

Yemaya

No. 11

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

NOVEMBER 2002

From the Editor

Dear Friends,

Greetings! This issue of Yemaya has a special focus on South Africa. The recently concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a disappointment on many counts. But for the traditional fishing communities along South Africa's West Coast it was a unique opportunity to highlight their problems to the world media and to the public at large.

The Fisher People's Forum was organized as part of the Civil Society Forum. Participating in it were about 240 men, women and youth from coastal fishing communities in South Africa, apart from some international delegates. The Forum was hosted by the Masifundise Development Organization, with support from the South African Artisanal Fishers Association and the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP). Participants were able to draw attention to their struggle for access rights to marine fisheries resources and to sustainable coastal development.

There was significant participation of women of fishing communities, including those who have worked for years as workers in fish processing plants. Songs were used effectively, both during the sessions and the rallies held outside, to communicate much of what had to be said. The songs highlighted the quest of coastal fishing communities for fishing rights, land rights, for security and human rights.



Inside Pages

- S. Africa.....2,3,4
- Sri Lanka6
- Netherlands.....7
- France
and Senegal.....9
- Spain.....10
- Reports.....11,12

The first article from South Africa describes some of the reasons why traditional fishing communities on the West Coast continue to face problems in gaining equitable access to marine fisheries resources. Another article looks at the emergence of women as leaders in the struggle for the rights of traditional coastal fishing communities.

The article from Sri Lanka captures the problems many fishing communities face, that of sea erosion. The article looks at the way one such affected community in Sri Lanka has had to struggle to cope with the problem.

We carry an article from the Netherlands, updating us on *Vinvis*, the women in fisheries network there. *Vinvis* has recently completed two years and the article tracks how the network has grown and matured in this period.

And there is news from Spain, where women shellfish gatherers in Galicia are organizing. As news about the oil slick off the Galician coast comes in, caused by the sinking of the oil tanker, *Prestige*, we know that their struggle is entering a new phase. Our thoughts are with these women and men of affected fishing communities.

As we sign off, we take this opportunity to wish you the very best for the coming year. And to remind you to send in articles for *Yemaya* No. 12 by mid-February 2003.

Africa/ South Africa**On the brink**

Traditional fishing communities in South Africa are struggling to find a secure future in the sector

By Jackie Sunde of the Masifundise Development Organization, South Africa

Coastal communities in South Africa have a very long history of harvesting marine resources such as fish, shellfish and rock lobster or *kreef* for their livelihoods. It is estimated that 30,000 subsistence or artisanal fishing people depend on these resources to survive and another 30,000 are employed seasonally in the fishing industry. South Africa exports a large quantity of fish (about 40 per cent) to countries in the North and this makes fishing a highly profitable industry from a commercial perspective.

In most communities men have traditionally been the ones to go to sea whilst women have played significant roles in shore-based activities: making and repairing nets, preparing bait and processing and selling fish. Along some areas of the coast, women collect mussels and other shellfish off the rocks. Women are the primary seasonal workers in the fish processing factories along the Cape West Coast. Of late, they are also playing an increasing role in the administration and representation of fishing associations on the West Coast, where women chair at least three associations. Here they play critical roles in assisting fisher people apply for permits and quotas and in lobbying the Department of Marine and Coastal Management (MCM), the government department responsible for fisheries management.

The fishing industry has been shaped considerably by the discriminatory legislation and practices during the white-dominated apartheid regime. Black people were excluded from getting quotas in their own right and had to work for white fishermen or companies. White-owned fishing companies flourished. Gradually the larger companies acquired smaller companies and extended their control. A handful of powerful white-owned companies came to dominate the industry. The influx control laws, job reservation, and Group Areas Act further excluded Black communities from getting full access to the sea and its resources.

After the election of South Africa's first democratic government in 1994, efforts to transform the fishing industry by introducing policies ensuring equitable

access to marine resources, were initiated. This was in the face of considerable pressure from large companies fearful of losing control over the industry.

The Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQ) system was introduced. Although quotas were not new, this scheme was to enable people from previously disadvantaged communities to apply for quotas to fish. Other policies included giving incentives to companies that could show that they were transforming their employment practices to provide more opportunities for Black and women workers. The new system intended to allocate quotas to companies of different sizes and, in this way, to enable a certain amount of smaller 'new entrants' to establish companies.

