men and women registered in *colônias* in ten municipalities of Pará State. It shows that the number of men is always higher.

Ironically, the proportion of women who actually pay the monthly dues is higher than that of men.

4. Final Analysis

In north-eastern Pará the mobilization of women has occurred more in those regions where, as a result of diverse influences (movements, external or local organizations etc), women have been motivated to evaluate their experiences and life histories, where the women worked with pride in ‘being a woman’. Only such positive steps can help her be the ‘master of her fate’.

In the prevailing situation a woman is welcome as long as she accepts status quo and merely adds to the numbers in the organization. To change the cultural mind-set women themselves need to recognize that they have a valid role in the administration of the affairs of fishworkers and their communities. It is this reality of fishworkers in Brazil that the report has attempted to present.

Bibliography

- Alcântara Neto, C. P. 1998: *Projeto para ordenamento e desenvolvimento da pesca e aqüicultura do Estado do Pará*. Belém, CEPNOR. 39p. CEPNOR. Boletim Estatístico da Pesca Marítima no Pará. 1996, 1997 e 1998. (inédito)
- Diegues, A. C. 1998: Os pescadores artesanais no Brasil: uma atividade profissional e um modo de vida. In: Seminário Sobre Pesca Artesanal, Conferência dos Ministros Responsáveis pelas Pescas dos Países de Língua Portuguesa. Salvador. *Súmula*. pp. 70-76.
- SINPESCA, 2000: A pesca industrial no Pará. Belém. (inédito)
- SUDAM/OEA, 2000: *Rede de pesca e aqüicultura da Amazônia – REPAQ: projeto executivo*. Belém.
- SUDEPE-PA/AP, 1988: *O setor pesqueiro no Estado do Pará; diagnóstico (versão preliminar)*. Belém, COREG PA/AP. 81p.
-

7. Background Paper: Brazil

Female Labour in the Industrial Fisheries Sector in the State of Pará, Brazil: Characteristics and Trends

Introduction

This document presents the characteristics of female labour in fish processing plants in the city of Belém, Pará. The industry utilizes women's labour on a large scale on which few studies have been carried out. We have made an attempt to examine the crisis in industrial fisheries in order to appreciate the changes that are taking place in the working conditions of the labourers in processing plants.

Recent History

The industrial fisheries sector of Pará was established after 1968 as a result of the convergence of two 'development' policies that were being pursued at that time: one, the 'populating' of Amazonia, for which many financial incentives such as tax deductions were being provided to attract capital investment in this region; and two, the national policy of fisheries development, which was export-centric (A. Mello, 1995). An analysis of the national fisheries development policy shows that most of the firms that benefited from the fiscal incentives were located in the south of the country (A.C. Diegues, 1983). Typically, in the industrial fisheries sector the concentration was on the production of a few marine species sold in the export market, such as prawns (*Farfantepenaeus subtilis*), lobsters, *piramutabas* (*Brachyplatystoma vaillantii*) and others.

Industrial fisheries in the northern region produce prawns, *piramutaba*, dourada (*Brachyplatystoma flavicans*) and the pargo (*Lutjanus purpureus*). Some years

ago, companies from the north-east began sending their fleet into the northern waters to catch lobster. According to data provided by the network of projects in fisheries and aquaculture of Amazonia (SUDAM, 2000) all these species are caught in the estuarine and oceanic regions in northern Brazil. In this region, as in the south of the country, the effects of overfishing began to be felt within a few years. One of the reasons for the relocation of factories from the south to the north was the consequences of this predatory trend in large-scale fishing. (A.C. Diegues, 1983).

What is immediately obvious is the fact that even within a short time the negative aspect of pursuing this aggressive policy of export began to be manifested. Besides, as analyzed by A.C. Diegues, a whole range of producers—autonomous fishermen, proprietors of small- or medium-sized ships—did not benefit from this developmental policy. Individual players on the whole were excluded from the fiscal incentives offered.

The sector was thus marked by controversy, which included the numerous conflicts with traditional fisherfolk—a lot has been written on the subject (A.F.Mello, 1985; V.Loureiro, 1985, among others). From the early 80s, fishworker *colônias* had been complaining of the losses suffered by the traditional fisheries sector. To give them their due government agencies attempted to regulate the area meant for industrial fleets. Fishing with motorized trawlers within ten miles from the coast was restricted. But the lack of effective enforcement has continued to lead to a violation of these limits.

By Maria Cristina Maneschy. This was prepared in collaboration with the sociologist Ducilene Melo da Silva, who carried out interviews with the workers in various factories in Belém, Pará and also collected data to support this study.

The fact is that the establishment of industrial fisheries promoted the increase in, and diversification of, exports from Pará. The introduction of large-scale fish processing plants with deep-freeze facilities was an innovative move in this region. According to a recent official document: “In the decade of the 1980s fish came to occupy the ninth position in the list of products exported from the State of Pará.” (SUDAM, 2000) The data compiled in this document indicate that the resources for the species mentioned above are under risk owing to overexploitation. Bankruptcy, closure of companies, selling of installations to outside parties is now a common occurrence.

However, the absence of research data combined with dependency on a few markets—USA and Japan—are some of the factors that go towards explaining the extremely difficult times that the industrial fisheries sector has been seeing in the last few years.

Profile of Industrial Fisheries in Pará

A lot of the companies in north and north-eastern Brazil are situated in Belém, Pará, and there are others in Fortaleza, Ceará, and in the State of Amapá. The IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment), a body which controls and regulates fishing activities, issues licenses for 250 vessels for prawn and 48 vessels for *piramutaba* in the northern coast of Brazil.

The prawn season is from February to November. Steel vessels, 22-meters long with 375 hp engines and a gross of 100 tonnes, are employed. They have a refrigeration system on board. The crew comprises five men and the journey lasts 45 days. Each ship has two trawl nets (double rigs). The prawns are shelled on board, washed, brined and stored in the refrigerated chambers. On land they are washed again, classified according to size and packed for refreezing until the time

for export. According to the Industrial Fisheries Syndicate of Pará and Amapá (SINPESCA), the produce, which in 1998 was more than 2000 tonnes, is primarily exported to Japan (50 per cent) and USA (30 per cent), while 20 per cent goes to the domestic market. The syndicate admits that it may have gone overboard while issuing licenses for trawlers. Today they await the results of research to bring in new regulations in licenses for prawn fishing.

The same kind of boats are employed for catching fish, though without refrigeration facilities on board. Fish is preserved on ice. The trips last 15 days. 48 boats hold licenses to operate along the northern coast though SINPESCA admits that there are some clandestine operations. Trawls dragged by two boats are used to catch fish which is sold as fillets, in pieces, whole, without scales and without the head. At present 60 per cent of the produce is meant for sale in the internal market and 40 per cent is exported to USA, where the *piramutaba* and the *dourada* go by the name of catfish. The by-catch is sold in the national market, affirms the Syndicate. *Piramutaba* heads are sold in the north-east as bait for lobsters. The data furnished by SINPESCA confirms that little more than 600 tonnes of fish were exported in 1998—a drastic fall from 1993 when more than 2000 tonnes were exported.

43 fishing companies of the region were associated with the Syndicate of Industries in 1999, 40 in Pará and 3 in Amapá. Most of the companies are located in Belém (35). On an average 4,000 people work in this line, but of late this number has reduced considerably. In 1999 hardly 2,800 people were employed in this sector, around 1,500 in fishing and 1,300 in post-capture activities, including women who worked in processing. The data presented by the Syndicate shows evidence of the declining trend in industrial fisheries, as can be inferred from the

reduction of fleet, volume and value of exports, and also in the decreasing numbers of employees.

Effects of the ‘Crisis’ on Work Relations

The term crisis with reference to the difficult situation that the industrial fisheries sector is currently facing must be used cautiously. In fact, the problems in the industry can be said to be a direct result of the very manner in which this sector was established and the way in which it was developed. As we know, a number of government incentives were extended to export firms, especially those of foreign origin without recognizing, even excluding, existing structures and social agents who were active within the sector. Analysts based their development plans and programmes on certain presuppositions: small-scale fisheries were thought to have low productivity and were seen as technologically backward, not open to ‘modernization’ (M.A. Motta-Maués, 1984; A.F.Mello, 1985). W.Leitão (1995) is right when she says that development policies did not take into consideration the indigenous practices and traditional knowledge systems employed by fishermen of the region.

