



30 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

No.51 | April 2016 | ISSN 0973-1156

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

Another International Women's Day (March 8) has gone by, with significant achievements for women in the fisheries across the world. However, while we take stock of, and celebrate the achievements, we should also reflect on the long road of struggle ahead—a struggle for the rights of small-scale fisheries; for the rights of women engaged in fishing, fish trade and fish-work.

Women have always been the backbone of the small-scale fisheries sector across the world. However the contribution of women, both in economic and social terms, have been constantly undervalued. Their “informal” inputs, whether in gear repair, provisioning for fishing trips, maintaining accounts and various post-harvest activities are often unpaid labour and not accounted for while calculating the contribution of the sector. Even when women are compensated for their effort, their work is undervalued and paid less than the same work done by men. This “invisibilising” of women's work negatively affects their bargaining power, within the family, within the community, and even in state level institutions and policy making for the sector. This issue of *Yemaya* discusses the need for a more complex and comprehensive analysis that accounts for the role of women in fishing, the multiple benefits they bring to the fishing community, and therefore the need to bring their issues to centre-stage and empower them within the community and the state.

Yemaya also discusses the increasing role of women in aquaculture in Asia. This is more significant as it is happening in a period of climate change, and a situation of drought, flood and diseases, and while men are migrating out in search of alternative employment. However, despite the significance of their contribution, women are subordinate to men when it comes to technology or investment decisions, and dealing with government institutions. They are further faced with the additional responsibility of taking care of the family. In the context, their participation in fishing does not empower them or compensate them in any way, and often ends up as only an additional burden.

There is encouraging news regarding the recognition accorded to women's work in fisheries at the government and institutional level. The African Union has chosen to focus on women's empowerment and development, declaring 2016 as the “African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women”. The new “European Maritime and Fisheries Fund: 2014-2020” included references to gender equality and making available funds to support projects for women in fisheries.

On 3 March 2016, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) as a standard for gender mainstreaming, calling on states to integrate and mainstream a gender perspective in all agricultural and rural development policies, strategies, plans and programmes. This is a big step forward. However, it is a measure that will require persistent and active struggle to become a reality.

We reiterate that the road ahead is long and difficult. However, as the folk couplet from Malwa in central India, quoted in this issue of *Yemaya*, goes:

*“Taste the waves of the ocean, friend
Pearls aren't found by plunging into puddles!”*

Finally, we remember Chandrika Sharma, Executive Secretary, ICSF, who was on board the Malaysian Airlines MH370 that disappeared exactly two years ago on 8 March 2014. Chandrika is very much missed by all of us. ❧



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Counting on Women

At the intersection of gender, fisheries, and economics are systemic anomalies that mask the cost of fish production by discounting or underestimating women's labour

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Over 250 million people are involved in global marine fisheries. This estimate includes women and men, but it is difficult to determine contributions by gender because the fisheries sector, like many other natural resource sectors, lacks comprehensive sex-disaggregated data. While some, such as the World Bank, suggest that women account for nearly half of the global fisheries workforce, this may be an underestimate because many countries continue to overlook the labour contributions by women in fisheries. This is partly due to the many informal activities that women are involved in that contribute to fishing operations, but may also be attributable to sampling bias and overall poor accounting. In economic terms, the underestimation of women's labour in fisheries can lead us to understate the costs of fishing, while overstating and oversimplifying their economic benefits.

The field of economics promises approaches and tools to understand what determines the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services such as food, energy, transportation and healthcare. However, feminist economists have long criticized these approaches for overlooking many important factors that contribute to this productivity, including unpaid,

informal, and care work. This type of work is disproportionately undertaken by women. Looking specifically to the fisheries sector, and along the fish value chain, the contributions by women are often overlooked when the focus is only on market values. For example, women bring tremendous value to the seafood industry often through informal activities such as small-scale processing, transportation, and marketing; they contribute substantially to food security through gleaning and subsistence fishing activities; and they provide significantly to local and national economies. National accounting systems do not adequately capture this work, and fisheries accounting systems exacerbate this by overlooking catches by women and the value associated with them. On average, fisheries represent approximately one to three per cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) but this is based mostly on market values, and primarily, on the catch from large-scale commercial fisheries. A comprehensive estimate of fisheries catches including small- and large-scale, commercial and subsistence catches, and including the full range of inputs by men and women, would provide a more complete picture of the fisheries economy, going beyond GDP to explain in broader terms the value of fisheries to the economy and to account for previously overlooked contributions by women.

