



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

# Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

## From the Editor

Opinion is divided on the outcome of the recently-concluded United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as the Rio+20 Conference. While the UN declared the Conference to be a success, women's groups, NGOs and other civil society representatives have been more critical. Rio+20, they say, was not a step forward but two steps back. From the point of view of women in the fisheries, which of these views is closer to the truth?

The 1992 Earth Summit at Rio had led to the development of Agenda21, a blueprint of action for the new millennium. It had delivered the three Rio Conventions: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which in turn cleared the path for the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Conference agreements clearly recognized the vital role of women in environmental management and development and Agenda21 outlined a set of objectives, activities, and means of implementation for national governments to achieve the 'full, equal and beneficial integration of women in all development activities'.

Twenty years since the first Rio Conference, levels of impoverishment and injustice around the world have soared. For the majority of women, whose continuous and largely unrecognized work keeps families, communities and ecosystems going, daily life has come to represent a condition of crisis. Yet twenty years down the line, is the harsh reality of women's lives being taken into account seriously by policy-makers? Many would argue that it is not.

The theme of this year's Rio+20 Conference was 'sustainable development' and a main focus area was the 'green economy'. This concept has been slammed by women's groups the world over for its market-based solutions to poverty eradication and sustainable development and for embodying the agenda of neo-liberal corporate forces seeking to monetize every aspect of life. The Conference outcome document, titled *The Future We Want*, largely failed to incorporate well-established principles and commitments such as gender equity and women's reproductive and other human rights. It also failed to set targets, timelines and others mechanisms of accountability and implementation. The perspective of women's groups in which sustainable development is inseparable from gender equality, equity and human rights, found little echo in the outcome document.

On a more optimistic note, however, a significant outcome of Rio+20 was the establishment of, one, a high-level, intergovernmental political forum to oversee the implementation of established sustainable-development commitments, and two, a working group that will, by 2013 propose a set of sustainable-development goals (SDGs) towards implementing and mainstreaming sustainable development in the UN system as a whole.

As far as the fisheries sector is concerned Rio+20 recognized the contribution of fisheries towards the promotion of sustainable development; it recognized the importance of healthy marine ecosystems and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in maintaining millions of lives, and, in this context, made several new commitments towards the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. Thus, Rio+20 builds upon the recognition of the small-scale artisanal fisheries in Agenda21 and to that extent, offers ground for cautious optimism. For women in the fisheries however the recognition and valorization of their specific contribution to the sector is a hard battle that remains to be won. ❏



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# Is this the future we want?

Despite calls for accountability and action by women's groups, the Rio+20 Conference fell far short of expectations

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This year, the Rio+20 conference, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, saw heads of State and representatives of civil society meet to discuss the critical issue of sustainable development. Twenty years ago, the historic Rio Conference of 1992 had led to policy outcomes that shaped the work of governments and civil society for the next two decades. These included the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, Agenda21 and the Rio Declaration. The Rio Conference gave an impetus to implementation of Principle 10 (of the Rio Declaration) related to public participation, access to information and justice; agreements related to the issues of equity and equality between men and women; and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Perhaps most importantly, it showcased the will expressed by the developed world to finance and support proposals to achieve, globally, the goal of sustainable development.

At this year's Rio+20 conference two broad discussion themes were put forward: the 'green economy', particularly in the context of sustainable development and poverty

eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Women from all over the world actively participated in preparing for the conference, seeking clear recognition of their potential to help achieve the goal of sustainable development. Noting that women's rights lie at the heart of this goal, a statement by women of the Latin American and the Caribbean region declared:

"The world must recognize that we women are a group with diverse opinions and cultures, representing 50 per cent of humanity, but we coincide in our quest for equity, equality, social and environmental justice as these are fundamental pillars for achieving sustainable development. We share the concern of other major groups on the use of the 'green economy' concept. We are clear that a vision oriented towards sustainable development cannot only focus on an economic agenda, but must necessarily deepen agendas addressing the social, cultural, environmental and political agendas that have not been implemented since our last meeting in Rio. We want to take a clear stand against the 'dollarization' of life; we wish to take up the challenge of making real changes that go beyond 'greening' and the use of other makeup colours, and to get to grips with the real issues that will change the development paradigm of our planet. The agenda must incorporate what has been agreed and said in so many global, sectoral and women's forums, including Rio, Barbados, Cairo, Beijing, Monterrey and Manaus. We want the issues of women's health and nutrition, and the role that culture plays in a full life, to be analyzed; and the rights, roles, needs and vulnerabilities of women from indigenous communities and women of Afro-descent to be addressed in a holistic and concrete manner." (Adapted from the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Statement on Rio+20, PrepCom, Chile, 2011.)

The statement was clear. Women's human rights are rarely recognized and respected. These include women's sexual and reproductive rights, their right to live a life free from violence and femicide, and their right to sustainable development.

