

Report

of the

Round Table of Women in Small-scale Fisheries in Goa

19 February 2017

Panaji, Goa.

Organized by



International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust

Old No 27, New No 55, College Road, Chennai 600 006

with

Saad Aangan

Introduction

The round table was organized by Saad Aangan, a Goa-based gender resource group, in collaboration with the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (Trust) and was attended by thirty-four participants, all (except one fish farmer) women. The workshop was conducted in Konkani, the language of Goa.

The programme commenced with a lively song on the fish of Goa sung by Perpet Cardoz, from the fishing community at Zuari, Goa Velha.

After brief introductions by the participants, Maria Angelica D' Souza from Saad Aangan explained the purpose of the Round Table. She stated that she had attended a meeting at Chennai on 'Enhancing capacities of women fishworkers in India for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines' and noted the value of shared understandings and empowering strategies. She mentioned that she saw the need to have a focussed meeting of that nature in Goa and hence tied up with Saad Aangan, of which she is a volunteer, to facilitate organizing the same, with the support of the ICSF.

Feedback from participants

Women in small-scale fisheries from various parts of Goa, including both from the North Goa District and the South Goa District, shared their pressing concerns. They had earlier been given questionnaires which they were required to reflect on in groups and share at the Round Table. Though there were questions related to access to resources, markets, health, education, housing, violence and discrimination, it was clear that most groups to start with did not feel the need to discuss issues other than markets and access to resources. Further, though issues in specific markets were highlighted, participants came from villages across Goa and were aware of the concerns in their local villages/markets as well.

Canacona

Some of the women who participated had been selling fish for about forty-five years. The president of the Mahila Masey Vikrati Sangatan, Chavder, Canacona, raised the threat to their livelihood through fish vending because the newly sanctioned mobile van for Canacona was selling fish just outside the market instead of in areas where people do not have easy access to a fish market, thereby affecting their (traditional vendors') sales. She also mentioned that their sales are affected by a fish kiosk set up in the market. She said that cycle vendors and other non-traditional vendors selling fish outside the market affected the sales of those sitting in the market by paying sopo (tax) for sitting in the place.

They were once involved with drying fish but with fresh fish available throughout the year, there was no value for drying fish, and hence the effort at drying was not commensurate with the returns they could possibly get.

They mentioned that at facilities at Canacona Primary Health Centre were minimal, and for the slightest of medical interventions required, they were being referred to the Government Hospital at Margao, the health machinery of which left much to be desired. This resulted in them having to make repeated long trips to and from Margao. They also mentioned that for severe cases, they were being referred to the Goa Medical College at Bambolim. All this also meant loss of sales, due to queues for the public health facilities. This left them with no option but to seek private health care, which they can ill afford. They also complained about difficulties faced by women for their deliveries as some of them even ended up delivering on the way to the Government Hospital at Margao.

The women were sore about the lack of amenities in the market in terms of toilet and sanitation facilities and water. Some pipes were broken (due to collapse and demolition of the basic building in the area) and not repaired as a result of which no water facilities, so essential for fish vending, were available, and neither was an alternative or temporary arrangement done. The women also complained that there were no lights outside the market. They had given written representations to the Canacona municipality in vain.

There were also issues about the sopo being paid, ranging from an annual sopo of Rs. 7000 and to Rs. 20, 30, or even 200 per day. There was no clarity and the sopo contractor/panchayat was not performing the duties required of him/it for the charges being collected.

In terms of education, they said that their children could not afford the expenses that post-graduation studies entailed. There is an education scheme under which as an OBC (Other Backward Classes) community, they receive one out of the two term fees for post-graduation studies, which does not suffice, as there are also hostel/transport expenses besides the one term fee.

Some women sort fish that are caught by the purse seiners ; in some cases their spouses operate the purse seine boats. The fish that are caught are sorted by the women for sale at hotels or in the local markets. However, most of the women are involved in selling fish caught by their spouses who own small boats and traditional rampons (large shore-seines)

Candolim

About six women sit at the market in Candolim. They mentioned that outsiders come on cycles and sell, reducing their sales at the Tinto (Village Square). They stated that they had addressed a letter to the panchayat, but there was no response. They complained bitterly that the panchayat never even tells them of any schemes or shows them any forms.