Fisheries economics has traditionally concerned itself with balancing the costs of fishing such as labour, fuel, gear, equipment repair, and maintenance, with the money earned from fishing. While this simple model can help explain the behaviour of fishers, and in particular, determine if it is worthwhile for them to continue fishing, it fails to account for so called 'informal inputs' into fishing operations. Informal inputs could include, for example, gear repair, bookkeeping and provisioning for fishing trips, and since these often consist of unpaid labour these are inputs that can offset fishing costs, resulting in what looks like economic efficiency. In this way, the true costs of fishing are masked, as there are considerable inputs that are not necessarily included in cost assessments, and hence in determining whether a fishery is profitable or not. This is particularly relevant in a small-scale fisheries context, especially in light of the many ways that women contribute to fishing operations, often characterized as informal or support roles. In short, women reduce the perceived cost of

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A woman and man processing sea cucumber and crab catch on the island of Batasan in the Central Philippines. Women in fisheries provide multiple benefits to society

fishing by providing a supply of informal and unpaid labour.

Women's often unpaid and undervalued labour is also important to consider when examining the other half of the economic equation: the income earned. Industrial fisheries rely heavily on the labour inputs of women in processing factories, while small-scale fisheries in many parts of the world, for example, West Africa, rely on women via processing, marketing and distribution of fish to transform fish into monetary value. In these market based activities, however, men and women are not always compensated equally even for the same activities, with women often earning less. In contexts where women have limited access to fisheries resources and an unequal distribution of benefits, women in fishing communities remain dependent on their husbands or male relatives, reinforcing normative gender roles at the household level. The formal recognition of women's fisheries labour has also proven to be important in contexts where national policy gives financial support to fishers, either through unemployment insurance or retirement benefits. For example, in France, women pushed to have their informal labour in the artisanal fisheries recognized so that they could access the benefits of a personal retirement plan that was available to their spouses.

A gender income disparity can also have larger family, community, and national level impacts because women and men often use income in different ways. In many parts of the world women's income largely goes toward household food and children's education. Therefore, reducing women's access to fisheries resources or the necessary resources to develop alternative livelihoods may further impoverish fishing communities where fisheries-related income, and often that of women, contributes directly towards health and education. Research reveals that improved fishing incomes for only men does not necessarily benefit entire households, as the benefits may not be evenly distributed.

Women around the world are often economically disadvantaged because of restricted property rights, in terms of land and asset ownership and inheritance, which limits the ability of women to access credit and accumulate capital. This in turn affects their bargaining power with negative effects on decision-making power within and outside households, communities, and institutions. How women participate in the fisheries economy is influenced by cultural, legal and policy contexts that can often hinder their

access to fisheries resources and markets. For example, in Norway, quota systems that were implemented to limit the number of fishers favoured full time and larger scale fishers, while disenfranchising women who were more likely to work part time from smaller boats. In other cases, such as in the Philippines, management measures such as Marine Protected Areas may be placed in intertidal fishing areas traditionally used by women. In these cases, associated measures are needed to ensure women have equal access to fisheries resources and benefits, as well as a respected voice in decision making.

Beyond access to fishing, access to markets can also be a key factor in equitable participation in fisheries and the distribution of related benefits. Women's participation in fish marketing varies widely and is often based on interacting cultural and economic contexts. For example, in Ghana, women are boat owners and largely control fish pricing, and hence have a strong economic influence on the fishery. By contrast, in Bangladesh, very few women participate in the markets and must rely on male relatives to sell any catch. In other cases, such as in Kenya, women and men participate in fish marketing, but women only have access to the smaller and less valued catch, while men market the larger and more profitable fish.