COOPESOLIDAR R.L



Women from all over the world actively participated in preparing for the conference, seeking clear recognition of their potential to achieve sustainable development

From a women's perspective, sustainable development is a holistic concept that values, equally, the social, economic and environmental aspects of life, as well as equity and equality of opportunities, and access to justice, information and public participation. Sustainable development is central to the idea of human well-being, and, therefore, to achieve it, a fundamental precondition is the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

However, for many, the Rio+20 was a disappointment. Despite efforts made by women to call for accountability, action, financial commitments, and the recognition of a binding framework of human rights incorporating social, environmental and economic development, the conference outcomes fell short of expectations.

The Rio+20 outcome document, titled *The Future We Want*, can be accessed at <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/thefuturewewant.html>. It incorporates, on the one hand, a strong social accent, recognizing that the "greatest challenge" for humanity is the total eradication of poverty, and that sustainable development must go hand in hand with equity. On the other, it sets no ambitious targets for the future and makes no commitments to finance actions to promote sustainable development. It takes a laissez-faire approach to the idea of a 'green economy', stating that different paths, perspectives, models and tools are available to enable each country "in line with its circumstances and national priorities, to achieve sustainable development".

It advises governments to pursue green economies and to minimize the effects of climate change but sets no real objectives or time frames for this purpose. Its recommendations include the transfer of technology to developing countries via the United Nations, donors and international organizations; the setting up of a high-level political forum to provide political leadership, orientation and recommendations for sustainable development and the establishment of a working group to propose concrete action-oriented sustainable development goals (SDGs). Further, it calls for discussions around the term 'green economy' and to identify broader measures of progress to complement the gross domestic product (GDP) measure.

What, however, did women expect from this process? The Major Group of Women (MGW) in 2011 called for, first, an evaluation of the implementation of the Rio principles and Agenda21, this time using clear indicators that bring to light gender differences and equity in general, based on several key questions: What has, and what has not, been achieved, and why? What is the role of financial institutions and private banks? Why has it been so difficult to finance and implement a process of sustainable development that includes women?

Second, the MGW called for women's access to land and sea; for control over natural resources; for education, information and access to environmental justice; for social security, and for financial support to integrate

**Women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, their right to live a life free from violence and femicide, and their right to sustainable development, are rarely recognized and respected.**

### What's New, Webby?




## Women and sustainable development at Rio+20

In the lead-up to the Rio+20 Conference, women's group were pushing hard to include gender on the agenda, especially as women, who make up the majority of those living in poverty, continue to be marginalized. This wikipage focuses on women and sustainable development at Rio+20 ([http://wikigender.org/index.php/Special\\_Focus\\_-\\_Women\\_and\\_sustainable\\_development\\_at\\_the\\_Rio%2B20\\_UN\\_Conference](http://wikigender.org/index.php/Special_Focus_-_Women_and_sustainable_development_at_the_Rio%2B20_UN_Conference)).

The page provides links to the various civil society network initiatives and the Women's Major Group, and includes many important links to valuable resources on gender, food security, climate change

and sustainable development, including brochures, journal articles and reports by various organizations. It also contains links to stories of women from different parts of the world, highlighting their key recommendations for Rio+20. The stories of women at Worldpulse (<http://www.worldpulse.com/Rio20>), for example, talk about the key issues and realities affecting their lives.

The official website of Rio+20 (<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=104#>) provides the final statement by the Women's Major Group and an analysis of the outcome document as well. 



the needs of women into a world more balanced with nature.

Third, the MGW called for the recognition and valorization of traditional knowledge as practised by indigenous women to address issues of adaptation, mitigation and conservation of biodiversity and to promote the well-being of indigenous communities.

Fourth, it called for a clear and binding recognition that women's human rights, including their reproductive and sexual rights,

are a fundamental part of the vision and practice of sustainable development.

While falling far short of expectations, Rio+20 did, however, give women a space to celebrate their diversity and to showcase local and regional examples of work related to sustainable development. It also reflected the strength and struggles of thousands of indigenous women and women fishworkers battling the powerful lobbies of mining, oil extraction and nuclear energy all over the world. ❏

AFRICA

GAMBIA

## Building capacity, managing change

**A fisheries project among women fish smokers of four fishing communities in Gambia offers important lessons**

By **Mamanding Kuyateh** (mkuyateh@gamtel.gm), CREST Consult, Gambia

The River Gambia and its coastal zones, together with its tributaries and distributaries, such as the Bolongolu, provide favourable conditions for both artisanal and industrial fishing. In this region, the fisheries sector has emerged as an important employer, with shrimps being the primary species fished. The artisanal fisheries sector has attracted increasing activity, with hundreds of canoes landing thousands of tonnes of fish. Licensed trawlers and transshipment facilities make industrial fishing here highly competitive.