Here are some indicators on production in the sector in the 1990s which will help understand the actual changes at work. During this time industrial fisheries faced major decline in total production and was vulnerable to fluctuations in the outside market. Among the consequences were the fall in employment rate and deterioration in work conditions.

There tends to be a high turnover of women workers in processing plants—a common feature in this line of work. Because of variations in volume of catch, patterns of expenditure and need to hire labour are never constant. All through the last decade the critical condition of the sector has led to bankruptcy of several

companies and involvement of third parties. The data collected from the research done by D.Silva (1999) on women workers in fish processing plants suggests that there has been a fall in employment of regular employees with work permits while temporary jobs are on the rise. Companies are getting rid of their own fleet and discharging their crews. Boats are sold or hired out to skippers who have been laid-off. Co-operatives of fishworkers are constituted with credit obtained from the settlement of workers’ dues by companies. On the other hand, the companies that get rid of their fleet buy the produce of traditional fishermen with a view to reducing risks in production. Worker co-operatives are controversial for the simple reason that an unemployed worker may go back to being employed by his previous boss but not any longer on a regular basis. Are these co-operatives then legitimate or are they tactics employed by the company to cut down costs? There has been much debate in the Belém press on this issue.

From the point of view of business, therefore, there has been no consistent development policy. Indeed, state incentives have been reduced slowly—the beginning of 1990s saw the end of fiscal incentives. SINPESCA argues that the petroleum crisis and the resultant shortage of funds are also to blame for the recession. MERCOSUR, by facilitating fish imports, put pressure on the price ceiling of the national produce. The crisis in Asia, on its part, has affected the price in dollars of the Brazilian prawn sold in Japan. These circumstances have led to a bad debt situation in companies and a failure on their part to even be able to pay wages. They have sought the help of the federal government but feel that their pleas fall on deaf ears. They have demanded subsidies on fuel, tax exemptions and incentives for exports. They have suggested technical courses for fisheries; demanded that the federal

*The data
on women workers
in fish processing
plants suggests that
there has
been a fall in
employment of
regular employees
with work permits
while temporary
jobs are on
the rise.*

government provide unemployment insurance to fishworkers during the closed season to take the burden off them.

They have also demanded, with some justification, that the government control the clandestine outflow of fish from the state by road without payment of tax. It is estimated that consignments of nearly 150 tonnes of high-value fish—a considerable quantity by any standards—are smuggled out on a daily basis. This is done through a network of intermediaries who supply the large distributors in various states, mainly in the north-east. (F. Siqueira, 2000)

Inevitably there have been changes—cutting down of jobs, contracting to third parties, reduction of fleets and lesser and lesser buying from artisanal fishermen. CEPNOR (Centre for Research on Fisheries in North Brazil), a research institute affiliated to IBAMA, in its Statistical Bulletin on Maritime Fisheries in Pará (1996 and 1997) refers to this new problem while discussing the tricky issue of distinguishing the industrial from the artisanal fisheries. They have classified as industrial all the produce caught by motorized steel boats longer than 15 meters, with a closed deck. Catch from other boats, either fitted out by companies or bought by them is also industrial production because of the strategies employed by these firms to combat the crisis:

For a large industrial plant designed for fish processing, the decline in the production of piramutaba and prawns, has meant that the proprietors would look for alternatives to meet the demand. (CEPNOR, 1998)

References to these changes were found in another official document:

Marine reserves are threatened by overexploitation which has led to

the bankruptcy of industrial fleets (Barthen, 1990). With reduction in the fiscal incentives granted by the federal government, many of the fishing companies declared bankruptcy and proceeded to lease out their boats on a partnership basis, where the fishermen who do the work do not enjoy workers' rights, they only receive remuneration on the basis of number of trips undertaken. This has led to the mushrooming of irregular co-operatives that do not go by any labour laws. Their boats are unsafe and unhygienic. The conflict between the artisanal and industrial fisheries in the estuary is likely to become more serious in the face of the gradual decline in stocks. (SUDAM, 2000, p.25)

Then there are operators who set up companies called co-operatives that supply female labour for fish processing. They maintain a database of women, with or without experience, who are looking out for jobs. They are sent to the factories as and when required, according to the volume of catch to be processed. There have been no detailed studies on this issue, the information we obtained was gathered from visits to *syndicates*, through informal interviews with women workers, representatives of unions as well as by consulting material related to labour movements.

Division of Labour in Processing Plants

In general, the division of labour by sex in a processing plant follows a pattern. Men undertake pre-processing tasks—unloading at the port, transporting to the plant unit and weighing. Both men and women contribute to the initial stages of processing: breaking fish stings and placing the fish on conveyor belts. The

...there are operators who set up companies called co-operatives that supply female labour for fish processing.

work that follows takes place in an air-conditioned hall, where sanitation measures are strictly enforced. Most tasks here are performed by women—de-heading the fish, passing them through the rotatory saw (according to the species and market demand, it might be necessary to take off the skin), slicing the fish with a horizontal blade, de-boning, filleting, washing, packing, weighing and arranging the fish in trays. These trays are then transported to the freezer chambers where men take over.

Bibliography on this sector has few references to women, though E. Penner (1980) and A.F. Mello (1985) have profiled the women fishworkers of the 80s in Pará. More recently, D.Silva (1999) has compiled data on 26 women workers of Belém. 16 of them happen to be working without registration cards indicating temporary and unstable employment conditions. Sub-contracting by companies was a common feature going by the experience of those interviewed. The text below is based mainly on the D.Silva study, but also takes into account additional data collected during a survey of 30 women workers in April 2000, with the help of D. Melo.

A union leader interviewed by D. Silva (1999) had this to say:

Women, they say, are more 'skilled' at certain activities. And it is based on this that female labour is used. Women constitute 70 per cent of the fish processing industry.

It might be a useful qualification to have, but it comes with a cultural construct of gender attached to it that means that women's skills are not valued in monetary terms. A woman worker felt that certain gender attributes did make women more suited to this kind of job.

Because the woman is faster. The man gets the heavier jobs, he is

rough. The woman, she knows how to economize, she will cut right to the fish-bone, not lose any part of the flesh.

In fisheries, like in many other sectors, such attributes still continue to be associated with women despite the fact that all of these are standardized procedures that theoretically keep up with technological changes in processing methods.

Job Histories of Women Fishworkers

An analysis of the careers of women workers in the industry shows that a majority of them have worked in various processing plants. The crisis in fisheries has not left their lives and jobs untouched. "I left because they sent out the workers", is a common refrain. It would be worthwhile to cite a few other cases. We have used only first names on conditions of anonymity.

Neres, a 52 year old who has been in this line since 1979, has worked for various companies (and also as domestic help and in the wood industry during lean periods). She has had registration cards but has also had to sometimes work without one. She has quit jobs either because of illness in the family or "because they sent out the workers". 38-year-old Izabel has been working in this sector since 1985. She had a registration card in one firm between 1985 and 1988 but left when she conceived. She did resume work in a couple of years in a factory dealing in palm heart, but the company closed down.

Egidia, a 53-year-old experienced worker interviewed by D.Silva (1999) had been working since 1975 and possessed a registration card for many years. In 1998 she worked as casual labour earning around US\$5 per day. She had to quit work on and off, twice due to pregnancies:

"I left because they sent out the workers", is a common refrain.

It is obvious that this industry has no use for regular women workers.

I didn't have anyone to take care of the child. I would leave him with somebody or the other, I paid to have him taken care of, and so I decided to quit.

However she always got back to a job till she was eventually asked to leave as a part of the company's retrenchment operations.

All this leads us to believe that a majority of firms maintain a stable nucleus of workers who remain in employment for longer periods. The level of recruitment, however, varies. During lean periods or when fishing is banned, the firms tend to retain some workers for daily cleaning and preparation of packing material; others are sent home and are supposed to be off-duty, waiting to be called back to work anytime—indeed a consignment might suddenly arrive and they are made to work at a frenzied pace for long hours to finish processing. In such cases, the extra hours are not paid for because the company believes that the workers have already been compensated, even though each extra working hour is worth only a little more than US\$1.