Fisheries and the economies in which they operate are not static, and new ecological and economic realities can surmount entrenched gender roles. For example, as fish stocks decline, fish are harder to catch, boats often need to go farther afield and require more fuel. This drives fishing costs up. To recoup the rising costs of fishing, hired crew might then be replaced by a family member, say, the captain's wife or sister. While there is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest this is a widely used strategy, there is a lack of data to highlight its prevalence. In other more extreme cases, resource degradation coupled with poverty has been met with a rise in "fish for sex" transactions, as women use alternative strategies to access the fish they need for their livelihood. This in turn has been linked to increases in the spread of HIV and AIDS in fishing communities with even farther reaching social and economic impacts.

Furthermore, limited alternative livelihood opportunities in many fishing communities forces both men and women to seek work outside the community. Mobility of labour has led to cases where remittance incomes are an important component of rural livelihoods. With limited opportunities for livelihood diversification in many rural

The under estimation of women's labour in fisheries can lead us to understate the costs of fishing, while overstating and oversimplifying their economic benefits.

fishing communities, women often migrate to find work elsewhere and send their income back to the fishing communities to support their brothers', fathers' or husbands' fishing operations as a means to acquire capital inputs but also to compensate for diminishing returns as fish stocks decline. Remittance income earning opportunities for women in particular can also act to increase status and power within the household and community, but this needs further analysis to fully understand the impact of remittance income in a fisheries context.

Women in fisheries provide multiple benefits to society—labour, food, economic stimulus and so on—while also receiving

individual benefits from their involvement in fisheries, such as income, food, empowerment and bargaining power. Both micro- and macro-economic scales of analysis are relevant to a gender approach. The dynamics of gender can lead to patterns of differentiated benefits within households, but also at larger scales, as a result of macro-economic policies and gender-blind fisheries policies. There is considerable opportunity to research and gain insights at the intersection of gender, fisheries and economics, including some of the themes highlighted here, to better understand gender inequality in the fisheries sector and to look for avenues to reduce such inequalities. **Y**

AQUACULTURE

ASIA

Women in Aquaculture

Case studies of aquaculture production in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam throw up several important questions and issues related to the empowerment of women in the sector

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It has been reported in many documents that women are involved at various nodes of the aquaculture value chain. However, is it enough that they participate in activities? How much involvement is considered work? How much work is considered paid work? How does women's involvement in aquaculture impact their value and well being? One of the challenges facing women in aquaculture nowadays is the lack of recognition for their efforts, and the insufficient or inaccurate data to support how much contribution they are providing to ensure food security at the household, community and even global levels. In fact, the lack of sex disaggregated data hinders the design and planning of gender responsive policies, projects and interventions.

To explore some of these questions, case studies on selected aquaculture value chains, focusing on the grow-out production node, were conducted under the USAID Maximizing Agricultural Revenues through Knowledge, Enterprise Development and Trade (MARKET) project, with the following objectives: to map gender roles in the selected aquaculture value chain; to identify the roles and activities of women and men in the grow-out stage of aquaculture; to analyse the gender

dimensions with respect to division of labour, decision making process, benefit sharing and access to resources (including knowledge and information); and finally, to identify gender issues, needs and opportunities.

The case studies included inland small-scale aquaculture in Cambodia, small-scale marine shrimp and tilapia cage culture in Thailand, and the small-scale shrimp-rice rotation and tilapia culture in Vietnam. Primary data was collected through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and in-depth surveys of men and women involved in the grow-out production of selected species.

Depending on the countries, species cultured and farming systems employed, women's involvement varied. The constraints women faced includes the heavy workload in the household which needs to be balanced with the obligation in the farms. These case studies could be used as reference and materials for outreach and training in building capacity of practitioners to include women and consider the gender aspects in their aquaculture work.

Primary data was collected through farmer and household surveys, in-depth interviews with women, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Secondary data was also collected from local language documents, published papers, reports and government records. The respondents were farmers (at least 30 farmers or households per system, but the ratios of male to females were unequal in some systems). In addition, in-depth interviews were also conducted with a few women to discuss their activities both at home and in the farm, roles, relationships with other

stakeholders, ownership, capabilities, power and decisions making, needs, priorities and aspirations.