There is no amenity of toilet, though they pay a sopo of Rs. 10/- per day, and there is no auction for the sopo or for that matter any accountability from the sopo collector.

As a new market has come up in the neighbouring panchayat (Nerul), less people come to the Candolim market.

Panjim market

There are over 300 vendors in the Panjim market. There is continuous wholesale vending, with no timings and with fluctuating rates, which badly affects the retail fish vendors. Also given this continuous wholesale vending, the market is dirty and there is no time to clean it. Many from the fishing community have migrated to London because of lack of adequate income, and instability.¹

Vendors have been increasing both in and outside the market and cycle vendors collect fish for selling in villages and door to door, reducing the footfalls in the market. They have asked the municipality to regulate the wholesalers and prevent vendors from sitting outside the market.

Also meats are sold along with fish. People who don't eat meat are reluctant to come to the area. There is lack of water and toilet facilities. There are no storage facilities—iceboxes. There is one freezer which doesn't work well so ice melts. Above the market there are hotels and the water/sewage leaks from the top.

The sopo was raised from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 per day per person, on the assurance that a tap would be installed, but this assurance was not met. They pay Rs. 10/- per pot of water, sometimes bringing water from Betim, or they buy water from the Sulabh toilet, paying almost Rs. 3000 per month. This is besides the costs of ice and storage.

Mapusa

The women managed to get themselves a say in the redevelopment of the market, but their requirements were not totally considered. For instance, they wanted a canteen, toilet, storage space and restroom, but all these facilities are either not there or are available for a fee. The toilet provided is a pay toilet and is not maintained well. The storage facility available is charged for. There is no restroom; there is no provision to keep their baskets or security to keep it. So the women have to carry their baskets back and forth, causing them inconvenience, as they have to travel to Mapusa from near and distant villages of North Goa.

1 Since many in Goa have Portuguese passports, migrating to countries in the European Union is relatively simple.

Wholesalers come in at different times during the day due to the purse-seiners and trawlers which bring in their catch at various times. So people are buying fresh fish and not buying what has been stored in the freezer.

Many vendors are men and migrants. They are abusive to the women. However, some of these have been employed by the local women.

They also complained that the chicken vending space is above the fish market and that the leakage affects them.

Fish farm: Cuncolim

Traditional salt pans have been converted into fish ponds, so this is the first generation into fish related work. The fish is sold at Assolna (a neighbouring village) by the women there.

The issues they have are around the construction of the gate, because the pond is unprotected without a proper gate. There is also no proper road to the farm, there are no lights and it is surrounded by fields on all sides. There was a request for appropriate support systems and more subsidies/financial assistance for the same to the economically backward sections, in order to make fish farming economically viable. In the farm, women are involved with cleaning the farm and clearing the shrubs.

They also are looking forward to a training for shrimp farming, which has been scheduled. It was also noted that the Fisheries Department provides support only for monoculture fish farming.

Government schemes: Smita Mazumdar, Superintendent, Directorate of Fisheries

As a representative of the Fisheries Department, she had come equipped with a presentation of the various schemes available with the department. However, she was requested to restrict herself to those schemes which are relevant for the participants. She mentioned about the icebox scheme and the criteria for giving availing of the scheme. In that context, she mentioned about the icebox scheme and the criteria for availing of the scheme. The participants felt they were meeting those criteria but yet their applications for the icebox scheme do not appear to have been considered, as they have never received the iceboxes. For fish vendors, the primary scheme available is the icebox scheme. The panchayat office/or fisheries department is required to certify that the woman is a fish vendor. Only then they can apply. This is apart from the requirement of residential certificate or ration card. All fish vendors are entitled to an icebox—however, possibly all are not getting as each year, the budget gets exhausted and the remaining applications are not considered. There was much discussion on this.