When there are fluctuations in production and during ban periods, many women are dismissed. In this manner the professional history of the workers is subject to the whims of the industry. Cilene, a 36-year-old casual labourer finds employment only when there is a need for additional labour. At the time of the interview, in April 2000, she was without work "because fishing had stopped and they dismissed me." She considered herself lucky because her husband was employed. Her job only provides additional income.

In Vigia, a fishing port in Pará State, the main difference when compared with Belém, was that almost all women among the 15 interviewed had temporary jobs. Only two were regular employees. In Vigia, like in Belém, there tend to be huge

numbers of women in the industry. The lack of jobs in the city means that the ratio of women looking for jobs to jobs available tends to be dismally disproportionate. Here too, the workers were required to be able to put in extra hours whenever necessary.

To sum up the job histories of women workers:

- Mobility is high—women join and quit jobs with regularity;
- The reasons ascribed to the mobility are related to various stages in the life of a woman, such as pregnancy, lack of childcare facilities, illness (their own or that of someone within the family). In the absence of aid or insurance cover and social security, they have to look out for themselves;
- There are however cases where women quit because their husbands earn enough for the family to maintain a certain standard of living, modest though it may be;
- The recent crisis in industrial fisheries manifests itself in large-scale loss of jobs as can be affirmed by statements from women workers who were asked to leave.

The data provided here is preliminary and has only given a very brief insight into the condition of women labourers in the industrial fisheries sector of Pará. We hope that these are used as guidelines for further research. Like women in artisanal fishing communities, women workers in fish processing are also exposed to uncertain futures because of the decline of fisheries resources and the vagaries of the market.

It is obvious that this industry has no use for regular women workers. The situation is not seen as unusual either because women are not considered primary breadwinners according to prevailing gender stereotypes. During periods of low demand they have to look to other sources

of income for survival. Jobs as domestic help or as other service providers in the informal sector are the most common

options. The precarious condition of the industry means that temporary jobs are here to stay.

Bibliography

CEPNOR, 1996, 1997 e 1998, (Inédito): Boletim Estatístico da Pesca Marítima no Pará.

Diegues, AC, 1983: *Pescadores, sítiantes e trabalhadores do mar*. São Paulo, Ática.

Furtado, L G, 1987: *Curralistas e redeiros de Marudá; pescadores do litoral do Pará*. Belém, CNPq/Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi.

Leitão, W, 1995: Pesca e políticas públicas. *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, Série Antropologia*, vol. 11 (2), dez. 1995. p 185-198.

Loureiro, VR, 1985: Os parceiros do mar. Belém, CNPq/Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. 227p.

Maneschy, MC (Inédito): Parceiras de terra: o trabalho anônimo das mulheres na pesca em Vigia-Pará.

Mello, AF de, 1985: *A Pesca sob o Capital. A tecnologia a serviço da dominação*. Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará.

Motta-Maués, MA, 1984: A literatura oficial sobre a pesca na Amazônia: uma tentativa de revisão crítica. Seminário Sobre Pesca Artesanal, 1, *Anais*. Belém, IDESP: 103-129.

Penner, ME, 1984: A dialética da atividade pesqueira no nordeste amazônico. Recife, UFPA. (Mestrado – dissertação)

Silva, D, 1999: Trabalho feminino na indústria da pesca e seus reflexos nas relações sociais no grupo familiar das operárias em Icoaraci-Pará, 1997-1998. Trabalho de Conclusão apresentado ao Curso de Graduação em Ciências Sociais, da UFPA. Belém, março de 1999. 100p.

SINPESCA, 2000 (Inédito): A pesca industrial no Pará. Belém.

Siqueira, F, 2000: Rede de atravessadores desvia 150 toneladas de peixe do Pará. *O Liberal*, 29 de maio de 2000. Caderno Paineis, p. 11.

SUDAM/OEA., 2000: *Rede de pesca e aquicultura da Amazônia – REPAQ: projeto executivo*. Belém.

8. Background Paper: Brazil

Work of Fisherwomen in Fishing Communities of the State of Pernambuco

Introduction

The country of Brazil is vast and too culturally, economically and socially diverse for us to have prepared a paper on the entire region within the time we had on hand. Physiologically too, Brazil has a variety of geographical features and ecosystems, making it difficult to present the well-investigated study that this forum demanded. We, therefore, decided to concentrate on collecting data about the work of women in the fishing communities of the state of Pernambuco. The information presented here is a result of discussions with women, youth and educators in the fishing areas. We have adopted the action-research method preferred by the centers of education that are active in these parts. Our priority is not theoretical research of the kind that generates information that is purely of academic interest. The team of educators who undertook to write this document made a conscious attempt not to merely write as outsiders but to actively involve the concerned parties in the job, as part of a process to contribute concretely to empowering marginalized groups within artisanal fishing communities.

The diagnostic and relational aspects of the documentation of facts and information is a methodological choice. It is linked to the concept and principles of action-research, using the constructivist pedagogical approach of Paulo Freire.

This text has resulted from discussions carried out in gender workshops where there have been debates on power relations, multiculturalism, work environment and development. Besides, we drew references from training

workshops, from critical analyses, and from individual and collective documentation, our own as well as research studies undertaken in the past.

The issues raised by ICSF were discussed and contemplated in two meetings with local women and during interviews with fishermen/ fisherwomen leaders. The data, both already available and those obtained in the course of the investigation carried out by the team, indicates a certain trend, though given the nature of such studies, certain drawbacks and limitations are inevitable.

We could not include the results of the action-research oriented Reflect-Action process, which is being slowly introduced and practised in some communities. This method reflects on the reality in the fisheries of the estuaries of Pernambuco, with special emphasis on the participation of women and children.

The principles of action-research: action-reflection-action, the steps advocated by Paulo Freire in connection with dialogue and individual roles, combined with the RPD (Rapid Participatory Diagnosis) technique, have been our tools for this study to focus on gender empowerment and development. The research process is a learning process for all, it is educational, brings about a deeper understanding and calls for both subjectivity and objectivity. Above all, the objective of this work is to create a space for learning, dialogue and democratic practices.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that our main aim is not to carry out studies and produce texts as such things are commonly conceived. There is none of

*Prepared by the
education team of
the Centro Josue de
Castro, Recife, Brazil*

the 'observing from the outside' for the sake of 'scientific objectivity' etc. What is there is *subjectivity and inter-subjectivity*. This does not imply a rejection of other methods; it is merely an attempt to describe the manner in which this particular text was documented and the limitations inherent in this method. Those who expected an academic study of women in the fisheries of Pernambuco will have to remain disappointed.

1. Changing Role of Women in Fisheries

1.1 Fisherwomen in Coastal Pernambuco

The fishing and extraction work of communities along the coast of Pernambuco has, over a period of time, come to symbolize an important part of life for fisherwomen, allowing them to survive, to work outside the domestic arena and, in many cases, has been the only means of sustaining their families. Their activity has been described as 'invisible work' and, for some women, it continues to be an extension of housework. For many fishermen who work at sea, "the work in the mangroves is not fishing, therefore, whoever works in the mud is not a fisherman...", be it a woman or a man.

When women are producers there is no special recognition of the labour as being women's labour. Even when there is a surplus in what she produces, though it is placed in the market as a product of commercial value, it is classified only as 'State Fisheries Production' or 'Production of Pernambuco's Fishermen.'

Production per se "belongs to men, to the fishermen to whom the art of fishing belongs". Neither the work of a fisherwoman in the estuaries, or of *ostreiras* (oyster collectors) or of *marisqueiras* (shellfish gatherers) nor of any other category of mangrove

workers, is productive work. That label only attaches itself to the work of marine fishermen.

A large majority of women learned to fish and extract/collect "with other women, with their mothers or fathers, watching others fish from a very early age at the mangroves", among other forms of apprenticeship. Most of them started as children, accompanying their mothers/fathers because there was nobody to look after them. Some liked it and some did not.

... Ah! I used to go to the mangrove with such joy, it was almost like a toy... and today, even though things are bad I still join the girls and go most happily.

I was forced to go, I didn't like it, I didn't want to be like dad or mom, I didn't want that life for myself... I am in it because there was no other way.