The growth of the sector has, however, also been beset with its own set of issues,

with immediate benefits overriding negative consequences. For instance, wood and fuel for fish processing and preservation are increasingly becoming scarce with growing competition. Persistent drought and an unfavourable foreign exchange scenario add to the vulnerabilities of the fishing community, particularly of women fish processors.

National efforts at rehabilitating the sector made by the Department of Fisheries, with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners such as the Japanese and European Union (EU) member countries, have met with only limited success. Development interventions vastly improved the capital assets of communities and created an environment of trust and partnership. However, where they failed was in building organizational capacity of fishing communities to prepare for, and manage, change. The absence of governmental or NGO expertise in organizational development, and in building capacity and knowledge in related fields such as forestry, has limited the impact of development interventions. Support structures reflecting only a traditional fisheries sector view did not help beyond offering immediate, short-term palliatives.

It is in this context that an investment programme to assist Gambian women in coastal fisheries communities has important lessons to offer. The programme, implemented within the framework of the Spanish Agency for International Co-operation (AECID)/Philippe Cousteau Gambia Women in Fisheries Project, underscores the urgent need to strengthen fisherfolk organizations

MAMANDING KUYATEH



Women in Tanji, Gunjur, Kartong and Brufut using the newly reconstructed fish smoking facilities for a safer and healthier environment

as well as institutions responsible for fisheries management.

The project seeks to reduce poverty in the four coastal fisheries communities of Brufut, Tanji, Gunjur and Kartong, targeting women dependent on fisheries and aquatic resources. It tries to develop various types of knowledge—social, organizational, human and professional—and build infrastructural capital assets among women fish processors. It also aims to reduce the pressure on the natural resource base through improved fish-processing techniques and smoking facilities aimed at distant markets.

At the start of the project, discussions were held with women about the fisheries cycle, from catch and landing to distribution, handling, processing and marketing. These discussions revealed many aspects that need special attention.

In the Gambian region, landed fish catch is unloaded by *dunu-laalu* (labourers). The catch is handed over to the wives and family relations of fishermen who then sell this to the *bana-bana* (their bonded clients) either for direct sales or for processing, depending on the type of catch and market forces. Women fish smokers are organized into groups that bid in the wholesale market for fresh fish, which is not targeted for the day's market. This fish is smoked by the women for sale the next morning in nearby markets. Men smoke and process fish for sale in distant smoked-fish markets.

The discussions revealed that despite earlier interventions by FAO, women fish smokers' organizations were weak and lacked leadership skills. The FAO interventions for savings and credit for women, however, were being successfully continued in all four communities, and there was no need to establish additional savings-and-credit schemes. Women reported that they lacked knowledge and skills in improved methods of fish handling, sanitation and processing. Further, the smoke houses and other infrastructure facilities were in a broken-down and dilapidated condition as a result of many years of neglect.

Based on these inputs, the project set out to achieve the following goals: raising public awareness about the role of Gambian women in the fisheries sector; training women in specific professional skills such as post-harvest fish handling, sanitation and processing;

conservation; capacity building, including group/association leadership; gender issues; funds management; provision or renovation of fish-smoking facilities; and, provision of fish-processing equipment in the communities.

In line with the project's objectives, several activities were undertaken. These included: a study to improve awareness about the role of Gambian women in the fisheries sector; the training of 120 fish processors (30 women per community) in professional skills; and improving fish-smoke houses and facilities and upgrading the fish-smoking equipment in each of the four communities. It must be mentioned that improving the fish-smoke houses and chimney facilities required additional behavioural and attitudinal changes, which implied that more than technology was needed for improved fish smoking.

An overall assessment of the institutional capacities of fisherfolk groups indicates that many of the village groups and associations are very old. Their work is to improve fisherfolk activities for personal and professional development. Most have, among their members, treasurers, auditors, cashiers and secretaries with some experience in handling bank accounts. Many have literate members, with a few fluent in European languages. They lack integrated extension staff. Even so, they constitute readily available core groups of community institutions that enjoy respect, support and goodwill within their districts and constituencies. These institutions have strong potential and can be said to constitute under-utilized capacity to address community concerns.

From the experience of the project, we learnt that it is important for consultants to be flexible and innovative with their methodology. There were instances where project beneficiaries could not clearly see the relationship between the various dimensions of the planning or maintenance phases and their specific requirements. We also learnt that experts should be open, direct and fully honest with the group leadership. A realistic awareness of a project's capabilities is fundamental to avoid raising false expectations. The project taught us to be prepared for the unexpected. For instance, in Brufut, a whole building meant for refurbishment collapsed due to age and overuse, requiring additional time and extra funding.

