



**32** Years in Support of  
Small-scale Fishworkers

# Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

## From the Editor

**M**ore than three years since the endorsement of the SSF Guidelines in June 2014, it is important to recall that these Guidelines, the first internationally recognised instrument for the small-scale fisheries sector, expressly call upon all stakeholders to adopt strategies to promote gender mainstreaming in the fisheries. It is important to ask, how are women in fishing communities articulating their demands in the context of the SSF Guidelines?

Women in fish processing and trade in many parts of the world are increasingly getting organised and networked to build capacity and entrepreneurial capabilities. The current issue brings together many such examples: from the Caribbean, of women fishers' organisations working towards networking, representation and capacity building; from Africa, of women across several fishing nations networking to build capacity, adopt best practices and increase their incomes, while also advocating for more gender responsive fisheries policy; from Europe, of the women's network AKTEA campaigning for equal rights for women in fisheries as well as for sustainable fishing practices.

However, we see that even today, in many parts of the developed world, especially in fish harvesting, the contribution of women tends to get ignored, and they do not share equal rights with men. In Norway, the number of women registered as full-time fishers was the highest in 1990, and has consistently declined since then. Low female workforce participation means low participation in fisher associations, leading to gender blind fishing policies. We read in this issue that it was only after they were recognised as professional fishers that women shellfish harvesters in Galicia were spurred to organise. At first organising independently but with affiliation to the fishermen's organisations, in time, these women were even able to gain leadership positions in the predominantly male cofradias. Formal recognition of women's work is thus often necessary to mobilise and build organisation, and allow women's leadership to emerge.

While formal recognition of women's work is of critical importance, without family and domestic support, women would find it difficult, if not impossible, to stand up to community taboos and policy indifference. In this context, the story of K.C. Rekha, who, with her husband's support, became India's first deep sea fisher, is particularly heartening.

Another important enabling condition for women is access to simple technology and local data, particularly in today's context of environmental degradation, climate change and increasing encroachment of the seas by other stakeholders. The article on beach profiling in Tamil Nadu, India, highlights the importance of fishing communities taking control of such access. It brings out how women of the community can work with the men to master simple techniques towards building local data to support their own struggles for coastal rights.

All the articles in this issue thus represent examples of gender mainstreaming in different contexts, whether by external inputs of capacity building or by women's self-organisation or through access to simple technologies, with family support being crucially important. For the local implementation of the SSF Guidelines to be truly gender sensitive, lessons learnt from such diverse global contexts are of great significance. ❏



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