However, despite these policies, some communities and people who have fished all their lives, have been left without equitable access to fisheries resources. There appear to be several reasons for this:

Corruption: The fishing industry has a history of corruption, with influential people using their connections to ensure that their friends and families benefited from quota allocations. Allocations were also made for political purposes. Allocations were made to certain Coloured communities and leaders but not others. Later, in 2000, the government tried to introduce systems to ensure a more equitable distribution. However, a lot of mistrust remains, especially since many people who have never fished before have received quotas, whilst the access of many real, *bona fide* fishing people who have fished for years and depended on fishing for survival, has declined.

High costs: A big problem for fishing communities is the cost and complex procedures involved in applying for a quota. The criteria used to decide quota allocations are also seen as problematic.

Paper quotas: A further problem is that of 'paper quotas'. Because of the high value of quotas, many new entrants who were allocated quotas sold them to other fishing companies. This has enabled these fishing companies, even overseas-owned companies, to increase their power and control over the industry.

Failure to prioritize bona fide fisher people: The government has decided that, in the case of certain high-value species of fish and shellfish, quotas for these species will be allocated only to larger enterprises operating as businesses and not to small, subsistence

fishing groups, thereby depriving the latter of access to these resources.



Impact of global trade: Pressures from South Africa's trading partners in the North, such as from the countries of the European Union, coupled with the government's current export-oriented economic policy, have affected decisions about quota allocations, ostensibly in order to promote investment in the industry. These policies are being implemented at the expense of the income and food security of local fishing communities.

Local fishing communities are thus facing social and economic crises as a result of the restricted access to fishing resources. Many fisher people who used to be active now sit at home. In other cases, the limited quota allocations mean that households have a greatly reduced seasonal income.

In certain cases people turn to poaching (catching fish without a license/ quota) as a means of short-term survival. They are attracted by the large sums of money that are paid for protected species. In some instances, local people poach in return for payment in drugs. Powerful drug cartels use the lucrative trade in valuable marine resources as a way of obtaining finance. In communities where poaching is rife, problems, such as drugs and gangsterism, are on the increase. Linked to the high levels of poverty, gangsterism and drug abuse, is an increase in rape, sexual abuse and trafficking in women and children.

For communities that do not poach, the economic future is precarious. Given the seasonal nature of incomes, households find it difficult to pay their house rents and

there is increasing food insecurity and poverty. Fishing communities are relatively excluded from economic development in their regions and have expressed their frustration at the lack of information on alternative economic initiatives, for example, on how to access the tourism market.

Jackie Sunde can be contacted at jackie@tcoe.org.za

Africa/ South Africa

Why Deny Us the Right to Live?

Demands of South African fishing communities at the Fisher People's Forum organized from 24 to 27 August 2002, as part of the Civil Society Forum prior to the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD)

- Access and rights to the sea and marine resources through transformation of national fisheries policy;
- Preferential rights for *bona fide* fisher people;
- Challenging unfair global trade and finance policies that affect fisheries;
- Provision of fishworker's rights through the extension of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and other labour protection and benefits, including safety regulations to cover subsistence and small-scale fishers;
- Access to means of sustaining families and livelihoods in the off-season;
- Provision of subsidies to subsistence, artisanal, small-scale and limited commercial fishers, given that currently it is the big companies that get petrol subsidies and tax breaks but not small-scale fishers;
- Provision of infrastructure such as jetties and slipways, adequate roads and access to finance for equipment, cold storage facilities and markets;
- Participation in the management of marine resources;
- Organization of fisher people so that they can be adequately represented to ensure that their issues are addressed;
- Democratization of the fishing industry;
- Visibility of women in the fishing industry.

Africa/ South Africa**“If you strike a woman, you strike a rock”**

Several women leaders are emerging within the social movement of fisher people in South Africa

Based on interviews by Jackie Sunde of the Masifundise Development Organization, South Africa

There is an old saying in South Africa that comes from the liberation struggle, “Wathint’ Abafazi! Wa thint Imbokotho!” that is, “if you strike a woman, you strike a rock”. Now, eight years after the election of the first democratic government in South Africa, and despite having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, the strength and courage of black women living in fishing and coastal villages in this country is again being tested.

Notwithstanding their recently gained rights, very few women living in these areas have access to the sea; they have no representation within the national fisheries management programme and only a minority have gained quotas through the notoriously corrupt Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system. It is in this context that several women leaders have emerged within the social movement of fisher people, including Solene Smith and Naomi Cloete.