Ms Mazumdar pointed out that some schemes are available individually, others through societies and self-help groups, and yet others through the panchayat (in the latter category comes the reconstruction of fish market scheme).

For fish vendors there is the mobile van scheme—for self-help groups or associations (not necessarily traditional fish vendors)—which requires that fish should be sold at 5 per cent less than the market price and in areas where there are no markets.

The new scheme that has recently been announced for fish vendors is the central government motorbike scheme (Activa or Hero Honda), for which there is a subsidy of Rs. 30,000/-. The bike with attached box has to be according to government specifications. Residential certificate is needed. (Women were upset with this new information; the schemes would only strengthen those with cycles or who can be mobile—mainly men—further impacting the local market vendors).

Loans (as per a central government scheme) up to Rs. 5 lakhs can be given to fisherwomen group at 4 per cent interest for any fisheries-related business. Tenders are to be shown for purchase along with Aadhar card. Ms Mazumdar was informed about the Supreme Court judgement that the Aadhar card cannot be made mandatory and that the department should be reminded about the same.

On being asked about the role of the fisheries inspector, Ms Mazumdar said that his function is to check fish prices at markets for their internal statistics and whether iceboxes schemes are used. Every taluka has a fisheries officer and a fisheries officer stationed at the BDO office. The fisheries surveyor carries out an inspection/verification pursuant to any application made.

Fish farm subsidies are available at 25 per cent, but the owners can get more from the agriculture department.

When asked whether the Fisheries Department had been requisitioned for suggestions for the Panaji smart city, Ms Mazumdar stated that the department had put a proposal for introduction of fish in the gutters to clean the gutters.

The participants engaged in animated discussions with Ms Mazumdar, which continued into the lunch break.

Overview and relevance of SSF Guidelines

Advocate Albertina Almeida of Saad Aangan gave a brief overview of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Small-Scale Fisheries. She pointed out that the Government of India was a signatory to the said guidelines and indicated some of the components of the guidelines and their relationship to the issues raised by the women. She explained the guiding principles that should govern the implementation of these guidelines, namely,

human rights and dignity, respect of cultures, non-discrimination, gender equality and equity, equity and equality, rule of law, consultation and participation, transparency, accountability, economic, social and environmental sustainability, holistic and integrated approaches, social responsibility, feasibility and social and economic viability. She drew attention to how the issues that the women had and the demands they were making could be aligned with these guiding principles.

In this context, she highlighted the importance of social auditing and monitoring of the implementation of the schemes, training of women in SSF, and the strengthening of associations and collectives.

Follow-up plans

In a discussion that followed, the issues and suggestions that came up included:

- a) To have a joint meeting with panchayat authorities, women vendors and the Fisheries Department.
- b) To ensure appropriate loan facilities for *patti* nets, considering that as of now, women from the fishing communities have a long workday given that they have no fish availability and have to go distances at odd hours to buy fish and then sell it.
- c) What can be done to ensure that migrants do not end up setting up fish markets in different places such as Batim, at the cost of the livelihoods of the fishing community of the area, including Goa Velha.
- d) Problems of fish vendors increasing due to the mobile vans, increase in market vendors, lack of regularization of the market areas (where others are allowed to sell), lack of regularization of timings, decrease in fish catch. Selling of fish needs to be regularized.
- e) Model smart fish market proposal should be given to Panjim for the smart city.
- f) The Goa State Urban Development Authority has been involved with the construction of the fish market at Mapusa. Its role needs to be explored and tapped in the interests of the women fish vendors.
- g) Schemes for rampon nets could be extended to other nets—in the *agor/khazan* lands.
- h) The issue of reduced access to fish due to purse seiners, trawlers, pollution by River Princess (a 26-metre-long cargo ship that ran aground on Candolim beach in the year 2000 and cleared only by 2015), resorts and consequent reduced space for drying fish, the disturbance of fishing due to casinos, needs to be addressed, but given time constraints, there was no adequate time to discuss this aspect of access to fish.

- i) Health problems due to lack of adequate sleep due to long workday; diabetes, pressure, are a stark reality.
- j) The municipality has taken photographs from the women in order to make ID cards, but nothing has been done to date.

Finally, there was a collective drawing up of immediate demands

1. Need for ice since the price of ice, travel, labour etc. is steep. It is also difficult to get small quantities of ice.
2. Need for toilets—the application has to be sent from the panchayats/ municipalities to the Fisheries Department. The Fisheries Department has a scheme for ‘construction of fish market’ for which INR 5 lakhs is available. This scheme is so far underutilized though the Fisheries Department has been asking the panchayats.
3. There needs to be a fixed timing for wholesalers in the market and vendors in each market (6-11 and 2.30-5), in order to maintain stable markets.
4. Fisheries inspector should ensure that people should not sell outside the market (especially the cycle vendors). Cycles, rickshaws, etc., should ply in areas where there are no markets.
5. Women fish vendors in the market should be given ID cards and periodic monitoring in the markets is necessary to ensure that others do not sell there.
6. The Fisheries Department must ensure compliance by the beneficiaries of schemes such as mobile van. For instance, the Pollem cage culture group was given the mobile van by the Fisheries Department, but the van is always near the Chavdar market where the traditional vendors sit—it should go to the interior areas. A more accessible system for complaints has to be developed.
7. Women have to be involved and must have a say in any plans for market development.
8. Women vendors should get pensions—like the motorcycle pilots—and need social security schemes. Under the Directorate of Social Welfare there is a “Scheme to grant monthly financial assistance to the persons engaged in traditional occupations/ businesses including motorcycle pilots”.
9. Women in different areas of fish work must be consulted when Fisheries Department is drawing up schemes, so that counterproductive schemes such as the motorbike scheme do not find a place.
10. There has to be appropriate budgeting based on needs of the fisherwomen.

Looking ahead

The participants would discuss in their areas / markets and have local meetings regarding the issues that were raised at the round table.

Representatives of each place have taken the responsibility of organizing local meetings to raise the issues and look at the formation of associations or groups or a mechanism by which they can together take their issues forward with the support of Saad Aangan.

The demands raised in the group would be officially given to the director, Department of Fisheries—a representation would go along to meet the director within the next two weeks. Options of dates were given and would be finalized after getting an appointment with the director.

Feedback

The participants found the round table extremely useful. They said that they learnt a lot and it met their expectations. Doubts and problems they had were clarified, and now they have clear ideas on the way forward. It made them feel inspired to take the issues ahead. They were appreciative that a representative had come from the Fisheries Department so they could interact directly. They appreciated and remarked that it was the first time women in small-scale fisheries were being called for a meeting like this and that it gave them a space to express their concerns which were taken seriously. And they were hopeful that together with Saad Aangan they could take the issues forward.

Areas for Follow-up

Saad Aangan had also visited various places prior to the round table, partly to mobilize women but also to get information from women who were unable to participate in the round table. Follow-up with these women will also need to be considered. Further work would be needed to understand the issues of women in smaller markets, from inland fishing communities, women fishers, women working in fish processing units, and also those working with or aiding work in fish farms.

ANNEX 1

Round Table of Women in Small-scale Fisheries in Goa

19 February, 2017

Panaji, Goa.

Programme agenda

19 February, 2017	
9.30 – 10.00	Registration and snacks
10.00 – 10.30	Introduction of Round Table and participant introduction — <i>Mariette Correa, ICSF and Maria Angelica D'souza</i>
10.30 – 12.00	Sharing of issues by women in SSF — <i>Chaired by Maria Angelica D'souza</i>
12.00 – 1.30	Presentation on Schemes for women in fisheries — <i>Smita Mazumdar, Dept. of Fisheries, Government of Goa</i> <i>Chaired by Albertina Almeida, Saad Aangan</i>
1.30 – 2.30	Lunch
2.30 – 3.30	Overview of SSF Guidelines and relevance to women in SSF in Goa — <i>Albertina Almeida, Saad Aangan</i>
3.30 – 3.45	Tea
3.45 – 4.45	Future plans and consolidation of demands — <i>Mariette Correa, ICSF and Albertina Almeida, Saad Aangan</i>
4.45 – 5.15	Feedback from participants — <i>Maria Angelica D'souza</i>
5.15	Vote of Thanks — <i>Maria Angelica D'souza</i>