For a lot of women, specially those who are heads of families, and who learned to fish when they were adults, it is the only means of livelihood—a way to keep their children close to themselves, to guarantee food, "to have the *mistura* (fish or meat with the basic rice and beans diet) on the table even if it was only the broth with manioc flour". For these women, "to fish, to set covo¹ traps for shrimp, to extract shellfish like *unha de velho* and *sururu* and oysters etc., is like being at home". It means, "to work in a place where one can take the children along", be it for help or so as not to leave them home alone, or abandoned on the streets.

As Anita Luna, a retired fisherwoman and leader of a community in the municipality of Cabo, who has participated extensively in fishworker movements, affirms:

There was no way out for us fisherwomen... the thing was to fish in mangroves, and at low tide.

For many fishermen who work at sea, "the work in the mangroves is not fishing, therefore, whoever works in the mud is not a fisherman..."

This was the work we had... the only way to raise the children. This was how we managed to live.

In the 70s, women went to the fishing grounds in groups of four or more. They chose their timings according to the tide and the type of capture to be carried out. There was an abundance of fish/crustaceans and molluscs in the closest fishing grounds; thus they did not need to venture further out. Most of them walked, but there were many who went on canoes navigated by themselves or by some mangrove fishermen.

They basically fished for molluscs and crustaceans, but some even caught shrimp and fish. The fishing gear used were *puçás* and *gererés* (gear resembling scoopnets), small nets, fishing rods, line, sickle and knife, and other innovative equipment they had devised on their own. It was a predominantly manual activity, requiring little resources and technology.

It was all a lot easier. We used to get a lot of sururu. Others got unha de velho, aratú (crustacean), crab and a lot of us got fish in waters close to the shore and in the river. There were a lot of oysters... we were careful to only extract the big ones. We used to go by foot early in the morning and in the afternoon we did the shelling. There wasn't much pollution...

Most women's groups in extraction fisheries functioned, and still function, by paying heed to simple unwritten rules and agreements which guarantee the stability of the group. The emphasis is on co-operation, solidarity and happiness. Humour plays a major role in their bonding.

In communities like Tamandaré in the south coast for instance, there are extractive fishing groups who assign tasks to make their working hours less

complicated and less stressful. One lot concentrates on the extraction activity while another takes care of the canoe, even though it means they do not get to fish, and the third cooks for everybody. This is an important job and if the cook is skilled she gets special privileges. This depends on tacit agreement within the group and on power relations, among other factors. In any case, there is a system of rotation and everyone gets to do a bit of everything.

Even today the women take whatever they can gather along the way, including seasonal fruits to make up part of the day's meal. This job is generally assigned to children who accompany their mothers.

In places where oysters are collected they barbecue some during lunchtime, though nowadays because of the preference for fresh fish in the market, the women tend to sell the entire catch instead. However, this varies from one region to another. The women in Vila de Campinas and Vila dos Pescadores for example, who fish in the estuary of Mamucabinhas, still work as a group and consider sacred the co-operation—"to know how to do it together"—to keep the friendship and camaraderie alive, to eat together in the mangroves.

In the past fisherwomen also processed, conserved and carried out activities linked to distribution and marketing. Even today many prefer to sell their own catch in order to avoid middlemen. This entire post-harvest activity is carried out by the group, though some fisherwomen prefer to work alone.

From all of the above we infer that fishing for women is:

- a) A strategy for survival, sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity;
- b) An expression of their individuality, sensibility, creativity, emotions and values—based on protective and

maternal instincts, solidarity, and co-operation. Fishing brings out the affectionate, the playful and the joyful even during conditions of extreme poverty and penury; and

- c) A way to make light of a tough, labour-intensive life.

1.2 Changes in the Work and Status of Fisherwomen

Industrialization, urban expansion, more specifically, real estate development among other factors, have begun to pressurize the coastal ecosystem, affect the environment, the flora and fauna and the survival of the population that depends on it for a living.

All this has severely impacted on the women who work in the estuaries of Pernambuco who are leading increasingly impoverished lives as conditions worsen day by day. It is not without reason that these alarming, and maybe irreversible, trends in degradation of coastal resources and environment are considered by many as the root cause of the 'problems of fisherwomen'.

Even though many claim that there has been little or no change in women's activities in fisheries in recent times, some are hard to miss. The day's workload is heavier and lasts longer, the fishing trips take them further afield, fish stocks have reduced, productivity is low, and women appear physically and emotionally worn out.

Women are getting organized and participating socially, politically and economically far more than they ever have in an effort to give voice to their suffering. This has led, in a way, to their empowerment, bringing about a qualitative change in the way they perceive themselves.

Still one cannot deny that there are women who, individually or as a group, benefit

from the various programmes for financial and technical assistance—though the numbers are not impressive, given the large numbers of women fishworkers in Pernambuco. There is also no evidence to show that the benefits of credit programmes and transfer/ absorption of technologies will trickle through in the long run and bring about effective results and solutions.

Previous experiences where programmes failed due to extraneous reasons despite having had technical and financial support must be taken into account. Paradoxically, this kind of aid generated more inefficiency and reinforced paternalism. Such actions were implemented from the outside and from top to bottom and, like others that had gone before, could not succeed.

These projects above all, were conceived with the idea of implementing them during the duration of the government (four years), when it would have been more appropriate to have extended them till results had begun to show.

Despite the fact that they face tremendous hardship just to live from day to day, women seem to be doing fairly well when it comes to political leadership, participation and organization. A group of women fishworkers are gaining and consolidating new ground through their active roles.

There is, however, scope for better organization among women, and they need to be more assertive when it comes to playing even larger roles in ongoing movements.

In conclusion, we have to acknowledge that within the *colônias* and in the local/ regional and national movement, a group of fisherwomen, though small, has gained recognition through struggle. The support that women's organizational and gender-related issues have received from

Despite the fact that they face tremendous hardship just to live from day to day, women seem to be doing fairly well when it comes to political leadership, participation and organization.

MONAPE, from the Federation (this body represents fishermen at the state level and comprises members of *colônias*), and associated institutions have contributed considerably to this situation.

1.3 Implications of these Changes for the Family and Community

From the economic perspective, both women and men have been affected by the grim conditions in the industry today.

However, given the inequitable division the daily workload on women is heavier, which in turn drains them of energy and leaves them feeling physically and emotionally wrung out.

Women work two ‘shifts’ because apart from extraction they have to take care of the family and the household, as men in the region tend not to participate in domestic activities. For women who take an active part in the *colônias*, besides their regular chores, they have to spend time in organizational work and devise means to fight for their rights. Overloaded with responsibilities and routine tasks they work almost through the day. Fishermen on the other hand do not have as much to do which gives them the freedom to come and go as they please.

2. Women’s Participation in Fisheries

2.1 Women in Pre-harvest, Harvest and Post-harvest Activities

Fisherwomen’s work does not merely end with pre-harvest activities. They usually participate in the entire cycle, including in the sale of the surplus to intermediaries, associations or consumers. Many of them prefer to process and/or sell directly to the consumer, to earn better. There are also those who fish purely for self-consumption.

2.2 Work in Aquaculture Units

Usually women do not work in aquaculture units in Pernambuco. However, in the city of Cabo, the Centro Josue de Castro (CJC) supports an experimental aquaculture venture where men and women of the *Sociedade Beneficente dos Pescadores de Ponte dos Carvalhos* (SBPPC) are employed.

A second group of young extension agents, (men and women) are being trained in sustainable aquaculture. Women perform the same tasks as men, having developed certain specialized skills and great competence, at times even bettering men in skill and strength—a fact that is confirmed by the men themselves.

The older members of SBPPC, were also carrying out all the tasks until a few years ago. Now, however, they are unable to participate in the harvest—removing fish from the ponds, dragging the nets, cleaning and maintaining the ponds and dykes. Despite this, they continue to have an effective presence in the group. During the regular meetings to carry out cleaning and maintenance tasks, they take care of the cooking and other land-based tasks.

2.3 Women in Fishing Enterprises

In general, women do not play managerial roles unless they are qualified managers who can aggressively get work done in what is basically a male-dominated environment, or are the proprietors of the enterprise. In Pernambuco, it is more common for women to work in processing, or as receptionists, telephone operators and the like.