Solene lives in Langebaan, a small coastal village on the West Coast of South Africa. She was born in the nearby district of Hopefield on a farm where her parents worked. On leaving school, Solene went to work at the Langebaanweg Airport Base as a cleaner. For the first twelve years of her working life, Solene worked from five in the morning until seven at night. She was forced to wake up every day at 3 am in order to walk to work and get there on time at 5 am.

Solene worked extremely hard. When asked how she managed, she says, “I just had to be strong...you just had to do what you were told...” Her love for people enabled her to develop good relationships with her colleagues and she soon developed a reputation for being able to identify their strengths and assist her employer in making recommendations regarding their training needs and job descriptions. After twelve years, her hard work and leadership potential were recognized, and she was promoted to the position of supervisor.

When she was 21 Solene married Edward Smith, a fisherman from Langebaan and came to live in Langebaan. Edward’s father was also a fisherman and the family had a long history of fishing, as well as of tragedy, at sea. Edward had lost a brother, a brother-in-law, and a nephew in an accident at sea and two other brothers in another accident. Solene has three children of her own, two foster children, and three grandchildren.

In 2000 Solene decided to resign. She says that over the years, especially after the democratic elections in 1994, she had become aware of her rights and she realized that she was being treated badly at work. She took a retrenchment package and turned her attention to her community. She feels that she has always been a community-oriented person. She assisted the local fisher community with their applications for subsistence permits and she began to help them to form the Langebaan Visser’s Assosiasie and to apply for limited commercial permits.

In October 2000 she was elected as the Treasurer for the Association, a position that she still holds. The South African fishing policy marginalizes small-scale fishers, allocating them extremely small, unsustainable quotas. The 35 members of the Association were only awarded 7 permits for 420 kg of West Coast Rock Lobster. This has subsequently been increased to 500 kg. This provides an income that is considerably lower than the poverty level.

Despite living on a resource-rich coastline, the Langebaan fishers are unable to access these resources. They have no jetty or slipway and are restricted to a tiny area within the lagoon due to the control that the South African Navy and the Nature Conservation authorities have over the lagoon. The still predominantly white, wealthy tourist industry is given priority over the local fishers. In fact, many of the local fishers were removed from their homes along the beach during the apartheid era and allocated smaller houses some distance from the beach. Strict laws control the cleaning of fish on the beach and hamper their access to the sea. The plots along the beach have been developed by wealthy holiday-makers, many of whom do not stay in these houses for a substantial portion of the year.

Solene has become a leading activist in the struggle for the rights of *bona fide* fisher people in South Africa. She has played a particularly important role in asserting

women's rights and the need for gender equality in the industry. Through her lobbying the Association has agreed that there should be one woman involved in each permit and there are now five women within the permit groups. She says that although in the beginning men might not have agreed, now they see this as important. What has also helped is that they know that this is one of the criteria used by the government when awarding quotas and hence they are eager to support this provision. In the long term, they would like to get a much bigger quota and have more women involved.

Solene says women play a very important role in the fishing industry. However, very few women have the safety training that will enable them to go to sea—only one woman wants to go to sea at this stage. The others, however, play a critical role. They are involved in preparing and repairing the nets—a skill they have learnt over the years—and in baiting operations. Solene herself gets up to help the men in her family prepare for sea. Often this is at 1 am in the morning. She worries about the crew. She says it worries her, for example, if someone goes to sea drunk as “you can lose lives if someone goes to sea drunk”.

Substance abuse is a real problem in her community. Several of the permit holders are on drugs. Solene is trying to get a social work community programme going that will try to highlight the dangers and support drug users in giving up their dependence. She notes that it is against the law to go to sea under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Why are drugs and alcohol such a problem? Solene believes that this can be traced directly to the new fishing policy. In the old days the youth could go to sea and earn a living. Now most of them are unemployed, they sit in poverty. “They will do anything to feel happy... there are no grants to assist them outside of the fishing season and the money they get from their current quota is very little...”

Solene believes in women's contribution. She says, “I would like us women to know that we are not less worthy, we don't have to keep quiet. We can uplift ourselves...I want to encourage women to get what we want, to organize and mobilize to help ourselves. We are strong enough in all respects: business, politics, everything...the things we need are there.”

With regard to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Solene says that what she would really like to see is the fisher communities forming a steering committee—involving all areas from all countries and

linked together at the world level. She says it should not just come from the local level. “If we can get this in place, a structure that can talk for everyone, my dream is that in ten years time fisher people themselves will be in Marine and Coastal Management (MCM). This dream is within our reach, it is possible if we stand together. We can achieve this, if we stand and work together.”



