



Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

In her intervention at the 28th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Zoila Bustamante, President of the Chilean fishworker organization, Conapach, questioned: "Why are women and gender not specifically mentioned in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)? She was speaking on behalf of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Her intervention supported the civil society proposal, developed in a prior preparatory workshop in Bangkok, to add a specific Chapter on small-scale fisheries to the CCRF (see SAMUDRA Report No.51, page 7), which would address the rights—economic, social, cultural, civil and political—of women, men and indigenous communities.

Many argue that the CCRF has several references to the need to ensure participation of all stakeholders, be it men or women. Article 6.10, for example, asks States to facilitate consultation and the effective participation of industry, fishworkers, environmental and other interested organizations in decision-making with respect to development of laws and policies related to fisheries management, development, international lending and aid.

What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that the roles and realities faced by men and women fishworkers do differ. While fishing is often considered a male-dominated sector it is now well known that women are very active in all aspects of fisheries, particularly in post-harvest activities—in some regions women comprise almost 90 per cent of those in the post-harvest sector. They contribute in significant ways to food security, household and community wellbeing, income and employment.

It is also well known that women experience discrimination in very specific ways, particularly in terms of access to resources and to decision making processes. Can we then assume that 'gender neutrality' is sufficient and acceptable in such a context? Can we assume that gender neutrality will not, by default, reinforce the existing marginalization of women?

The 1979 Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recognizes that additional means for protecting the human rights of women are necessary, noting that despite the existence of various instruments women still do not have equal rights with men and discrimination against women continues to exist in every society. Clearly, a specific focus on women's roles in the fisheries and on the priorities and concerns articulated by them is not only important, it is an obligation.

It is important that the call from the small-scale fisheries sector for a special Chapter on small-scale fisheries in the CCRF is heeded. It is equally important that there is clear focus on the specific priorities of women fishworkers in any such instrument. ■



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