In contrast, in *colônias* and associations of some coastal municipalities, women—both those who fish and those who do not—work in adding value to the product/processing. In these places, their participation is common in the administrative, financial, organizational/educational and institutional tasks, in productive economic functions, as well as

For women who take an active part in the colônias, besides their regular chores, they have to spend time in organizational work and devise means to fight for their rights.

in operational ones linked to the handling and treatment of the product.

2.4 Women in Fish Processing Plants

There are few processing plants in the state and even fewer in the communities, so the question of large-scale participation of women in this activity does not really arise. The shrimp farms that have begun to appear have started recruiting women; like the farm in Goiana that employs the women of São Lourenço.

When women do find work in such companies, as is the case in units based in Recife, they participate not only in processing/packing, but are also taken on for secretarial and other auxiliary posts.

3. Economic and Social Role of Women in Fishing Communities

3.1 Women and Family

Fisherwomen, as we already know, fish/extract, go to the mangroves, the coast or the river every day. They do all the housework, take care of the children etc. In addition, along many beaches, they find alternate work such as domestic help, doing the laundry and other housekeeping chores for residents in neighbouring areas, either during weekends or in the closed seasons.

Even when she has a companion who is also a fisher, her routine, in a majority of the cases is no different. Several women feel that “the woman who does not leave the house to go to the mangroves is going to starve—so will the rest of the family”. The extended workday is, therefore, connected to survival, especially in communities where environmental degradation is at its worst.

A large number of women are single heads of family. This being the case, the burden of running the house falls heavily and entirely on them.

Women who do not participate in fishing or collection activities may come from the more impoverished sections and may take up work as domestic help. Those among them who have completed basic education and have done courses in accounting or teaching or have the support of some local politician, have better chances of entering the market/service sector (education, health, etc).

Wives/companions of fishermen too are almost wholly responsible for taking care of the family and household matters. During times of crisis, or between harvests, they sometimes follow their husbands to the mangrove/river to help with the fishing. Though there are a few fishermen who play a more active role in the house, such cases are few, the exception, rather than the rule.

3.2 Women Fishworkers Within and Outside Fisheries

In local fishing communities, women find themselves with little or no work alternative but to work in extraction fisheries. They philosophically look upon it as “being the best option available”, as “their destiny”, “the will of God”, or “the only chance of making clean money”.

One cannot forget that all this takes place in a context where there is a lack of work opportunity for a workforce that is primarily made up of women who are not even acknowledged for the work they do, and where illiteracy and lack of education compound problems. Besides working in fishing/ extraction, sugarcane plantations in some areas, and as domestic help, there are not too many choices available.

It is also true that the type of work women do—collecting/ extracting oysters, clams, crabs and other crustaceans/ molluscs—is not considered fishing by many people. It is perceived as an extension of housework and sometimes, not considered any kind of work at all. Fishermen in urban areas, in fact, view this kind of work as

Several women feel that “the woman who does not leave the house to go to the mangroves is going to starve—so will the rest of the family”.

only being good “for some poor souls”, as unimportant, and even “dirty work in the filthy mud—the last thing I would ever do as a fisherman because a thing such as this, that is not even work, destroys and humiliates anybody !”

Women also work in agriculture, public sanitation, and garbage disposal. They also find work as cooks in cafes/restaurants and sell fish products on the beaches. Of late, they have begun to work in the houses of summer vacationers as domestic help and housekeepers, especially in places where there is a large tourist population.

Effects of environmental degradation can be seen in whole estuaries, though there are a few that have witnessed a measure of improvement in recent times. But more often than not, it is the same story of dead or dying rivers and devastated mangroves. To make matters worse, shrimp farms have started to mushroom, thanks to a powerful lobby of shrimp farmers who wield political clout.

All this when a struggling populace of fisherpeople is being edged out below the poverty line and are fighting for their survival.

3.3 Conclusion

While alternating activities in the fisheries with activities outside has always been a part of these peoples’ lives, the worsening economic, social and environmental scenario has meant that fishermen are constantly looking for jobs outside the sector. Finding “other work” has become the most cherished dream.

Even jobs in sugarcane plantations and mills, for planting and cutting cane for the production of sugar and alcohol, are on a steep decline.

Most of the women who come to the educational centres of the Parreira Literacy Project and attend the workshops organized by Reflect affirm

that if they could help it they would not leave fishing or their mangroves, “a blessed haven where the entire family can be together” which is not the case when they work as domestic help. When only the woman has access to the food and room provided by the employer, the fact that this is much better than what her children have back home, is quite hurtful. It is, therefore, quite traumatic for many such women who work with the knowledge that their children are worse off than they are.

4. Government Statistics on the Fisheries Sector

Official statistics provide accurate information on marine, coastal and offshore fishing. Data is collected at important landing points. There are, however, some deficiencies when it comes to fishing and extraction activities in estuarine and mangrove environments, where there are both men and women fishers. The results are grouped under the category ‘manual extraction’, without separating men’s work from women’s work.

Table 14 shows capture data for four species. The estimated production of 720.2 tonnes in 1998 represented 4.8 per cent of total local production, with an estimated value of \$620,150 being handled during the first sale. This was approximately 9.3 per cent of the total amount marketed in the state.

It is important to note that certain species commonly found in some areas do not find any mention in the statistics. At the same time, one must keep in mind that in many cases, production is for self-consumption and some part of it may be sold directly by the women as soon as they arrive from fishing—figures that are hard to quantify.

Manual extraction in Pernambuco is carried out by those who live in estuarine areas, where women make up the larger group and are responsible for production.

But more often than not, it is the same story of dead or dying rivers and devastated mangroves.

Table 14: Fish production in the coastal municipalities of Pernambuco, 1998.

| Localities | Production (in Metric Tons) | | | | | Price |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| | “Aratú” | Crab | Clam | Oyster | Total | R\$ |
| Goiana | - | 32.3 | 143.0 | 0.1 | 175.4 | 75,300 |
| Itapissuma | - | - | - | 525.3 | 525.3 | 525,300 |
| Olinda | - | - | 4.5 | - | 4.5 | 1,350 |
| Cabo | - | 1.3 | - | - | 1.3 | 1,300 |
| Sirinhaém | 3.2 | 8.2 | - | - | 11.4 | 14,600 |
| Tamandaré | - | 2.3 | - | - | 2.3 | 2,300 |
| Total | 3.2 | 44.1 | 147.5 | 525.4 | 720.2 | 620,150 |

Source: IBAMA Estado, 1998: Coleta Manual em toneladas.

5. Fisheries Policy, Legislation and Gender Perspective

5.1 Legal Definition of Fisherman

The Basic Fisheries Law—Law Decree 221 of 22 February 1967—which is still in force, does not recognize any difference between men and women for whom fishing is ‘the principal means of livelihood’. Thus women can be considered fisherwomen. The truth, however, is that women who participate actively as shellfish collectors are not considered fisherwomen.

5.2 Legal Status of Women in Pre- and Post-harvest activities

Since a woman has the right to fish, she can approach an authorized institute for recognition as a fisherwoman and then apply to the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA) for registration.

In Pernambuco, however, there have been few women who have been registered by the Naval Ministry which is the agency responsible for the administration, control and enforcement of activities in port areas. Similarly, there have also been no examples of women skippers, or even crew members in marine fishing.

For women (and men) to be considered fishers, they must, according to the law, be dependent on fisheries for a livelihood. In fishing communities, fishermen and fisherwomen are those who actually fish. But there have been instances in some *colônias* where even those who do not fish are registered as fishermen.

5.3 Women’s Access to Credit and Other Government Support

Women have not benefited from individual credit schemes to the same extent that men have. It is more common for women to have accessed small loans through associations, when they have been able to demonstrate an entrepreneurial ability and guarantee returns on investment. Loans have also been conceded to groups of women through *colônias* and associations. But government guidelines on loans tend to favour men.

Despite the active participation of women in associations, *colônias* and the Federation of Fishermen, there is not enough political initiative to provide credit to them.

5.4 Governmental Support to Women in Fisheries Sector

Because a significant percentage of women work in estuarine fisheries, and

*There are,
however, places
where women face
such acute poverty
that they rarely
have any other issue
to discuss besides
hunger.*

are involved in the extraction and collection of molluscs, crustaceans and fish and in product handling, conservation, preparation and selling—in some areas through organized groups—there are government projects and financial assistance programmes for procuring the necessary equipment for carrying out such activities. The assistance is granted to the associations and *colônias*.