In Cambodia, we studied women's labour in small-scale freshwater aquaculture production. Here, aquaculture is still considered a family activity where all members engage in various aquaculture related work. Farmers also hire temporary external labour (men for construction, women for harvest). Both men and women are involved but women have more inputs than men in terms of labour and time. Men in this area often migrate to big cities for alternative occupations outside their hometown, leaving the women to operate the farms. In most areas, rice farming is the main occupation while aquaculture is just secondary, along with livestock farming.

One of the issues related to roles included wages. Men would be paid USD 1 to 3 per day while women would be paid USD 0.5 to 2 per day. One of the reasons given for the differences in wages was that men are given a heavier workload. But this does not consider the fact that when women are left to operate the farms when men migrate elsewhere, there is pressure on women to balance both household and farm work, and sometimes other livelihoods. Technical decisions are mainly taken by the men as they are more trained. Training opportunities are limited for women as they cannot participate in training programmes even though they are invited. Financial decisions are taken mainly by the women due to their marketing and trading skills.

Women farmers face issues such as lack or inadequate technical knowledge and experience in aquaculture, financial assistance and technical support, markets to sell their fish with better prices, and support to mitigate or protect their culture operations from the impact of environmental and climate change, including drought, flood and diseases.

Small-scale aquaculture needs to be linked with food and nutrition security but there is a need to address the issues above to empower women. One example is that of Mrs CN, 54, who is both a housewife and a fish farmer. She is married to Mr KH, 56, a rice and fish farmer. They have four children and two young grandchildren. Mrs CN was trained in fish seed and grow-out production, after which she successfully expanded her farm and equipment. Now she is training others and has become an example of success, not only in her village but among aqua farmers in Cambodia.



Women's involvement not only in fish farming but also in other livelihood activities provide a major income source for their households

Her success has benefited herself, her family and their community.

In Thailand, we considered women's labour in small-scale freshwater tilapia cages and marine shrimp ponds. In one area of Sakon Nakhon province, northeast Thailand, tilapia farmers' wives also have other economic activities, such as selling fish, owning a grocery store, farming rice and rubber cultivation. These are considered more important sources of income. Thus women's involvement in tilapia cage farming is limited due to other chores, but they still want to participate. Tilapia farming adds income to the family and keeps families together as the men do not have to migrate to other areas to find work. The women manage the financial aspects especially income disposal for household use.

A case study of small-scale marine shrimp ponds in a district in Chanthaburi province, eastern Thailand, revealed that female shrimp farmers have other work at home, or in trading, as hired labour and other income generating activities. Although their time is limited, women farmers can still work in the shrimp farms with their husbands, doing such tasks as feeding, record keeping and checking stock. Regarding farm ownership, it is common for husband and wife to jointly own farms. Female farmers perceive their role as important in shrimp farming due to the ownership status but the men take the main responsibility as they have more knowhow. This is a result of government extension programmes in the past wherein only the men were invited and could attend as the women had other work to do.

One of the challenges facing women in aquaculture nowadays is the lack of recognition for their efforts.

The women farmers do not feel constrained in doing tilapia cage culture or shrimp farming, especially when they work in partnership with their husbands. Household work does not prevent them from being involved in aquaculture but can limit the time they devote to farming. Women farmers also feel empowered while making decisions to improve their operations to generate more income. A case in point is Mrs M, who was the first one to establish tilapia cage farming in her area. She is also a rice farmer. She said, "I have more control of our rice and fish farming business than my husband. I can make my own decisions about farm operations. I can do everything that a man can do in the farm, even heavy work. People here perceive me as economically better-off." Another beneficiary is Mrs SK, a small-scale shrimp farmer and public school teacher, who said: "I hired a farm manager (male), and I also visit my farm and can interact with my manager and workers without any difficulty."

Tilapia cages are located on rivers, often at quite a distance from the homesteads. This is difficult for women who have household responsibilities and other livelihood activities. Access to finances is also important, as operating fish cages could entail high costs. The lack of technical knowledge hinders them, for tilapia cage operations and management are quite intensive.

For shrimp, the limited land available for expanding operations is a constraint even if the farmers have more knowledge and resources. The farm workload could be high but they can hire workers to help them.

For those who require finances, the high cost of operations leads to more debts. Many farmers also incurred heavy losses due to diseases, especially the Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS) in the last three years.

