



29 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

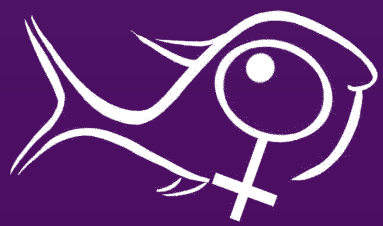
From the Editor

Women make up nearly 90 per cent of the workforce that works in upstream activities in the fisheries—activities such as buying and selling, processing, and related marketing activities, collectively referred to as the ‘post-harvest sector’. Traditionally, for years, in coastal areas across the world, women have been responsible for the selling of fish, whether in local fish markets or door-to-door. But while the labour of women fish traders helped to make fish accessible to millions of consumers, theirs has been a thorny path full of obstacles and challenges. Not surprisingly, some of the most vibrant struggles of women in the fishing sector, have been struggles for greater dignity, greater safety and hygiene, proper facilities, and adequate protections for fish trade. However, in the last three or four decades, the trade in fish has more or less been transformed by the globalization of the world economy. This has profoundly altered the relations of fish production, consumption, ownership and control, and the impact of these changes can be seen not just at the level of the stock exchange but equally in communities and households, impacting the relations between men and women in fisheries across the world.

This issue of Yemaya highlights some of the ways in which these changes are playing out in the lives and labour of women in the fish trade. We see in Tanzania’s Lake Victoria thus, that if, on the one hand, the lucrative Nile Perch has fuelled an aggressive growth of export factories, it has also led to the rapid capitalization of traditional markets, changing the status of women in the fish trade from sellers to employers, albeit employers who operate an ‘illegal’ trade and remain vulnerable to exploitation by extortionists and private patrols. In the city of Patna in India, declining river catch has meant that women are, quite literally, losing their positions as fish sellers, being ousted from local markets onto the streets, where they are exposed to daily threats of extortion and bribe. While the effects of these changes are not uniform, fisherwomen everywhere, from Patna to the shores of Lake Victoria, are adapting their individual and collective strategies to survive these crises.

It would however require more than just the grit and resilience of women to tackle the severe crises gripping the small-scale fisheries sector today. The first step would no doubt call for the proper implementation, guided by adequate political will and supportive policy, of the recently adopted Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). Implementation measures must be sensitive to the question of gender, but make the mistake of viewing the role of women in the fisheries in isolation. As two articles, one on the fisheries in South Asia, and the other on octopus management in Tanzania show, management strategies of fisheries that are based on information and knowledge gathered from both women and men, and relying on community co-management practices, are associated with significantly higher levels of sustainability and productivity, while those taking a narrow view seem doomed to fail.

Women’s contributions to the fisheries at all levels, as producers, traders, workers and organizers, must be brought to the centre stage of the planning and implementation process, if the small-scale fisheries and their natural resource base are to be protected. **M**



Tanzania	2
What’s New Webby?	4
India	5
Tanzania	6
Milestones.....	7
The Netherlands.....	8
Profile	9
Inland Fisheries	9
Q & A.....	11
Yemaya Mama.....	11
Yemaya Recommends.....	12