Even though women have been working in fisheries for a long time, this fact has gained some visibility and recognition (including in the government) only in the past few years. Much more remains to be done.

Many experiments with credit schemes besides other assistance in terms of providing resources, technology and training, which were conducted on a short- and medium-term basis, lasted only a short while. Work to improve the sector continues, but the process of change involves tackling social and cultural issues in depth, along with promoting changes in belief systems, values, attitudes, and furthering knowledge. The greatest setback to these programmes are the frequent alterations that occur when a government changes hands every four years. The lack of continuity, and the fact that no system for monitoring the efficacy of a policy exists, means that such schemes die a quick death.

Credit and technical support given to the fishermen by the government should be according to a well-defined system of planning, assessment and monitoring. There should be clear performance indicators for verifying results/ impacts.

One hopes that there is political will to sustain the projects in progress at present. All monitoring and follow-up action must involve major key players, including fishermen, other social groups and public agents without getting into relationships of dependency or co-optation. Impartiality

and independent decision-making are a must.

It is also important to divert attention towards credit programmes for fishermen (women). They struggled for decades to impress upon the political leadership the importance of credit schemes, but ironically, now that loans have actually been made available, such schemes are dotted with more failure than success. This holds true of the experiences of the entire artisanal fisheries segment. The results of such schemes have to be critically analyzed by using appropriate criteria for assessment, keeping short- and long-term goals and qualitative and quantitative indicators in mind. However, not much of this is reflected upon adequately, except at the level of academic discussions.

6. Women and Social Security

Social security, unemployment and accident benefits are available to all fisherwomen who are registered, have proper qualifications and have paid all their dues.

7. Women and Organization

7.1 Occurrence

In several regions women have formed groups to discuss issues of relevance to them, although it has not occurred with the same degree and intensity everywhere.

There are, however, places where women face such acute poverty that they rarely have any other issue to discuss besides hunger. This happens mainly in areas where degradation has destroyed estuarine resources as is the case of the crab and oyster catchers in Rio Formoso, São Lourenço and Ponte dos Carvalhos.

In most such places it is equally true that the local population (women, men and even children) have already mobilized into

action groups to discuss themes such as pollution, and the diseases that directly affect the work and life of the community.

It is heartening to observe that the enthusiastic participation and dynamism of the fisherwomen in education centres has been on the rise. These centres—Circles of Action-Reflection-Action²—use a method based on dialogue and participation/ empowerment of those involved. Together they select the themes for debate and seek ways to resolve problems.

In places such as Carne de Vaca and Rio Formoso in the Education Nuclei, participants are predominantly women. The centres prioritize gender issues, and try to ensure that women and men are present in equal numbers. However, in certain areas they have had to cater to the increasing demand by fisherwomen to be allowed to attend their programmes and have had to compromise with ratios.

7.2 Problems Highlighted by Women

Issues relating to production, socio-political questions that arise from it, their organization in to women's groups, as well as solution-seeking for basic problems, besides issues of health, nutrition and education have been raised in the municipalities already mentioned above, as well as in Sirinhaém, Tamandaré, Igarassu, and Itapissuma among others on the northern coast, where there exists an organizational base and/or plans for organizational development.

Besides these, other problems frequently discussed include: pollution, mangrove (considered as 'fish maternity areas') destruction, ecosystem, the day's work, the summer, the tourist, the *colônia*, the lack/low stocks of fish, lack of food, violence, children, music, social security, old age, companions, sexuality, work-related diseases, alcoholism, abandonment, etc.

7.3 Nature of Women's Organizations

The first step towards setting up an organization is discussions on problems common to all fishworkers; from here things move on to participation, and then integration into *colônia* or fishworker associations, followed by payment of 'taxes' levied and finally, in some cases, the formation of groups of fisherwomen.

All this is still at an incipient stage. There are situations where even after an organization is formed by a specific group of fisherwomen, they continue to associate with the *colônias* to strengthen their base or even to survive as a group.

These days fishermen's organizations do give importance to issues specific to women. It must be highlighted that the potential of women to get mobilized and organized has played an important role in the organization building process—to the extent where in some fishing areas of Pernambuco those representing the *colônias* in decision-making are often women. Such is the case in the *colônias* of Itapissuma, Ponta de Pedras and Gaibu. In the Federation of Pernambuco, one of the former presidents was a woman who even now continues as an important functionary in the group. This appears to be an encouraging trend.

7.4 Support from Fishermen

Support to women in fishing communities varies from *colônia* to *colônia*, from one directive body to another. Where there is a larger participation of women in the day-to-day life of the *colônia*, women have enjoyed a greater degree of support. The directive bodies, even when made up of men who have their own prejudices, have been sensitive to women.

Fishermen have recognized the role of certain women over a period of time, and have acknowledged the fact that they played decisive parts in many of the achievements of the organization in the

initial stages. But such recognition is superficial and situational.

MONAPE's intervention and support for fisherwomen is well-known at the regional and national levels, be it concerning female labour or other gender issues. Their contribution has been specially effective in aspects related to the organization of fisherwomen as a specific category and deserves to be lauded.

7.5 Women's Participation in Colônias and Other Organizations

Women who have been active in fisheries but have left fishing to work in production and processing, also continue to be considered fisherwomen by the *colônias*, as long as their documents are up to date and they continue to pay the required fee, though things may not be the same in every *colônia*.

Once formalities are complied with, women may take part in the organization. Even if they do not have their documents in order, they are allowed to attend meetings and courses.

Since its inception and till the mid-eighties, the Fishermen's Representation System (*colônia*, federation and confederation) of Brazil was regulated by administrative acts (Ministerial Decrees) and not by law. But the legalities are now in place, judicial nomenclature and all.

But even before the mid-eighties, the Fishermen's Representation System did not prohibit women's participation. The exclusion occurred and continues to occur more as a result of gender discrimination and reservations about the roles women can successfully play. Unfortunately, despite the many achievements of fisherwomen, the prejudices remain.

While women find representation at the local level (*colônias*) they also do so at

the state level—the Federation of the *colônias*. Other kinds of organization of fishermen which may or may not be related to fisheries, such as neighbourhood associations and others like Ponte dos Carvalhos Fishermen Beneficent Society and the *Barraqueiras* Association of Tamandaré also have women participants.

7.6 Women, Leadership and the Organizational Process

In Pernambuco, women have led fishermen's struggles and movements for many decades. Some women have been on the scene since the 70s, participating in protests and struggles against the pollution of water resources and the devastation of the coastal ecosystem.

The Fishermen's Society of Ponte dos Carvalhos (SBPPC) in the municipality of Cabo for example, began the struggle over thirty years ago. Here, an important group of fisherwomen and wives of fishermen have recently been joined by a group of young fish farmers made up of 11 girls and 10 boys. It was the women who, along with fishermen from SBPPC, learned sustainable fish farming practices. Armed with this skill, they not only attacked the pollution problem but also showed the way to fight hunger and unemployment and keep a clean environment.

In Itapissuma, *colônia* Z-11, too the presence of a women's force has been a historical fact, as in many other *colônias* where the spontaneous leadership roles played by them cannot be denied.

The Federation of Fishermen is another example where women are present in large numbers. In fact, it was once headed by a fisherwoman. The present directive body is made of up of men and women members.

The Federation of the *colônias* of Pernambuco expects to have three women in top positions after the next elections.

In Pernambuco, women have led fishermen's struggles and movements for many decades.

As for women in directive bodies, of the 15 organizations interviewed, many are in the process of changing their directive bodies or going through elections. Information obtained from six of them confirmed that women did participate in these bodies. Given below is a list of fisherwomen who are presidents in the *colônias* or who occupy posts of importance in the directive body. :

1. *Colônia* of Itapissuma: President, Joana Mousinho
2. *Colônia* of Gaibú: President, Josefa Ferreira
3. *Colônia* of Ponta de Pedras: Secretary, Lourdinha Rodrigues
4. *Colônia* of Cabo Ponte dos Carvalhos: Society of Fishermen, Vice-President, Niçinha
5. *Colônia* of Tejucupapo: Treasurer, Carminha
6. *Colônia* of Tamandaré: Secretary

Those who are leaders or are representatives of organizations, also participate at the regional and national levels, in meetings organized by MONAPE, or those linked to ECO-92, Women Worker meetings, Education and Gender meetings, etc.