Like Solene, Naomi Cloete lives in a small historical fishing village on the coast. Naomi was born in Paternoster where her family has been involved in the fishing industry for generations. Her family lived on a farm adjacent to the beach, in small cottages built by her grandfather. During the apartheid era this farm was registered in the name of a white farmer and Naomi's family lost control of the farm. They were forced to move from the farm and those members of the family who refused to move were finally evicted from the farm in 1999.

In accordance with the constitutional provisions of the country, Naomi's relatives lodged land claims through the Land Restitution process but to date their claim has not been settled. On the contrary, their claim has been 'misaid' by the department. They have faced a great deal of harassment from the white farmer who has subsequently sub-divided the farm and sold off the land to developers for tourist accommodation.

Naomi is the Chairperson of the local Paternoster Visser's Association. The association comprises 69 local fishers who have a small, unsustainable quota that they have been allocated for four years. The management and administration of this quota is very

challenging and causes a great deal of conflict amongst the members. Naomi has had to learn many skills and plays a central role, not just in the on-going administration of the organization, but also in the emotional and psychological support and maintenance of the crew. She describes days when she has scanned the stormy horizons, fearing that one of her crew members was lost at sea.

The local small-scale fishers have no breakwater or slipway, few of them have had training in safety at sea, and their boats are small wooden *bakkis*'. Naomi, and nine other women from the area, have applied for quotas on four occasions, spending a great deal of money on each application but to no avail. These women do not know why they have not succeeded in obtaining access to the sea. They are determined to fight for their access to marine resources. Naomi recalls the hope that the *bona fide* fishers had after the general election in 1994, their belief that they would now be able to access the sea in their own right. Although dismayed that the new government has not awarded them priority rights as historical fishers, these women are determined to fight for this right and to tackle the unequal transformation of the fishing industry in this country.

Jackie Sunde can be contacted at jackie@tcoe.org.za

Asia/ Sri Lanka

Victims of sea erosion

An interview with Melanie Costa, a woman from a fishing community in Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka

By Chandrika Sharma of ICSF's Chennai office

We met Melanie Costa of Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka at the South India Fisherfolk Festival organized by the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) at Trivandrum, from 14 to 16 September 2002. She was there with a group of six others from Sri Lanka. The group comprised fisherwomen, as well as representatives of the National Union of Fishermen and the NGO, the Fisheries Development Solidarity Centre.

Melanie Costa is the wife of a deep-sea fisherman. She has had to face a lot in the past few years. A couple of years ago her husband was arrested by the Indian authorities for straying into Indian waters. The

families of arrested fishermen, with the support of NGOs and unions in Sri Lanka, had worked hard to pressurize the Sri Lankan government to secure their speedy release. However, it was 11 months before he, and the others of the crew, were released.

For Melanie, with three young children, this meant that she had to go out and find work to earn money, to feed and educate her children. The work she found was in a tile-making unit.

This was not the end of her troubles. A few months later her house, along with the houses of about 30 other families, were washed away by the sea. With this was washed away all their life's earnings and possessions. Their entire village has been under threat from sea erosion and the villagers have long been demanding groynes and other structures to check the erosion.



Overnight they found themselves without a roof over their heads. People came to their help fortunately, and someone offered them a place to put up their tents temporarily. While this helped them tide over the immediate problem of a place to stay, there were other problems. Returning after work in the tile-making unit, Melanie would often find that pigs had entered her tent and eaten up the rice she had cooked for their meals.

The families decided to organize themselves, and with the support of NGOs they began their struggle for recognition of their rights as citizens, as human beings and as women. On March 8, International Women's Day, they went as a group to meet the district government officer. He gave them a sympathetic hearing and also a letter to be given to the minister,

mentioning a piece of land that was shortly to be acquired by the government as a possible location to rehabilitate the displaced families.

While continuing the process of contacting government officials and ruling party members, the displaced families, in the face of few other alternatives, decided to occupy the land.

However, the land owner filed a case for eviction. The case was now in court. According to the law, if a land is occupied for three months, those occupying it cannot be evicted. The land owner, however, had filed a case against the encroachment within just eight days.

With the help of a lawyer and free legal help from an NGO, the group was able to get several stay orders that delayed the case from coming up for a hearing for three months. When the case finally came up for hearing, the judge asked them to produce a copy of the gazette notification declaring that the government had acquired the said land. Unfamiliar with the legal jargon, the group assumed that what was needed was a cassette and they even gave one to the judge! This has now become a big joke enjoyed heartily by the community.

In the subsequent period the group and the supporters from NGOs spent many days in Colombo meeting with government officials and ministers. They finally received an assurance that the gazette notification for acquiring the said land would soon be published. However, aware that they would need a printed copy of the gazette notification in court, they did not let the matter rest there. They went to the government printing press and got a copy of the gazette notification as soon as it was ready, directly from the printer.

This was how they finally managed to gain possession of the land. For the judges the settlement of the case came as a relief as well, as during the hearing of the case they had had to contend with the large numbers present in court—all the members of the displaced families, including children and the aged, as well as their supporters.

Even as this struggle has come to a close, they are readying for the next one. On the land given to them even basic facilities like electricity, water and sanitation are lacking. To get these facilities will be another struggle.

Europe / Netherlands

Challenging stereotypes

VinVis, the Women in Fisheries Network of the Netherlands, has been in existence for two years now. Time again to report on the process of finding a common orientation...

By Cornelia Quist, a member of ICSF and contact person for *VinVis*.

Last year I reported how some of us, who had met during a symposium on the needs and aspirations of wives of fishermen, had formed a women in fisheries network of the Netherlands. We had called it *VinVis* (see *Yemaya* No.4, August 2000 and *Yemaya* No.8, December 2001). In the first year of our existence we had been struggling to find a common orientation and, at the same time, to fight responses of cynicism, paternalism, or just ignorance from the fisher community itself.

Last June *VinVis* completed its second year of existence. We feel it has been a very good year, a year of stabilizing and gaining recognition. And a year of exploring our role in fisheries. At present we welcome new women to our network at every meeting.

One important event that helped the *VinVis* network find its orientation and direction, was the role women of the network played during the cod crisis in early 2001. At that time the Dutch fishing community was disproportionately affected by the decision of the European Union to close large parts of the fishing grounds in the North Sea to protect the codfish from depletion (see *Samudra* No.28, April 2001). Government and public opinion was strongly influenced by the environmental lobby and there was little sympathy for the plight of the Dutch fishermen. The women of *VinVis* felt that their first priority was to protect the future of the Dutch fisher community that suffered from internal divisions, a poor public image and a lack of perspective about the future.

Another event that facilitated this process of orientation was the launching of the so-called Green Paper by the European Union to review its Common Fisheries Policy. All stakeholders were invited to respond to this. The women of *VinVis* studied and discussed the Green Paper together and were the first from the Dutch fisher community to come up with a response. This act encouraged a group of young fishermen, among them

the husbands of the *VinVis* women, also to respond. Both these responses were later adopted by the national Dutch Fishermen's Union and found broad support among the Dutch fisher community.

In November 2001, a symposium was organized by the Dutch fishermen's organization with the title "What is your opinion about the future of the Dutch cutter-fishery". Normally only fishermen would participate in such meetings, but, at the request of *VinVis*, the wives of fishermen were also invited. Many, both men and women, responded to the invitation. It was clear that there was a broadly felt need in the community to reflect about the future. Discussions were very constructive and both men and women expressed great concern about social and environmental issues and their willingness to work for a fishery with a future. After a long time the 'community feeling' was back again. And, for the first time, wives of fishermen were accepted as partners in a fisheries discussion.



This new visibility gained by the wives of fishermen was the reason why *VinVis* was approached by the media. We knew that we had to be very careful. We first gave an interview to the national fisheries paper. An article in this paper, which is found on the table of every fisher household, was seen as an opportunity to explain our mission to the community. When we asked to see the draft article, we were alarmed to read the typical woman-stereotype jargon in the article. Fortunately, the journalist was cooperative and after about three or four revisions (!), we finally felt it could be published.

When other media persons approached *VinVis*, we discovered that whilst the journalist of the fisheries

paper had seen women of fisher households as plain housewives, the other journalists were only interested in hearing about women who go fishing out at sea. This meeting with the media led to an animated discussion amongst us about the kind of role/ image of women of fisher households we wanted to show to the public. This again facilitated a reflection and awareness process among the women of *VinVis*.

In exploring women's roles in fisheries, the women of *VinVis* became more aware of the value of their contribution, and of their potential. The women continued to approach the Dutch fishermen's organizations, expressing their sincere interest and concern about the future of the Dutch fisher community. As a result, they were invited frequently for meetings and given information. *VinVis* also got a special niche on the website of the national fishermen's organizations and in the national fisheries paper. Women of *VinVis* regularly write the column "Diary of a fisherman's wife". It looks as if women have finally got into the world of the fishermen. Wives of fishermen are more and more mentioned in reports and documents as a group that deserves to be heard. And more and more women speak up.

The women of *VinVis* took up a role, which was new for the community. They began participating in public meetings on issues that affect the future of Dutch fisheries. In these meetings they met with officials of various Ministries, with environmental activists, with other stakeholders using coastal resources. They were confronted with different ideas and perspectives. Quite often, the women of *VinVis* were the only spokespersons of their community at these meetings. As long as they went as a group, they felt encouraged. In this way, opportunities were created for issues important to their community to become part of the socio-political dialogue and for women to broaden their own perspective.

Through the ICSF *VinVis* was introduced to other fisherwomen's organizations in Europe. They learned about fisheries and, in particular, about the role of fisherwomen in other European countries. On 20 November 2001, they collectively presented a list with issues of concern to women in European fisheries to the European parliament (see *Yemaya*, No 8). This was a unique event.

The recognition that the women of *VinVis* have received in their role as advocates of the fisher community and

the appreciation they receive for this from the community, has strengthened their self-confidence. They do not, any more, hide their ambition to gain knowledge and skills and even a more equal partnership in the fishing enterprise. They feel less inhibited now to raise issues in the community, that are controversial but need to be addressed for the sake of the future of the community, such as the relationship between boat-owners and crew, (un)sustainable fishing practices and internal divisions within the community. They also feel less reluctant now to publicly confront men of their community who tend to stereotype women, and they can even expect the support of other men in this. The *VinVis* network has proved to be an important base on which women of fisher communities have been given the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and insights. Crucial for its existence has been the finding of a common orientation and the opportunity to set its own agenda and priorities.

Those who want to get in touch with us, please send an email to cornelie.quist@wolmail.nl

France and Senegal

A male-dominated agenda?

The female workforce in the canning industry in Brittany, France, and in Dakar, Senegal : A review of the Master's dissertation of Babacar Diouf

By Alain Le Sann of the *Collectif Pêche et Développement*, France and a member of ICSF

In 1989 and 1990, a young Senegalese student conducted a comparative study of the canneries of Southern Brittany, France and Dakar, Senegal. The processing plants were located in fishing harbours, in areas with few other industries. He noted that in both places women had to take up the low-grade jobs. Their work at the plant was seen as a continuation of the domestic work of preparing the fish.

The development of the canning industry in Dakar is an aspect of the 'délocalisation' or relocation process pursued by Breton industrialists, in the early twentieth century in Europe, and after the Second World War in Senegal. At first women workers were from fishing families. Their workload varied seasonally as they had to cope with the volumes landed by their fathers or husbands. The activities, and the way they were organized, were similar in Brittany and in Dakar.

However, the status and the career of women workers were seen to be very different in Dakar and Brittany because of the contrasting cultural, social and economic contexts. In Dakar, a number of first generation women workers used their savings to take up some trade, for instance, selling the fish caught by their husbands. Only the second generation got involved in union activities to obtain better working conditions, in terms of salaries, job security, etc. In Brittany, on the other hand, women workers had joined the fight in large numbers as early as in the 1920s.

Nowadays the gap between conditions in Dakar and in Brittany has somewhat narrowed, but the respective social and economic context still differs widely. Women workers in Breton are in charge of most of the domestic chores, apart from their normal work at the plant. Their Senegalese counterparts, in contrast, can rely on the extended family system. A large part of the household work is carried out by daughters or other female members of the family, sometimes by a servant. By entering a salaried occupation, women workers in Dakar improve their status, all the more so when the husband is polygamous.

Their position is seen to be further strengthened during times of economic crisis, that leave their husbands with uncertain means of subsistence or outright joblessness. Salaried employment becomes, therefore, very attractive and women stick to their job using every available means, in particular by spacing childbirth. They invest their savings to help their daughters get into some commercial activity. In Brittany, women workers tend to leave their job at childbirth and try to get back to work at the plant only after the children have grown up.

