



Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is convening an international conference titled 'Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Bringing Together Responsible Fisheries and Social Development', from 13 to 17 October 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand. This is perhaps the first international conference focusing exclusively on small-scale fisheries being organized by FAO.

The attention to small-scale fisheries is clearly welcome. Also welcome is the fact that the Conference is envisaged to ensure significant, and gender-balanced participation of fishers, fishworker organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), apart from policymakers, researchers and others interested in small-scale fisheries. The Conference could, no doubt, offer an opportunity to valorize small-scale fisheries and to highlight the concerns and proposals of small-scale fisheries and fishworkers.

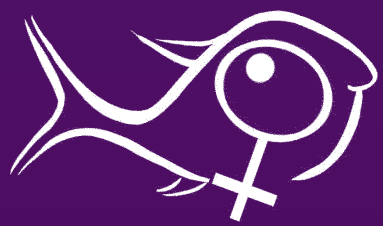
The Conference could also provide a meaningful platform to draw attention to the key issues facing women in fishing communities. This is of critical importance given that women are known to play central roles in the fisheries and in sustaining fishing families and communities. They are also known to bring a different perspective to the fisheries management debate—a perspective that brings together issues of fisheries, coastal management and community wellbeing, and that draws on the wide range of activities, of both a productive and reproductive nature, that women undertake.

There have been several commitments to gender equality, and to supporting women's roles at the international level. Several countries have gender equality policies in place. Yet, it is highly unfortunate, as the articles in this issue of *Yemaya* point out, that the issues that affect women in the fisheries and in coastal communities continue to be inconsequential in ongoing fisheries development. This is closely linked to the predominant and narrow perspective of fisheries as being about fishermen, production, profits and exports, with comparatively little attention paid to issues of sustainability, technology, equity and community wellbeing.

It is crucial to set right this imbalance. Gender-differentiated roles and concerns along the whole fish supply chain must be taken into account, to develop clarity on fisheries problems and intervention points, as one of the articles in this issue suggests. At a fundamental level, it must be affirmed that fisheries management is as much about ensuring equity, sustainability and improving the quality of life of fishing communities.

Policies that recognize and support women in the fisheries sector—that unequivocally help secure women's rights to coastal and fisheries resources and to post-harvest benefits, and that protect their basic human rights, particularly to basic services, to social security, to participate in decisionmaking and to live a life free of violence, sexual abuse and fear, are necessary.

As time closes in for the international conference, we urge that all those engaged in small-scale fisheries take this opportunity to draw attention to these vital issues, thereby giving voice and visibility to the struggles of women in coastal communities worldwide. We urge that actions and policies proposed are translated into concrete action at the national and local level, in the interests of resource sustainability, community wellbeing and gender justice.



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