To expand participation to other women and groups is, however, a challenge that must be faced. Things are changing, but slowly. Education, a sustained focus on gender and power relations (an essential pretext for democracy), and a change from within in the mentality of men, and women themselves, are essential. In many ways these are the factors that keep women from becoming independent.

It is also true that some women are extremely active, make proposals and are

organized and dynamic. But when the time comes to decide on issues of power, or representation, they hesitate while casting their vote, and in many cases, in fact, vote for men. For many fisherwomen, the tendency is still to restrict themselves to the private spaces, the home and the domestic chores. Thus many of them only take part in outdoor activities like going to the clinic, the church and the mangrove—all of which is seen as an extension of the home space.

Women who do not fish themselves or are wives of fishermen do not play much of a role in fishermen's organizations, but they participate in many other ways in community life since they have more time to spare than fisherwomen.

7.7 Experiences of Women in Organizations

Despite the fact that they often play important roles in fishermen's organizations, traditional gender roles come into play and women continue to be considered not equal to men. Even when they make an effort to strive for equality, discriminatory treatment arising out of a conventional protective attitude to women is obvious. Women are seen as fragile, "know less", and have "no physical power".

The post of President of the Fishermen's Federation of Pernambuco was once occupied by a fisherwoman and the present directive body also has women who play important roles in their respective *colônias*. It is important that this conquest is thanks to their sustained struggle for recognition. Before the 80s, such participation was the exception rather than the rule.

Table 15 shows the membership, by sex, in 17 *colônias* of Pernambuco.

Table 15: Membership in the *colônias* of Pernambuco, by sex

| Unit | Location / District / Municipality | Number of Members | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------|
| | | M | F | Total |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-1 | Pina, Recife | 2750 | 250 | 3000 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-2 | Pau Amarelo, Paulista | 500 | 1000 | 1500 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-3 | Ponta de Pedras, Goiana | 470 | 150 | 620 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-4 | Carmo, Olinda | 350 | 150 | 500 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-5 | Tamandaré | 293 | 38 | 331 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-6 | Sirinhaém | 60 | 30 | 90 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-7 | Rio Formoso | 138 | 39 | 177 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-8 | Gaibu, Cabo | 474 | 104 | 578 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-9 | São José da Coroa Grande | - | - | - |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-10 | Itamaracá | - | - | 600 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-11 | Itapissuma | 1000 | 1225 | 2225 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-12 | Porto de Galinhas, Ipojuca | 265 | 35 | 300 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-14 | Goiana | - | - | 500 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-15 | Atapuz, Goiana | 103 | 81 | 184 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-16 | Ibimirim | 240 | 33 | 273 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-17 | Tejucupapo, Goiana | 316 | 286 | 602 |
| <i>Colônia</i> Z-20 | Igarassu | 125 | 136 | 261 |

Source: Data from surveys in the *colônias* / Federations of Pernambuco.

End Notes

¹ *Covo*: trap made of sticks and string in a conical shape to catch shrimp.

²These circles function in the municipalities of: Goiana, (Ponta de Pedras, Goiana Séde, São Lourenço, Carne de Vaca, Catuama, Assentamento UBU), Igarassu, Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Rio Formoso and Tamandaré. In some units the assistants are youth from within the same communities who receive regular training in areas such as

pedagogical methodology, and on the themes of PCN – National Curricular Parameters. The training is concentrated especially on parallel themes with an emphasis on gender relations, relations of power, multiculturalism, environmental improvement and development, among others, besides a constant Analysis of Situation

This is a process which is still in progress and has had a great impact. It has the

characteristics and limitations of a process which is forming into a collective action and that is perfecting itself as it is incorporating the Reflect-Action approach. This approach, in practice, is much more than just a methodology. It implies the strengthening and empowerment

of those practicing it. Thus the strategic medium and long-term approach lies in the groups of women and men in the fishing sector widening their vision, participating and exercising freedom of choice, decision-making and autonomy in facing and solving their problems.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

BRAZIL

Adriano Soares Barbosa
Passagem José Leal Martins,
688 - Marco
Belém – Pará
BRAZIL
CEP 66.095-280
email: cppnorte@zaz.com.br

Aladim Alfaia Gomes
Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores
(MONAPE)
Tv. Ocidental do Mercado
No. 21 Alto Do Mercado Bozonha
Ver-o-Peso
Belém, Pará CEP 65.013-030
BRAZIL
Tel/ Fax: 55 91 212 7032
E-mail: monape@amazonline.com.br

Alcides b dos Santos
Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores
(MONAPE)
Tv. Ocidental do Mercado
No. 21 Alto Do Mercado Bozonha
Ver-o-Peso
Belém, Pará CEP 65.013-030
BRAZIL
Tel/ Fax: 55 91 212 7032
E-mail: monape@amazonline.com.br

Antonio Carlos Diegues
NUPAUB-CEMAR, Rua do Anfiteatro
181 Colméla - Favo 6
Universidade de Sao Paulo
Butanta- Sao Paulo
CEP 05.508-900
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 11 30 91 3307
Fax: 55 11 38 12 4057
E-mail : nupaub@org.usp.br

Ana Laíde Barbosa
CPP
CNBB: Tv. Barao do Triunfo,
3151 - Marco
Belém, Pará, CEP 66.093-050
BRAZIL
Tel/Fax: 55 91 226 4026
e-mail: cppnorte@zaz.com.br

Gerardo Ferreira
Associação dos Moradores
Prainha do Canto Verde
Beberibe, Ceará
CEP 62.840-000
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 88 413 1164
Fax: 55 88 413 1426
E-mail: fishnet@fortalnet.com.br

Gilvar Pereira de Melo
Federacaõ dos Pescadores de
Pernambuco
R. Belo Horizonte No. 543
Rio Dôce, Olinda
Pernambuco
CEP 53.040-110
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 99 42 6739

Giselda Castro
INSTITUTO TERRAMAR
Rua Aracati, 129
Bairro Benfica
Fortaleza, CEARA
CEP 60.020 240
BRAZIL
Tel/Fax: 55 85 226 2476
55 85 226 4154
E-mail: terramar@fortalnet.com.br

Joana Rodrigues Mousinho

Colonia de Pescadores Z-10
Itapissuma
Rua Dr. José Goncalves
No. 87 Centro Itapissuma
Pernambuco
CEP 53.700-000
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 5218 1354

Josinete Periera Lima

Rodovia Augusto Montenegro
Residencial Nalália Lins,
A4, apt. 207, Belém, Pará
CEP 66.625-630
BRAZIL
E-mail: josinete@ufpa.br

Lourdes Goes

INSTITUTO TERRAMAR
Rua Aracati, 129 Bairro Benfica
Fortaleza, CEARA
CEP 60.020-240
BRAZIL
Tel/Fax: 55 85 226 2476
55 85 226 4154
E-mail: terramar@fortalnet.com.br

Luzirene Gomes

Pontal do Maceio
Fortim, Ceará
CEP 62.817-000
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 88 413 1363

Maria Nunez de Aquino

Presidente
Colônia dos Pescadores
Fortim, Ceará
CEP 62.817-000
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 88 413 1363

Maria Cristina Maneschy

Rua Boaventura da Silva 1339
AP. 702 Bairro Umarizal
Belém, Pará,
CEP 66.060-060,
BRAZIL
Tel : 55 91 249 0776
Fax : 55 91 246 2323
E-mail: cristina@ufpa.br

Maria Odila Baia Brasil

Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores
(MONAPE)
Tv. Ocidental do Mercado
No. 21 Alto Do Mercado Bozonha
Ver-o-Peso
CEP 65.013-030- Belém, Pará
BRASIL
Tel/ Fax: 55 91 212 7032
E-mail: monape@amazonline.com.br

Nathanael Maranhao

Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas
Josue de Castro
Rua de Sao Goncalo, 118
Boa Vista-Recife PE
CEP 50.070-600
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 81 423 2800
E-mail : cepjc@elogica.com.br
pesca@free.elogica.com.br