**The most important lesson was that new technology and equipment have to be accessible, simple to use, socio-culturally acceptable, financially affordable and geographically adaptable in order to be accepted by women.**

An important lesson from the project was that the community field extension staff is not always able to transcend local politics and social machinations. Women's groups can be infiltrated or influenced by non-productive, idle, beachside men hustlers who attempt to create chaos and confusion, leading to situations that require tact and careful handling by the management. We also learnt that not all women in leadership positions are necessarily able to take on

higher responsibilities; hence, a case-by case assessment in training is called for. Smaller groups of women fish-smokers needed greater assistance to form higher apex platform associations in order to inform and influence policies. Probably, the most important lesson was that new technology and equipment have to be accessible, simple to use, socio-culturally acceptable, financially affordable and geographically adaptable in order to be accepted by women. ❏



## PROFILE

# Never say die

**Hard Work by Masnu'ah, a leader of the fisherwomen's group, Puspita Bahari finally pays off**

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The ocean is my blood and wind is my breath! For Masnu'ah, a fisherwoman and leader of the fisherwomen's group in Morodemak in the Bonang district of Indonesia's central Java, the ocean is an inseparable part of her being.

Born into a poor fisher's family in Jepara, central Java, Masnu'ah, also called Nuk, was trained from an early age to help the family with drying and selling fish and gathering wood for cooking. Later, after marriage, she

moved to Bonang, where she now lives with her husband and son.

Masnu'ah began to understand the hardship that fishers face from her own experience as a fisherwoman in Bonang. The fisher's life is steeped in poverty and the levels of poverty peak during the 'middle capture season'—a time of extreme weather when fishing is impossible, government support unavailable and no capital aid is on hand.

Noticed for her leadership skills, Masnu'ah was approached by some to start an initiative to encourage independence among women, particularly to help families tide over the 'middle capture season'. And thus was born Puspita Bahari, a fisherwomen's group started in 2005 with a capital amount of IDR 1mn (US\$105).

Puspita Bahari started out as a rice co-operative, sourcing rice for sales to fisherfolk families, with a benefit amount of IDR 200 or only about 2 cents per kg. This activity earned

Puspita Bahari IDR 2mn (US\$211) that year. In 2006, the co-operative venture received a setback because the capture fisheries were badly hit. Fishers were not being able to get enough fish, and payments for rice began to drop.

As the co-operative folded up, Masnu'ah arranged for entrepreneurial training for women in making traditional dishes such as *getuk lindri* (steamed cassava sprinkled with coconut), ice-cream, noodles and fish flour. However, although the food products were seen as safe and hygienic, the cost was beyond the reach of most villagers.

In 2009, after other ventures such as setting up beauty parlours and auto repair shops also failed, Masnu'ah turned to using fish as the basic raw material for food products, and initiated a fish chips and *abon* (shredded beef) venture through Puspita Bahari. In the beginning, the products met with little enthusiasm. They were made at home and so the taste and flavour varied from batch to batch. Masnu'ah, therefore, insisted on standardizing the products, from the fish to the spices used. Today, the chips are marketed widely and bring in much-needed income into families.

At the same time, Puspita Bahari initiated an organic waste segregation venture for which it received an award in October 2011. It was also appointed a mediator for a boat aid project through which it got involved in the wider network called Indonesia Fisherwomen Sisterhood (PPNI). Says Masnu'ah: "If you believe that an effort will serve many people, then never give up, because it will surely succeed." The recognition and awards, like the Kusala Swadaya award, that Puspita Bahari is getting today are trophies, Masnu'ah believes, for all fisherwomen and their fearless spirit. ❏



# The loss of inheritance

**Rapid commercialization of the local fisheries in Tanzania's Lake Victoria region is leading to the disappearance of gifted customs and traditions**

By **Modesta Medard** (modesta.medard@wur.nl; modesta\_medard@yahoo.co.uk), PhD student, Rural Development Sociology, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; **Han van Dijk** and **Paul Hebinck**, RDS, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; and **Rosemarie Mwaipopo**, Department of Sociology, University of Dar Es Salaam

Lake Victoria supports Africa's largest inland fishery. In the 1950s, a new fish species, the Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*), was introduced in Lake Victoria. Whether that was a right decision has been a subject of intense debate as catastrophic results have been reported in the last two decades, with about 300 fish species all but wiped out as a result of the newcomer's predations. Today, only three fish species dominate the fishery: the Nile perch, the *dagaa* (*Rastrineobola argentea*) and tilapia.

The Nile perch is a white meaty fish, grown for export to the EU, the US, Australia and the Middle East. The *dagaa* is used more widely for human consumption and animal feeds. By 1994, the export of perch from Tanzania had reached 53,000 tonnes, a fivefold increase over average perch exports from Kenya and Uganda in the 1980s. Tanzania now has the highest export figures, closely followed by Uganda.

There are many concerns about the impact of the globalization and commodification of the Nile perch fisheries as a result of the export-led development of the sector: food

and job insecurity, spread of HIV/AIDS and loss of morals in fishing communities, exploitation and unequal share of benefits, continued fishing illegalities, over investment and spread of theft and piracy. Moreover, a direct relationship between the commodification of Lake Victoria fisheries and the disappearance of traditional norms and values in fishing communities, particularly traditions and rituals in boat construction and launching, is evident.