In Vietnam, women's labour in small-scale tilapia cages and rice-shrimp rotation in ponds was studied. Tilapia cages in the province of TienGiang, in the Mekong Delta region, are dominantly managed by male members of households. Women's involvement is limited mainly at the input stage, and during sales and marketing in local markets. Women have to balance their household and other activities with farm work. The major roles of men include operations and handling technical matters, obtaining credit or loans and managing the repayments, stocking seed and feeding during the culture

period, and financial and selling decisions, including pricing. However, both men and women can take decisions on how to use the income from tilapia for spending, especially for family and household use.

For rice-shrimp rotation system in ponds, both men and women can operate small-scale farms. The women are active in the small-scale collection and harvest of produce, in assisting in feeding and cleaning, as well as financial decisions and making savings, along with housework. The men mainly engage in critical operations which have intensive technical and management requirements, as well as marketing communications, that is, negotiating with buyers.

In Vietnam, as in most places in Asia, heavy and physical work is stereotyped as a male activity. Women's involvement is therefore limited due to the perception that they cannot do heavy work, and also because of the lack of technical training in intensive operations. According to the men, they take responsibility for the heavy work and for high risk investments in order to protect their women from hurt and losses. In addition, the stereotype of men being regarded as head of the household might limit women's participation in farm work.

Several important issues and questions emerge from these case studies. In household or small-scale operations of aquaculture, women are already involved. The main issue is how can they be more empowered in the work that they are doing? Increasing women's participation can be an added burden, and yet there is often no adequate compensation. Thus, beyond just increasing their participation or involvement, we should examine how women are treated, compensated and protected as they go about their work in farms, homes and communities. Do they have a voice or opportunity to express how they feel in the workplace?

A recurring theme among the women in the three countries studied was the added burden of aquaculture to their demanding work in the home and in other livelihood activities. How can men share the burden of household and family responsibilities that women carry every day? As the seafood industry becomes more concerned about their contribution to social development, especially in the production nodes, one of the areas of focus will be how the public, private and civic sectors may support empowerment of women in aquaculture. ■

Women in Fisheries in Africa: 1999–2015

This article discusses the important milestones in the recent history of women in fisheries in several African countries vis-à-vis the role of *Yemaya* over the years

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1999–2000:

Shortly after *Yemaya* was born within ICSF in 1999, it reached the shores of West Africa. Women fishworkers and fishers in Senegal, Guinea Conakry and Gambia greeted the new publication with excitement and expressed their hopes that *Yemaya* would become their “umbilical cord, linking women fishworkers with each other and enabling them to share their concerns and learn from one another” (See *Mariame Kane, M'bour, Senegal, Yemaya Issue 2, 1999*).

From the very first edition of *Yemaya*, it became apparent that women in fisheries on the continent shared common agenda. The agenda linked women who worked and lived within the vibrant, well-established fisheries of the West African region, and women fishers and fish traders on the shores of shared inland lakes of Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. Exchanges between women in fisheries across West Africa and with women in the Lake Victoria region spread to links with women in France and other parts of the world through *Yemaya*, and the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) following the meeting in Loctudy in 1999. The concerns and problems voiced by women in the early pages of *Yemaya* reflected the common situation facing women on

the continent: women's role in fisheries was largely invisible; they performed a wide range of labour along the value chain and they struggled with poor working conditions; they faced a lack of credit, appropriate technology and infrastructure. Most significantly, strong patriarchal and customary norms prevented them from participating equally in fishworker organizations and making sure that these organizations reflected their political interests. The sharing of strategies was evident early on. For example, when the Katosi Women's Group from Uganda exchanged ideas with ICSF members and others, they realised that their plans to broaden their activities into fish smoking would not address concerns about the health of the fish resources or the health of their community. Inspired through these exchanges, they took the decision “We have realized the need to protect the fish resources and the interests of the community and to look not only at the profit nature of the business. Some one has to come out and take over that responsibility, and also to be an example to the community that the fisheries resource if not protected can be depleted. With that in mind we the women have now come up with a way of diversifying our activities. The land is there and not cultivated. We want to utilize the land by growing food so as to reduce the pressure on the lake and our demands for fish. We want to protect the lake taking on the motherly role of nurturing” (See Margaret Nakato, Uganda, in *Yemaya Issue 5 2000*).