ANNEX 2

Group discussion topics

Health

1. What are the health issues and problems faced by women in your community (SSF)? Discuss the health problems and the challenges in accessing health care.
2. What is being done to deal with these problems—by the community, government, NGOs, others?
3. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to solve these problems?
4. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Education

1. What is the situation regarding educational levels and access to education for your community?
2. What are the barriers that prevent better levels of education in your community?
3. What is being done to deal with these barriers—by the community, government, NGOs, others?
4. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to solve these problems?
5. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Violence

1. Do women continue to experience discrimination and violence in fishing communities—within the communities and external threats? In what ways?
2. Why do you think these problems continue?
3. What is being done to deal with these problems—by the community, government, NGOs, others?
4. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to solve these problems?
5. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Human rights

1. Can you outline ways in which your human rights are promoted?—(e.g. right to equality and non-discrimination, right to life and livelihoods, right to information, ? Are they involved in village level or community level decision-making processes?
2. Have there been violations of human rights in your communities—could you elaborate?
3. Has the Government taken measures to protect your human rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution—specifically discuss right to equality and non-discrimination, right to life and livelihoods. If yes, please give examples. If no, in what areas should action be taken?
4. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to ensure that your human rights are promoted and protected?
5. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Housing, water and sanitation

1. What are the problems faced by your community, and especially women, in terms of housing, water and sanitation?
2. What is being done to deal with these problems—by the community, government, NGOs, others?
3. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to solve these problems?
4. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Social Security

1. Do you get benefits of social security schemes/ provisions from the government? If yes, please elaborate on the nature of social security that you get. If no, what are the reasons for this?—pension scheme, maternity benefit, health/medical insurance, death benefit, unemployment benefit, disability benefit?
2. Are the social security provisions of the Government adequate? Are there challenges to access social security benefits from the Government? Which are the departments from where you can access these?
3. What do you think you/ your organisation/women in SSF can practically do to overcome these challenges?
4. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Markets (facilities, infrastructure, space, rights)

1. Have there been occasion/instances/programmes- where women have been displaced from markets? Access to procure fish to sell has been a problem? Access to fresh fish? Please give examples?
2. Have special efforts been made to assist women in retaining their space in the markets—whole sale, harbour based ? If yes, what are they? If yes and they have failed, why do you think this happened, what were the loopholes? If no attempts have been made by the government, what suggestions do you have?
3. What are the issues relating to facilities and infrastructure at markets?
4. How do you think women's spaces in the markets can be better protected? Can you share some successful examples indicating how women's spaces have been protected or what new spaces they have found?
5. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to ensure that your market spaces are protected?
6. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?

Access to resources, fish

1. Do women in your communities have secure rights to tenure (habitation, areas for processing and selling fish, areas for other pre- and post-harvest activities, fishing) in your communities? If not what are the reasons that exclude or marginalize them? If yes, how are or can these rights be safeguarded?
2. Do you have access to resources—to collect seaweed, crabs, shrimp seed, fish in back waters. What are the challenges faced in accessing these resources?
3. What are the issues for sustainable management of fishery resources? Are there any challenges? Are you involved in deciding local level management aspects
4. Does your community have sufficient space for post harvest activities, drying, smoking, storing of fish? Do women also have access to sufficient space? If not, why not?
5. What do you think you/ your organisation/ women in SSF can practically do to ensure that your access to resources, fish is sustained? What alternatives do you propose in the case of declining access to fish?
6. What are your demands from the State, from others (e.g. FWOs, NGOs) ?