Babacar Diouf noted some common aspects of trade union activities in Dakar and Brittany. The aim, in all cases, was to get salary increases and improved working conditions, not for a greater recognition of 'qualification'. Yet the recognition of women as 'qualified' workers is an essential prerequisite if gender biases and the sexual division of labour has to be challenged. While men undertaking relatively simple, low-grade jobs may be considered qualified, women carrying out fairly complex tasks, requiring great skill, are not considered qualified. Could it be due to the fact that union leaders, both in Dakar and in Brittany, are, most of the time, men?

It is now ten years since the Senegalese student completed his research. It is worth revisiting the themes

he studied, in particular to find out to what extent the deepening crisis and changing gender relations are impacting on the life and livelihoods of women workers in the processing sector.

Alain le Sann can be contacted at pecheetdeveloppement@free.fr.

Europe/ Spain

For there to be a future...

Women shellfish gatherers in Spain are getting organized to protect their resources and to improve their livelihoods

By Cristina Lòpez Rodríguez of the Women's Committee of Ecodesarrollo Gaia, La Coruña, Spain

50-year old Eulalia is a shellfish gatherer in a Galician *ria* in north Spain, with hardly any education. Her health is in a fragile state aggravated by the problems specifically resulting from her profession as a shellfish gatherer. She was not aware of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that took place at Rio in 1992, or of the Agenda 2,1 which deals with the most pressing problems of today and attempts to prepare the world for tomorrow's challenges by advocating sustainable development and the participation of all. In her small, hard and humid world of the shore, no information arrived about such an important event.

For Eulalia's 28-year old daughter Maruxa, pursuing an education was not easy. Nevertheless, despite the family's precarious social and economic situation, at 18 she managed to complete her school certificate studies. In a labour market that provides few options for the young, she decided to follow in the footsteps of her mother and take up shellfish gathering. It was not easy for her to adapt, and for a while she resisted, rebelling and telling herself that she wanted something better and far removed from the deprivations suffered by her mother, which she had witnessed from an early age. But, finally, she accepted her fate and gradually, not only did she take it up wholeheartedly, but, for the love of her mother and for the sake of her future, she chose to involve herself in improving the conditions of her profession. She is now struggling to find solutions to the problems faced by the sector.

Maruxa is an active member of an Association that defends the social and economic interests of women

shellfish gatherers. She is aware that this militancy is not easy and that it needs a lot of strength and dedication, but she is ready to follow it through. She knows all the basic laws that apply to the shellfish sector: the Galician Fisheries law, the Galician Co-operatives Law, the norm governing the establishment of Associations. She knows everything about Fishermen's *cofradías*, about decrees that regulate the extraction of molluscs, about fishing and shellfish licenses (PERMEX), about decrees governing fishing gears and trade, about the penalty regime, etc.

Maruxa did hear about Agenda 21 and, of course, she understood the references to marine pollution, and to the need to protect the oceans, to make rational use of living resources, and to improve the dignity of the people who depend on the sea. She understood the great importance of promoting education, training, and awareness among users, officials, fishermen, women and youth in order to achieve sustainable development and to deepen the traditional understanding of the environment. She understood the importance of social and cultural values and of teaching respect for the resources. She understood very well the role of women in this world. She knows that she is not alone, that there are many Maruxas in this world who are fighting for the same dream. She knows the strength that can come from linking together women from around the world with the same problems for finding appropriate collective solutions.

In the last Assembly of the Association, Maruxa spoke. With all the participants applauding, she spoke convincingly and passionately about the need to be fearless, to participate, struggle, learn, and clearly establish the role of women.

From the back row, and although she did not understand some of the things so enthusiastically spoken by her daughter, Eulalia felt proud of her and felt that in some way things were going to change for the better in the work from which she and her generation had reaped more suffering than benefit.

In the depths of her thoughts Eulalia heard the voice of Maruxa saying, "...it is fundamental to recognize and strengthen the role of women in fisheries and in the integrated development of the community, as well as their participation at all levels of the decision-making that affects the sector.... We will also work towards the day when women shellfish gatherers take up managerial positions in the fishery..."



Many women like her are needed to stop land-based pollution caused by dumping industrial and urban wastes, oil pollution, the destruction of beaches through the so-called 'beach regeneration' schemes, the appropriation of shellfish areas for 'beach leisure', the municipal destruction of the coast with urbanization and the degradation of coastal marshy areas. Indeed, these women are urgently needed to stop the destruction and to re-establish the balance... for there to be a future.