Historically, ritual is regarded as part of traditional knowledge, signalling an inner life of the community. This knowledge is restricted; it is meant not for all but only the 'gifted'. Apart from traditional medicine, it entails sorcery and witchcraft—the power to work up harm against an enemy. Such knowledge, beliefs and norms shape the social and economic systems of traditional fishing societies and also determine property usage—the control of a fishing boat, for instance—by families, clans and societies.

The traditional ethnic fishing groups in the Tanzanian side of Lake Victoria include the Jitas, Kerewes, the Haya, the Luo and the Zinza. Another group, the Sukumas, who were originally riverine fishers, have become major investors in the Nile perch fishery, own more boats and camps, and represent a higher proportion of crew labourers than the other groups. Among the traditional fishing groups, the Kerewes were the first to make paddle boats but, over time, the other groups have learned this craft too. With rising demand, the cost of paddle boats has steadily increased from TShs3-5 (US\$0.002-0.003) in the 1940s and 1950s to TShs12-30 (US\$0.01-0.02) in the 1960s and to TShs2,000-6,000 (US\$1.3-4) in the 1980s, the period when the Nile perch fishery was introduced. Today, a *mninga* (hard-wood engine boat) costs about TShs3 mn (US\$2,000) and a paddle boat, depending on size and type of wood, between TShs400,000 to TSh1 mn (US\$267-667).

In the early days, the activity of boatbuilding was honoured by special ceremonies and rituals. The novice learnt his craft from working with an expert builder for many years, and the end of the apprenticeship was marked by an elaborate ritual that involved *kuchanja chale* or making incisions to the body, and smearing the body with medicinal

MODESTA MEDARD



Clan eder, Magesa Lubumbika from Lugata village (Kome Island) performing fishing rituals in honour of his grandson

plants and black ashes. Commonly, the craft of boatbuilding was passed on from father to son or uncle to nephew but sometimes a person outside a boatbuilder's family could also be chosen for the job.

There were certain characteristics demanded of a *fundu* or good boatbuilder: good conduct with people; trust; the ability to keep secrets; tolerance; wisdom; and a readiness to help others and share wealth and talent. Of particular value was the ability to make a boat that was stable and not likely to capsize, that would yield good fish catches, and that would avoid collisions with hippos. In the words of 51-year old Everist Mazoyo, a boatbuilder from Zinza:

"In the old days, not any person could be a boatbuilder. We were trained in many things: how to make a boat and how to avoid misfortunes, especially low fish catches, accidents, bad winds, storms and rituals against enemies. When we inherited this occupation, we were given *mikoba* (a bag with powered tools). It was not just about teaching how to make boats and how to use the plane, saw and sword. We were traditionally honoured with rituals and traditions by clan

elders. We were given some herbs to rub on the boat and some for burning; we were taught *zindiko*—how to make the boat invulnerable against enemies and bad spirits, bad winds and storms—before we became true boatbuilders".

Throughout his life, the boatbuilder obeyed and carried out the bidding of his elders and clan spirits. From them he learnt the intricacies of tradition and ritual, including the use of medicinal plants, marinated ashes, old jewellery and charms (*hirizi*) in boat construction and launching. Making a new boat was like "preparing for a daughter's wedding". Elaborate ceremonies were held to which village elders, men, women, friends, neighbours and relatives came. A male goat was slaughtered and food and local brew made plentifully available. Offerings of food and fishing accessories were made to the boat owner. After the celebrations, the boat was launched but only if the boatbuilder permitted it. The launch was accompanied by a spiritual 'immunization' of the boat to make it safe for the boat owner, passengers and crew. Should the boat owner ignore this ritual and an accident befall his boat, the entire clan



## Milestones

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### CEDAW turns 30!

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was established by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to monitor the implementation of the Convention by States parties, held its first session in October 1982. This year the Committee is celebrating 30 years of dedicated work in assisting States parties in complying with their international treaty obligations under the Convention to protect and promote women's rights. To mark this important occasion, the Committee held a panel discussion on "Women's Political Participation and Leadership", during its 52nd session.

For three decades, the 23-member Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has worked to bring the landmark Women's Convention to life. In response to the Committee's review and recommendations, governments have changed their laws, policies and approaches to women in line with international gender equality goals. As a result their work has opened up opportunities for women across the world, whether to own land, run for parliament or access healthcare.

The event gave a particular focus to women's political participation and leadership. Speaking at the event, UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet commended the members

of the committee for their dedication. She was joined by senior UN and CEDAW staff, and by Ms. Eleonora Menicucci de Oliveira, Brazil's Minister of Policies for Women (on behalf of president Dilma Rouseff), and Ms. Shanthi Dairiam, Founder of the International Women's Rights, Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP).