Rene Schärer

INSTITUTO TERRAMAR
Caixa Postal 52722
Fortaleza, CEARA
CEP 60.151-970
BRAZIL
Tel/Fax: 55 88 413 1426
55 85 238 2655
E-mail: fishnet@uol.com.br
Web: www.fortalnet.com.br/~fishnet

Rogério Martiniano de Sousa
INSTITUTO TERRAMAR
Rua Conselheiro Tristad 1057
Bairro- Fatima
Fortaleza- CE, CEP 60.050 105
BRAZIL
Tel (R): 55 85 226 3839
E-mail: malugoes@zaz.com.br

Sheila Kelly Paulino Nogueira
INSTITUTO TERRAMAR
Rua Aracati, 129
Bairro Benfica
Fortaleza, CEARA
CEP 60.020-240
BRAZIL
Tel/Fax: 55 85 226 2476
55 85 226 4154
E-mail: terramar@fortalnet.com.br

Soraya Vanini Tupinamba
INSTITUTO TERRAMAR
Rua Aracati, 129
Bairro Benfica
Fortaleza, CEARA
CEP 60.020-240
BRAZIL
Tel/Fax: 55 85 226 2476 e
55 85 226 4154
E-mail: terramar@fortalnet.com.br

CHILE

Humberto Mella Ahumada
Presidente Nacional
CONAPACH
Calle Monte Alegre No. 398
Casilla 3776
Cerro Alegie
VALPARAISO
CHILE
Tel: 56 32 232 603
Fax: 56 32 232 602
E-mail: pescart@unete.cl

Luisa Pineda Azocar
CONAPACH
Calle Monte Alegre No. 398
Casilla 3776
Cerro Alegie
VALPARAISO
CHILE
Tel: 56 32 232 603
Fax: 56 32 232 602
E-mail: pescart@unete.cl

Pedro A. Avendano Garcés
CONAPACH
Calle Monte Alegre No. 398
Casilla 3776
Cerro Alegie
VALPARAISO
CHILE
Tel: 56 32 232 603
Fax: 56 32 232 602
E-mail: pescart@unete.cl

Estrella Dias Andrade
HEXAGRAMA CONSULTORAS
Cirujano Videla 1535 B
Dpto F. Nurroa
Santiago
CHILE
Tel: 56 32 796 866
E-mail: calqui@entelchile.net

ECUADOR

Gabriela Cruz Salazar
Presidente
Federación Nacional de Cooperativas
Pesqueras del Ecuador
(FENACOPEC)
Manuel Galecio 805 y Pedro
Moncayo, edificio CEDOC
Guayaquil
ECUADOR
Tel/Fax: 593 4 567875
E-mail: fenacope@gye.satnet.net

MEXICO

Belinda Cedillo Tirado

Secretaria de Medio Ambiente,
Recursos Naturales Y Pesca,
Lateral Anillo Periférico sur 4209
Col. Jardines en la Montaña,
Del. Tlalpan
MEXICO DF, CP 14210
Tel: 52 5 56280703
Fax: 52 5 56280600 Ext. 2094
E-mail: mossbct@prodigy.net.mx

Guadalupe Guillen de la Cruz

Presidente
Gropode Mujeres
Ejido Guanosolo
Paraiso, Tabasco
MEXICO

Hilda Salazar Ramirez

Mujer y Medio Ambiente
Av Universidad 2016 EDIF 9-202
Col. Oxtopolulco Universidad
04310 MEXICO, D.F.
Tel: 52 5 56583462
Fax: 52 5 56583462
E-mail: das@laneta.apc.org

PERU

Amelia Garcia

Antropologa
Instituto Natura, Sociedad y Cultura
Martin Perez 866
Magdalena del Mar
Lima 17
PERU
Tel: 51 1 261 2825
Fax: 51 1 261 2825
E-mail: nscmarce@yahoo.com
nscmarce@mixmail.com

Cecilia Vidal Baldera

FIUPAP
Campamento Habitacion Pesca
Peru F-8
Puerto Huarmey- Ancash
PERU
Tel: 51 44 600 716
E-mail: Cecyvidal@hotmail.com

Claudio Nizama

Secretary General
FIUPAP
Av. Carlos Zavala Loayza No. 144
Of. 207
LIMA 1
PERU
Tel: 51 1 428 5956

INDIA

Chandrika Sharma

Programme Associate
International Collective in Support of
Fishworkers (ICSF)
27 College Road
Chennai 600006
INDIA
Tel : 91 44 8275303
Fax: 91 44 8254457
E-mail: icsf@vsnl.com

Indu, M G

International Collective in Support of
Fishworkers (ICSF)
27 College Road
Chennai 600006
INDIA
Tel: 91 44 8275303
Fax: 91 44 8254457
e-mail: icsf@vsnl.com

Nalini Nayak
Sadanand
Choola Lane
Anayara P O
TRIVANDRUM - 695 029 (Kerala)
INDIA
Tel: 91 471 553675
E-mail: tvm_nalinin@sancharnet.in

EUROPE

Brian O' Riordan
Secretary,
ICSF Brussels Office
Rue du Midi 165
B-1000
Brussels
BELGIUM
Tel : 32 2 513 15 65
Fax: 32 2 513 73 43
E-mail: icsfbrussels@yucom.be

OBSERVERS

Denisse Araya Castelli
Ayuda Popular Nidruenga (APN)
Alameda 1112 Oficina
904 Santiago
CHILE
Tel: 56 2 695 4066
Fax: 56 2 698 7279
E-mail: raices@netup.cl

Marie-Hélène Boudigou
2 Rue Dupleix, 29780 Plouhinec,
FRANCE.
Tel: 00 33 6 80964192
E-mail: mhbl@libertysurf.fr

INTERPRETERS

Ms. Sofia Alvares
Av. Eugéne Plasky No. 161 bte 13
1030 - BRUSSELS
BELGIUM
Tel/Fax: 32 2 732 1075
E-mail: aifosmektup@hotmail.com

Mr Euclides, A Lazarotto
51 Rue Des Riches Claires
B-1000 - BRUSSELES
BELGIUM
Tel/Fax: 32 2 511 3612
E-mail: e_lazarotto@hotmail.com

Selected Acronyms

| | |
|------------|--|
| AGT | : Programme of ‘Assistance for Land Management’, Chile |
| CEPNOR | : Centre for Research on Fisheries in North Brazil |
| CONAPACH | : Confederacion Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile |
| CPP | : Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores, Brazil |
| EEZ | : Exclusive Economic Zone |
| FDESPA | : Fund for Sustainable Development of the Peninsula of Atasta, Mexico |
| FENACOPEC | : Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Pesqueras del Ecuador |
| FIPASUR | : Federación Provincial de Pescadores Artisanal Sur, Chile |
| FIUPAP | : Federacion de Integracion Y Unificacion de Pescadores, Peru |
| FNDR | : National Fund for Regional Development, Chile FONAES: National Fund for Solidarity Businesses, Mexico |
| FWO | : Fishworker Organization |
| ICSF | : International Collective in Support of Fishworkers |
| IMPARPE | : Instituto del Mar del Perú (Marine Institute of Perú) |
| INEGI | : National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Data, Mexico |
| INRENA | : Institutes of Natural Resources of the Fisheries Ministry, Peru |
| ITQ | : Individual Transferable Quotas |
| MIPE | : Ministry of Fisheries, Peru |
| MONAPE | : Movimento Nacional dos Pescadores, Brazil |
| MOPESAL | : Movimento de Pescadores da Zona do Salgado, Brazil |
| MPCPA | : The Movement of Fishers and Farmers of the Peninsula of Atasta, Mexico |
| NAFTA | : North American Free Trade Agreement |
| PEP | : Professional Education Program, Brazil |
| PROFEPA | : Federal Authority for Environmental Protection, Mexico |
| SEDESOL | : Secretariat of Social Development, Mexico |
| SEMARNAP | : Secretariat of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Fisheries, Mexico |
| SERCOTEC | : Technical Co-operation Service, Chile |
| SERNAPESCA | : National Fisheries Service, Chile |
| SINPESCA | : Industrial Fisheries Syndicate of Pará and Amapá, Brazil |
| UNCLOS | : United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea |