

# Advancing the gender agenda

**In a meeting of the Brazilian organization, National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP), its leaders discuss aspects of their work and mobilization**

By **Náina Pierri** (pierrinai@gmail.com), Professor at Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) and ICSF Member and **Natalia Tavares de Azevedo** (nataliatavares@ufpr.br), Researcher at UFPR, Brazil

Since the mid 1970s the fisherwomen of Brazil have been organizing themselves. This process advanced significantly in the last ten years since the national fishery conferences organized by the government of former President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, between 2003 and 2006, which gave fisherwomen the opportunity to meet and discuss their situation at state and national levels. This led to the formation of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP), created in 2006 at the First National Meeting of Fisherwomen, held in Recife, Pernambuco. The organization rapidly gained support in the states, particularly in the northeast region and parts of the north, southeast and southern regions.

In April 2010, ANP leaders helped found the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Brazil (MPP) in Acupe in Bahia state. Since then, the MPP and the ANP have been active in defending artisanal fisheries and the rights of its communities.

In May 2010, the Second National Meeting of ANP was held in the city of Fortim, Ceará to review the progress made since 2006 (see Yemaya 34). In June 2012, in the third meeting of the ANP held in Cabedelo, Paraíba, whose theme was “Fishing with Health and

Welfare”, the main issues discussed were fisherwomen’s health, the shortcomings of the health system, and the problems that fisherwomen face with social security. It was decided that these issues would form the focus of ANP’s mobilization efforts for the next two years.

National meetings of the ANP are held every two years to analyze the condition of fisherwomen and set priorities for the next two-year period. Co-ordination meetings with state representatives take place twice every year to evaluate the state-level implementation of national-level decisions and to discuss achievements and future directions.

Two co-ordination meetings have been held in 2013—in June and October. The rest of this report describes the second of these two co-ordination meetings.

Aimed at strengthening the organization of artisanal fisherwomen in Brazil and organized with the support of ICSF and the Pastoral Council of Fishworkers (CPP), the meeting, scheduled for 21 to 23 October, was expected to be attended by about 25 leaders from 11 states within Brazil.

The main objectives were to take stock of the progress on the issue of occupational health policies related to fisherwomen, to plan improvements in fisherwomen’s access to welfare rights, and to schedule the next national meeting. Another objective was the sharing of ICSF’s 2010 Gender Agenda programme and the preparatory process behind the *Voluntary Guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication* (SSF Guidelines) being developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with particular reference to women.

When it was held, 11 leaders from eight states, three CPP members, two members of ICSF from Brazil and two researchers of local universities could finally attend the meeting. Many of the leaders reportedly dropped out because this meeting was following too close upon the heels of a mobilization organized by the MPP with other social movements in Brasília, against certain governmental measures, in particular, the privatization of aquatic areas (see Samudra News Alert dated 25 October 2013, <http://www.icsf.net/en/>

NAÍNA PIERRI



ANP Co-ordination meeting at Brazil in October 2013. Two co-ordination meetings have been held in 2013, both in the house of fishworkers in Olinda, Pernambuco

samudra-news-alert/articledetail/50965-25-years-of-cit.html?language=EN).

The first day began with a report of the general situation of the artisanal fisheries in each state. Each leader informed about their participation in the National Campaign for the Regularization of the Fishery Territories—a major national mobilization jointly undertaken by the MPP and ANP since June, 2012 (see SAMUDRA Report No. 62). They also shared their findings and observations on the occupational diseases that fisherwomen in their communities faced.

The ANP has demanded official recognition, particularly by the health and the social security systems, of the occupational diseases women in the artisanal fisheries face. This demand is vital for disease prevention and mitigation, and would allow fisherwomen to obtain occupational health benefits and accident insurance.

In the last few years, a medical team, together with the CPP conducted epidemiological research in Bahia on the occupational diseases of shellfish collectors and the quality of treatment services available. A special primer on fisherwomen's health was prepared. The ANP used this to conduct discussions with communities and to persuade medical teams from universities in other states to conduct similar research. How to use the primer and lobby government officials had been discussed in the ANP co-ordination meeting in June 2013. The progress made on these fronts was now reported.

On the second day, the group planned further activities and reviewed the progress made. The most important advance reported was a meeting with the Health Ministry on 9 September in Brasilia. Members of the ANP, the CPP and some of the doctors who had been involved in preparation of the primer made a presentation to Health Ministry officials on the health situation of fisherwomen and fishermen, following which the Ministry had agreed to undertake an extensive epidemiological study research across 11 states, based on the Bahia study. The Ministry had also agreed to introduce fishers' health-related content into professional health courses.

Also on the second day, Náina Pierri, member of ICSF from Brazil made a presentation on ICSF's Gender Agenda explaining how it had been formulated and how it related to women's struggles in fisheries in Brazil. In another presentation, ICSF member Beatriz Mesquita, talked about the process of drafting the SSF Guidelines, emphasizing the related consultation that was held in Brazil and explaining how the Guidelines address the question of women. The leaders present at the meeting showed a high level of interest in both issues. In our opinion, over the last few years, and to a great extent due to ICSF's facilitation, these movements have improved their understanding of struggles taking place at the international level in defense of artisanal fisheries and gender justice.

The last session was devoted to scheduling the next meetings, in particular the Fourth National Meeting of the ANP to be held from 25-29 August, 2014 in Paraná state and expected to be attended by about 50 leaders and supporters. The main goal of the meeting would be to evaluate the evolution of the ANP since its formation, and redefine its agenda and priorities. Towards this end, there would be one preparatory co-ordination meeting from 15-16 March 2014, and a set of state level meetings. The questions proposed to be discussed are: What have been the main achievements of fisherwomen in the last ten years? Currently, what are the main problems being faced? What are ANP's main demands for the coming years? And finally, what must be prioritized in order to strengthen fisherwomen's organizations?

Following a presentation of accounts and an evaluation of the meeting, a simple closing ceremony was held, where the participants sang a beautiful song about their struggle. In our view, despite the fact that many were unable to attend, a lot was achieved in the meeting. It contributed ably towards strengthening both the organization of fisherwomen in Brazil as well as the struggle of the artisanal fishing communities—a struggle in which women are at the forefront, demanding their right to a dignified life. ❏

**The ANP has demanded official recognition of all the occupational diseases women in the artisanal fisheries face.**