Although celebrating the leaps made in women's political participation over the past 30 years, Ms. Bachelet stressed there is work yet to be done. She spoke of the power of temporary special measures, such as quotas or parity laws, to close this gap. "Women constitute 51 per cent of the world's population, yet they are under-represented in the allegedly representative bodies that make key decisions affecting their lives," she said, noting that the global average for women parliamentarians stands at just 19.5 per cent.

Of the 33 countries with 30 per cent or more women in parliament today, 26 have quotas in place that helped to ensure this outcome. In the panel discussion that followed, three dynamic political experts discussed the political opportunities for women in their countries, and the success and challenges of the quota systems used in each.

Source: <http://www.unwomen.org/2012/07/bringing-cedaw-to-life-the-committee-for-the-elimination-of-discrimination-against-women-turns-30/>



and family faced disgrace. Elders, however, did not allow such negligence, and minor ceremonies were arranged from time to time to avoid risks.

Different fishing communities in the Lake Victoria region have different sets of beliefs. People of the Zinza community believe that they are protected by their spiritual clan being, *O-Mswambwa*, and surrounded by their *mizimu ya koo*, a totality of clan spirits, souls and ghosts. *O-Mswamba* is worshiped at a sacred site located within the clan land, usually near a big tree, forest and shrubs. Prayers to *O-Mswambwa* are made, among other things, for better job prospects and family fortune, for conflict resolution and a good crop yield, and are usually accompanied by a goat sacrifice. However, the protector of the lake is *Mgasha-Mungu wa majini* (the God of water) to whom prayers are offered for fishing, launching new boats and for cleansing rituals involving fishing boats and crew.

Fishers of the Luo community consider a boat to be not an object but a living being, to which blame and responsibility can be assigned. Boatbuilding is accompanied by many rituals. Describing these, Ochallo-Ayayo writes that the ceremony that takes place before the launching of a boat is like the final ceremony called *riso* in a Luo marriage. The launching of the boat is the occasion for a major ceremony called *nyasi-yie*, in which the boat that is ready to be launched, is regarded like a married daughter coming home. During the *riso* celebration the grandfather presents gifts such as beads, earrings, plumes, bangles and *dol* (necklaces), objects believed to act as protective talismans. In Luo society, the boat may be named after a grandmother, a grandfather or a married daughter, whose spirit is believed to enter the boat to look after it. Each boat is believed to have its own *nyamrerwa* or priest. If a death takes place as a result of an accident on the lake, it is regarded as a killing of retribution, the slaying of a kinsman by another.

Boats are thought to be accompanied by boat spirits that are easily offended by certain behaviours such as smoking marijuana, abusive language and whistling. A boat spirit would be offended by menstruating women or by a person who enters the boat with shoes on. Customary practices are in keeping with beliefs related to misfortunes, locally known as *janaba*. For instance, a fisher is required to bathe before fishing or after sleeping with a woman, even his own wife. Likewise, a woman is supposed to bathe before stepping on a boat or after sleeping with a man.

Today, however, with the commercialization of the fisheries, only lip service is paid to these beliefs, which have come to have the status of 'fishing camp bye-laws'. As a result, community elders find themselves progressively marginalized from the fisheries, while non-fishers are able to gain easier entry. In fact, some fishers object to traditional beliefs on the grounds that they are used merely to impose restrictions on individual behaviour. Indeed, traditions are fast disappearing.

Mzee Faida Ndayi, a Zinza, believes the problem to be the culture of modernity that is sweeping through his community:

"Our younger generation is spoiled by education, intermarriage and modernity, especially those who are married to educated wives from other tribes with different religious beliefs and traditions. In such homes, women have become the spokespersons of their families, and object to our cultural practices—something which is impossible for a village woman in our society. Now our sons have to negotiate with their wives to safeguard their marriages. But also, our sons are not able to follow tradition, and some of them don't believe in tradition anymore. Whatever they do, they link it with science from European books and not to their natural environment, and, as such, our rituals and traditional values are becoming history. Actually, what I am telling you is history too—the younger generation is totally broken! Our *O-Msambwa* get so mad, they don't answer our prayers any more. But when their families suffer as a result of losing a job or a demotion or the breakdown of marriage, sickness and political trouble, our sons come to us at once and say: "*Babu nisaidie nimekwama!*" ("Grandpa, I need your help; I am stuck!") Then we know exactly what they need."

The average age of the boatbuilder is declining and today's builder has little sense of the history of the lake. New entrants in the field come in from the *ng'ambo* (hinterland) and have no traditional knowledge. Says Andrea Simba: "Fictitious rituals are many and conducted haphazardly. Some performers are Maasais from dry lands who know neither how to swim nor what types of fish are found in this lake. But they earn good money by cheating our fishermen."