This expression of the nurturing role of women in fisheries took various forms in different countries, but had the overall impact of broadening the focus of fisheries to include issues at the heart of the political economy of fisheries as they impacted local communities: the impact of foreign trade and destructive practices on the lives and livelihoods of communities, on their food security, their health and their development. It shifted the focus from fishworkers to fishing communities as women highlighted the fact that these issues were intertwined and inseparable. It highlighted the links between the steady globalisation of fisheries in Africa and local problems such as child labour and HIV/AIDS.

JACKIE SUNDE



The 2008 Zanzibar workshop emphasized and affirmed the rights of women and the issue of gender equity as integral to the struggle for fishers' rights

2000-2002:

During the period 2000-2002 ICSF organized a series of meetings focused on Women in Fisheries (WIF) in the West African region. In 2001, participants from over 13 countries attend the “Workshop on Problems and Prospects for Developing Artisanal Fish Trade in West Africa”, held from 30 May to 1 June 2001. This was followed by the “West African Processed Fish Fair” on 2 and 3 June 2001. The fair was hosted by ICSF in collaboration with the Collectif National des Pecheurs Artisans du Senegal (CNPS) and the Centre de Recherches pour le Developpement des Technologies Intermediaires de Pêche (CREDETIP), and included fish processors and traders from several countries in West Africa, including Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Ghana, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. They were supported by the FAO-DFID Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Project (SFLP). The issues emerging from these meetings were highlighted in a series of articles in the *Yemaya*. The common needs of women in the region were apparent: women required access to credit, infrastructure and technological inputs. Yet the focus was not only on technological support, and women articulated very clearly their strategic interests. This had the effect of broadening the political focus of some of the fisher movements. In Senegal for instance, women helped the movement become more politicised and extended the focus to include issues such as the state of

the resource and fisheries trade agreements. The participation of women from the region in a range of activities focusing on negotiation of foreign trade agreements steadily gained momentum through the work of organizations such as the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), a partner organization of ICSF.

Yemaya articles during these years were centred around issues facing women in West Africa, in the inland lakes such as Lake Victoria and in East and Southeastern African countries such as Tanzania and Mozambique. In 2002, the “World Summit on Sustainable Development” (WSSD) was held in South Africa. Women fishers from South Africa met up with members of the WFFP and WFF, women leaders from Africa and elsewhere at the International Fishers’ Forum hosted by the Masifundise Development Trust (Masifundise). Inspired by the level of organization elsewhere, the South African women committed to establishing a network of fishing communities. This was the first step on the road to the birth of Coastal Links, now a national network of fishing communities in South Africa.

2003-2009:

A workshop was held in Cotonou, Benin in West Africa in December 2003 to throw the spotlight on women in fishing communities. The workshop, titled “*Room to Manoeuvre: Gender and Coping Strategies in the Fisheries Sector*”, was funded by the European Commission and was organized by IDDRA, UK and the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods

What's New, Webby?



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Women's Foot Print in History

The UN Women, as part of the International Women's Day Celebrations, opened a new interactive page, using multimedia to document the timeline for women's foot print in history over the years.

The site opens up with the history from 400 B.C, where the first female gynecologists was recognized. It chronicles some of the women leaders including nun Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz of Mexico, who defended women's right to education in 1691. It flips between the past and present trend in these aspects. The issues covered include the right for decent work for women, voting rights to women, women's rights to be covered by media and work in media, women's rights

movements, women's role in, women's role in peace campaigns especially for social justice, ethno-cultural reconciliation and indigenous people's rights, demand for pay equality, women's right to confer nationality to their children, women's right in protecting the livelihoods of their communities, women's access to land and credit, and to recent campaigns against child marriage.

This multimedia is part of the UN Women campaign for Planet 50-50 by 2030, to step up for gender equality, and may be accessed at:

<http://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/timeline/womensfootprintinhistory/en/index.html>

Programme (SFLP), based in Cotonou. It brought together 14 participants from Europe (France, Madeira) and Africa (Guinea, the Gambia, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and Tanzania).

