

Q&A

Interview with Maria Cristina Manesch, Professor at the Federal University of Para, Brazil and member of ICSF

By **Harini Kumar** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Associate, ICSF

What are the main issues facing women in fisheries in Brazil?

Brazil is a big country and so many issues are area-specific. However, in general, the most important concern is the recognition of women in fishing communities and their status and value as women fishworkers. They often lack public services, resources and opportunities. Sometimes they have the qualification but no access to the markets and resources.

Have women organized to deal with these issues?

Yes, definitely. In some cases women form their own associations. Often they try to enter Fishers Unions and register as members. Having a forum to voice their views, especially with regard to policies and rights of fishing communities, is their main concern.

What are the important changes that have taken place in the last two decades with respect to women in fisheries?

At present there is an independent organization called "National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil". This organization is stronger in the north-eastern states of Brazil but they definitely do have contacts in the south. The objective of this collective was to facilitate discussions, the exchange of ideas between fisherwomen and to organize to have their voice heard. Also, in the last decade, in several parts of Brazil in the coastal states, there has been a process of creating Marine Protected Areas. Local communities are also being consulted. It is important that women take part in the management regimes to address the challenges that are facing many fishing communities. ❏