Cristina can be contacted at: sircotim@teleline.es

Report/ Canada

Restructuring and Women's Health: The Fisheries Crisis in Newfoundland

*By Barbara Neis, Department of Sociology,
Memorial University, Brenda Grzetic, Antares
Research, National Network on Environments and
Women's Health*

Canadian society is experiencing the effects of extensive restructuring, yet little research has been done to examine the health impacts of restructuring processes. Overharvesting, reduced biodiversity and pollution are examples of environmental restructuring. Industrial restructuring includes work reorganization (de-skilling and re-skilling) and downsizing, and political restructuring processes involve changes to public services and social programmes. In Newfoundland, restructuring followed the northern cod moratorium of 1992. The moratorium terminated all fishing activity related to the northern cod stock along the east coast of the province. Closures and quota reductions for many

other groundfish species were applied to other fishing areas, too. As a result employment in the fishing industry declined drastically. Since the moratorium, growth in the shellfish sector has provided jobs for some fisheries workers. In recent years the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has been looking at nickel mining and smelting as another possible means to create employment. As is common in restructuring, this industry, if developed, will bring with it new occupational health risks. Currently there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that these risks are anticipated and minimized at the construction phase.

From Fishplant to Nickel Smelter: Health Determinants and the Health of Newfoundland's Women Fish and Shellfish Processors in an Environment of Restructuring (April 2001) is a case study of the relationship between restructuring and women's health in a fisheries-dependent region of Newfoundland in the wake of the groundfish crisis. In-depth interviews were conducted with 22 women shellfish-processing workers and 15 women fish-processing workers who retrained in an attempt to change sectors. These interview data were contextualized using key informant interviews with health professionals, an analysis of Workplace Health Safety and Compensation Commission (WHSCC) claims data for fish-processing workers, an analysis of data on training programmes introduced in response to the fisheries crisis, and key informant interviews with educational administrators.

The collapse of the groundfisheries jeopardized women's health through its impact on their employment and incomes and by changing the primary occupational health risks in the industry. Training programmes failed to offset the risks to these women's health. This study suggests that a more in-depth, gender-based analysis and a social-ecological approach to health should be incorporated into planning and negotiations related to all resource-sector initiatives, whether in periods of downsizing or growth. In addition, governments at all levels should take a more proactive role in job creation and in guiding the makeup of the Canadian labour force in an equitable manner.

For a copy of the full report, contact: National Network on Environments and Women's Health, Centre for Health Studies, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Suite 214 York Lanes, Toronto, ON Canada M3J 1P3. Web Site: www.yorku.ca/nnewh E-mail: nnewh@yorku.ca

Report/ Canada**Pay Equity... and lobsters!**

Excerpt from the information kit, 'Closing the Pay Gap in New Brunswick' by the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women in Canada.

Paturel International Company (known locally for its lobsters) recently updated its pay system to ensure objective wage practices. The preparation of detailed job descriptions at the Shediac plant was the first step in a four-year program. To assess the comparable worth of different jobs, the company measured the relative requirements of the positions, by assigning points based on four internationally recognized factors: skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. Wage adjustments were introduced gradually, based on the evaluation results. The mainly female workers packing seafood on the production line have seen their wages increase by 25 per cent, while the heavy labour job holders, mostly male, have received a 10 per cent pay increase. The company did it because "first and foremost, it's the right thing to do". Workforce morale has reportedly been boosted.

More information from Rosella Melanson, Executive Director, New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women, www.acswcccf.nb.ca.

E-mail: rosella.melanson@gnb.ca

Report/ Asia**Report of the Asian Fisherfolk Conference 2002: Cut away the Net of Globalization.**

Report of this Conference, held in January 2002 in the Prince of Songkhla University, Hat Yai, Thailand, is now available. Representative of fisherfolk and peasant organizations and NGOs from 11 countries in Asia, participated at this Conference. Apart from the Conference statement, the report includes country reports from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, prepared for the workshop. It also contains other papers presented at the workshop. For more information about the report, contact pampil@skynet.net or amarsanaa@apwld.org

YEMAYA

ICSF's Newsletter on Gender and Fisheries

Published by

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
27 College Road, Chennai 600 006
India

Tel: (91) 44 827 5303

Fax: (91) 44 825 4457

Email: icsf@vsnl.com

Web site: <http://www.icsf.net>

Edited by

Chandrika Sharma

Printed at

Sri Venkatesa Printing House, Chennai

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We would also like names of other people who could be interested in being part of this initiative. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.

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