In 2004, women representatives from countries from the Southern African region were able to meet when the Southern African Development Community Small-scale Fisheries Conference was held in South Africa hosted by Masifundise. The issue of women's rights in small-scale fisheries (SSF) was highlighted at this meeting.

In 2005, the spotlight focused on the Lake Victoria region and the plight of women in inland fisheries. The documentary film "Darwin's Nightmare" was premiered at the meeting. This film documented the social impacts of the trade in the Nile Perch on communities who depend on Lake Victoria fisheries for their livelihoods; and began a longer debate about 'sex for fish' issue in this region.

In the same year, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) hosted the first continent wide conference entitled "Fish For All Conference". This conference led to the development of the Abuja Declaration which focused on strategic partnerships for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa, including small-scale and artisanal fisheries, but with little specific attention to women.

In 2006, ICSF hosted the workshop titled "Fishing Communities and Sustainable Development in Eastern and Southern Africa: The Role of Small-scale Fisheries" (ESA Fisheries Workshop I), held from 14 to 17 March 2006 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This workshop brought together men and women fishers and fishworkers, and among other issues addressed the issue of women's role and rights in fishing communities. The year was a turning point for women from SSF in South Africa as they took the lead in advocacy actions and a campaign declaring that "Fishers Rights = Human Rights". In December 2006, they embarked on a defiance campaign in order to draw attention to the discrimination that SSF sector faced. This defiance campaign enabled them to secure a victory in the Equality Court in 2007. In May 2007, the Court ordered the Fisheries Minister to develop a new SSF policy that would recognize the rights of small-scale, traditional fishing communities.

In 2008, representatives from fishing communities in the region met in Zanzibar,

Tanzania at a workshop titled "Asserting Rights, Defining Responsibilities: Perspectives from Small-scale Fishing Communities on Coastal and Fisheries Management in Eastern and Southern Africa" (ESA Fisheries Workshop II or the Zanzibar Workshop), jointly organized by ICSF, Masifundise, and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), Tanzania, in collaboration with the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). The workshop emphasized and affirmed the rights of women and the issue of gender equity as integral to the struggle for fishers' rights. It was part of a preparatory process towards the first "FAO SSF Workshop" which was held in Bangkok in October 2008. Women from SSF in West, East and Southern Africa attended this Conference in Bangkok and participated in the development of the Bangkok Statement that calls for recognition of the role of women in fisheries. At this conference it was noted that "The struggle for recognition of women's roles in small-scale fisheries is linked to the struggle for defending small-scale fisheries itself. They go hand-in-hand; not one or the other; not one after the other."

This was a sea change for small-scale fisheries, as, following the Bangkok meeting in the following year, the "28th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the FAO" requested FAO to commence with the development of an international instrument on SSF.

2010-2015:

In 2010, ICSF hosted an international conference on gender and women in fisheries. As part of the preparation for this workshop, ICSF supported the Masifundise National Women in Fisheries Workshop in South Africa.

During this year, the first ever Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA 1) was convened in September 2010 in Banjul, The Gambia. The CAMFA was subsequently endorsed by the 18th Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State, in 2011, as the policy organ responsible for fisheries and aquaculture, within the Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture (CAMA).

The mobilization of women in fisheries and their increased organization across the continent was evident particularly in West Africa. Several regional workshops held as

The struggle for recognition of women's roles in small-scale fisheries is linked to the struggle for defending small-scale fisheries itself.

part of the consultation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Small-scale Fisheries created space for women in organizations to voice their demands. Regional consultations were held as part of the consultation for the development of the SSF Guidelines. A regional workshop representing women from 16 countries hosted by ICSF and African Confederation of Professional Artisanal Fishery Organizations (CAOPA), in Ivory Coast on “The Problems Facing Women Artisanal Fishworkers in the Regional Trade of Fishery Products in West Africa: how should these be addressed by the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries” (IG SSF) resulted in the Abidjan Statement. On the occasion of World Fisheries Day on 21 November 2012 organized at the Abidjan Palace of Culture (Ivory Coast), following a conference on “Improving the Contribution of Artisanal Fisheries to Food Security: The Role of Women”, organized by CAOPA in collaboration with the National Fisheries Federation of Ivory Coast (FENACOPECI), and with the participation of the Journalists’ Network for Responsible Fisheries (REJOPRAO), professional artisanal fishworkers from 16 African countries, and representatives from CFFA, ICSF, FAO, Bread for the World (BftW), and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), the Abidjan Statement highlighting the position of women in fisheries was adopted.