Clearly, customs and traditions are disappearing as commodification and credit markets give birth to new fishing relations. Fleets of new boats and other capital assets are pledged to fishing camps by fish buyers and

**"In the old days, not any person could be a boatbuilder. We were trained in many things: how to make a boat and how to avoid misfortunes, especially low fish catches, accidents, bad winds, storms and rituals against enemies. When we inherited this occupation, we were given 'mikoba' (a bag with powered tools)..."**

**Piracy, cheating and the theft of boats and fishing equipment have dramatically increased with the disappearance of traditional customs. Performing a boat ritual is risky because there is no guarantee that the next day the boat will not be stolen or used for theft, actions guaranteed to anger *O-Msambwa*.**

their agents. In turn, fishers are obliged to supply fish continually. There is stiff competition, intense fishing, the tendency on the part of financial guarantors and fish suppliers to externalize the costs of exploitation and distribution onto others, loss of cultural norms, and the marginalization of the elderly fishers who earlier mediated clan and kinship relations and fishing customs.

Boat construction has shifted from local grounds to commercial fishing camps and factory yards. The involvement of clan elders is dying, and with it, clan/kinship relations. Given the high investment costs of commercial fishing, it is the financiers and equipment suppliers who command respect today. Moreover, migration and the relocation of camps to distant islands in search of good catch means that the new ties between people are based more on business than social relations and involve strict control, supervision and division of labour, exploitation, the fading of traditional customs and the rise of migratory quack healers and ritual performers.

Piracy, cheating and the theft of boats and fishing equipment have dramatically increased with the disappearance of traditional customs. Performing a boat ritual is risky because there is no guarantee that the next day the boat will not be stolen or used for theft, actions guaranteed to anger *O-Msambwa*. This high-risk environment makes elders cautious and reluctant to undertake customary rituals. Tradition provides the moral, ethical, social, economic and political underpinnings of a way of life, a customary code of conduct, and a framework to regulate the behaviour of individuals within the community. With the erosion of traditional norms and beliefs, the future of Lake Victoria's cultural norms and traditions is shaky, and more so, the organization of fishing. To what extent will these concerns be taken on board is anybody's guess. As governments become busy with 'modern' management perspectives that further strengthen fish trade and commodification, history is all but forgotten. ❏

## Promoting gender equity

**The draft synthesis document summarizes CSO proposals, including those for promoting gender equity**

By **Chandrika Sharma**  
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**T**he decision by the 29th Session of FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2011 to develop an international instrument on small-scale fisheries, to complement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, was widely welcomed by civil society organizations (CSOs).

CSOs, representing fishworker and support groups, set up a co-ordination committee to engage with the process of developing the Guidelines. The committee comprises representatives of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the International NGO CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Between September 2011 and April 2012, a period of just eight months, CSOs conducted 14 national consultations as well as one regional consultation in Africa that brought together representatives from 16 countries. Thailand hosted a workshop specifically for women fishers. More than 1,600 people participated

in these consultations. Reports and statements from all these workshops have been made available on the civil society website <https://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/>. A draft 'synthesis document' (also available on the website) has been prepared based on reports and statements from national and regional consultations.

In several countries, particularly in Brazil, El Salvador, India, South Africa and Indonesia, participants elaborated proposals to promote gender equity. Such proposals are captured in the draft synthesis document. These include, for example, the need to change unequal power relations between men and women, as well as the 'double load' that women carry, by means of an equal division of domestic work between men and women and access to public services, such as nurseries, community restaurants, laundries and educational services outside school hours, that relieve the domestic workload. The importance of guaranteeing women full access to social security systems, and rights related to maternal health, social security and retirement, is similarly stressed. The need to establish mechanisms and adopt special measures that recognize and promote women's rights to participate in the all aspects of resource management as well as in the social,

economic, political, cultural and organizational life of artisanal and small-scale fishing communities, is highlighted. Also underlined is the need to ensure collection of gender disaggregated statistics and to enumerate women's work in both inland and marine fisheries in all aspects of the fisheries chain.

The draft synthesis document brings together principles considered key by CSOs. These include: recognition of human rights; commitment to the right to equality and freedom from discrimination; recognition of the right of women and men to full and effective participation in all aspects of governance and management of fisheries resources; recognition of the right to free, informed and prior consent; promoting and securing good governance and creating the conditions necessary for such governance; and the 'do-no-harm' principle to assess the costs of conservation and development.

It contains proposals from CSOs on interventions needed in 11 key areas: the governance and management of marine and inland fisheries resources; securing social and economic development rights; protection of the environment and sustainable use; support across the value chain; improved labour and social-security rights and conditions; gender equality and equity; promotion of food security and sovereignty; safety at sea; climate change and disaster preparedness; awareness raising, capacity development, training and education; and research and information needs.

The draft synthesis report will be updated based on reports and statements from the next round of national and regional consultations to be held between August and December 2012, as well as other comments received. The report thus finalized will form the basis for CSOs to comment on FAO's zero draft of the Guidelines that is available for comments, till end-January 2013, on the FAO website. [ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/ssf/SSF\\_guidelines/ZeroDraftSSFGuidelines\\_MAY2012.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/ssf/SSF_guidelines/ZeroDraftSSFGuidelines_MAY2012.pdf)

## Interview with Cleonice Silva Nascimento from Brazil, a fisherwoman and leader of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen (NAF) and of the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Brazil (MAFF)

By Naina Pierri (pierrinai@gmail.com), Member, ICSF

### At what age did you begin working and what kind of work do you do?

I am now 38 years old. I have been in fishing since the age of seven. When I started out, resources were still plentiful and my grandfather used to fish using a beach-seine in Shangri-la, a fishing community in the Paraná Coast in the South Region of Brazil. I would help load the fish. It was like play for me. As an adult, my work has been in the fish market of my community, cleaning and selling fish that my husband catches at sea. And at a certain moment in my life, following the example of my grandfather, I gradually got involved in the defence of the artisanal fishing sector.

### As a woman, what difficulties do you face, particularly in the fishermen's organization of your community?

The fact that fishing is a predominantly masculine world often means that our work is not seen as work, and our opinions and participation in decisionmaking are not accepted. As a result, there have been certain moments when I have suffered discrimination at the hands of fishermen and sometimes even at the hands of my own female companions. This was worse earlier; now, as we are becoming more successful, the discrimination is decreasing.

### In 2006, the National Articulation of Fisherwomen of Brazil was created. What is the importance of having a women's organization?

A taboo has been broken, showing to the world of fishing and all of society that women can understand the fisheries and that we can make a difference in decisionmaking. The care with which women look at things is very precious—we look with both our hearts and minds. We are like tigers, defending tooth and nail what is ours. Artisanal fishing has stories, cultures, values, wisdom, beliefs, wealth, love and faith. If we don't defend and care for these, they can be snatched away from us. I am so proud to be a part of this organization.

### In 2009, the new Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen was created, where the main leaders are women who have real weight in decisionmaking. How did this happen?

I believe that this new movement reflects the strength of women's organizing power. Our role as leaders has broadened and strengthened the base of the movement. We have also added new partners from various sectors, not just the fisheries, to the movement. The male leadership had to recognize this, as we were occupying and effectively using new spaces and becoming stronger day by day. But retaining this recognition is not easy—it requires us to fight for our rights every day and everywhere. 🦁

## YEMAYA MAMA

...looks for Sustainable Development!





## REVIEW

## An Evaluation of the Roles of Women in Fishing Communities of Dakar, the La Petite Côte, and Sine Saloum

Madeleine Hall-Arber (2012). Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island, Narragansett, RI, 26pp

By **Ramya Rajagopalan**  
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This report is based on a research study undertaken in September 2011 among 12 fishing communities. It compares and contrasts the conditions facing the Senegalese women of Dakar, La Petite Côte and Sine-Saloum, who trade and process fish. The study documents the central role played by women of Senegal's fishing communities in the processing and trade of fish landed by artisanal fleets. Findings from the study were presented at a gender workshop with women from fishing communities in March 2012. The recommendations from this workshop were then incorporated into the report.

The study recorded an increase in the numbers of women involved in trading and processing, even as the type of fish traded and processed has changed from species such as grouper and croaker (*capitaine*) to the less expensive sardinella. It found that men do not earn enough and that women's income is essential to meet the costs of basic necessities such as providing for their children—a situation that leaves little to save or reinvest in business.

The study also found that women have little or no access to the formal credit system. This affects their capacity to invest in fish when there is a sharp seasonal increase in price. Technology has helped to somewhat reduce investment costs, especially transportation costs, as women now use cell

phones to find out about the type of fish landed and the price and quantity, before they travel to the markets. However, the lack of access to formal credit, combined with a scarcity of alternative jobs, often leads to dire situations.

The study found women processors to be better organized than both the long-distance and petty traders. However, even these women's contribution to the family and household is hardly ever acknowledged. Women processors' organizations are demanding identification cards as the first step towards gaining due recognition for women in the processing workforce. Improving leadership capacities as well as organizational and communication skills are viewed as important priorities. One of the key suggestions from women in the fishing communities was for outreach aimed at building leadership at the community level. The women also wish to acquire accounting, numeracy ability, business development and management skills. According to the study, many women feel that a women's bank might be an appropriate solution for their problem to lack of formal credit. In some cases, women's groups have successfully paired with NGOs to develop schools and processing centres.

The research and the workshop raised a number of important questions such as the incomplete facilities provided by NGO financing, ambiguities about whether women are consulted prior to project implementation, and lessons learnt from projects in other areas. The study recommended that skills development for women in the areas of language, technology, leadership and conservation be encouraged and that the marketing of fish be improved through better product handling, packaging and labelling. ■



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable

fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.