At the state level, the formulation of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for African fisheries and aquaculture started in earnest in 2012 following immediately the Executive Council Decisions (Doc. EX. CL /627(XVIII) by the African Heads of States and Governments that adopted the Recommendations of the First Conference of Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA). A broad-based and inclusive Think Tank Meeting was held in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire in June 2012. The meeting brought together representatives of national fisheries and aquaculture departments, associations of small-scale and industrial fisheries and aquaculture, fish processors and exporters, including representative stakeholders from over 25 regional and international institutions. Women from Africa participated in the final negotiations of the SSF Guidelines in 2014, and in the same year the African Union NEPAD Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa was developed.

Yet despite these signs of change, the hopes that *Yemaya* would be a life-giving link for women in fisheries and would help to forge an alternative, nurturing approach to fisheries remain as yet incomplete in the light of the current status of women and of fisheries in the continent. Women in Africa continue to face extremely high levels of poverty, food insecurity and inequity. Although there are positive signs from some countries that women are participating in community-based programmes such as the octopus recovery programmes in Tanzania and the establishment of local community managed marine reserves in Tanzania, Kenya and Madagascar, the problems and challenges facing women remain. In the context of the SSF Guidelines, there is a great deal of work to be done to ensure that women are aware of their rights and that men and women are empowered to challenge gender discrimination. Most worrying however, is the dominance of a neo-liberal development agenda that regards Africa’s oceans and her women as ‘untapped wealth’. Women in fisheries struggling to mobilise around their access to marine resources for their livelihood now face the grossly unequal power relations inherent in the ‘blue economy’.

The crude wealth-based approach to fisheries that has become evident in many of the NEPAD country fisheries policies was given a boost recently by the Chairwoman of the 54 member African Union (AU), Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, when she announced to the world that Africa had a “two pronged weapon in its race to industrialise and make use of its natural resources: women and oceans”. The AU Chairwoman made this speech with its unfortunate militaristic terminology for the “1st Continental Conference on the Empowerment of African Women in Maritime” held in Luanda, Angola in March. The agenda covered how women can best make inroads into areas including shipping and maritime transport, fishing, offshore mining and other aspects of the “blue economy”. The Conference theme, “African Maritime Women: Towards Africa’s Blue Economy (2050 Aim Strategy / Agenda 2063)”, is also in line with the Theme of the African Union for this year which is the “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development Towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”. Also, March 8 or International Women’s Day has become an annual event for the women members of CAOPA to come together. This year they

celebrated International Women's Day in Nouakchott, Mauritania, and were joined by the African Union (Inter-African Office for Animal Resources). Women in fisheries in Africa face huge challenges in the coming years: how to use the visibility of their labour that ironically the social development goals of this neo-liberal approach provide; and to

use their 'empowerment' to become a powerful political force that can advocate for a nurturing approach to development in general, in direct opposition to the exploitative neo-liberal agenda. The need for *Yemaya* as an umbilical cord that can link them and nurture this alternative political force appears as necessary as ever. **M**

EUROPE

HISTORY

A Historic Journey

This article explores the long road of ten years of advocacy and action to create spaces for women in fisheries and their organizations in European Union policy

By **Cornelie Quist** (cornelie.quist@gmail.com), Member, ICSF, with inputs from **Katia Frangoudes** (Katia.Frangoudes@univ-brest.fr), Member, ICSF

In 1990, the General Body of ICSF committed to developing a programme on women in fisheries for ICSF. The Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme was conceived as an action-research programme that would be executed within, and through, fishers' organizations that were partner organizations of ICSF. This programme aimed primarily at strengthening the role and space of women in fishworker organizations, and defending their spaces in fisheries.

1994:

The ICSF's international Women in Fisheries programme took off in Europe! Women in fisheries' organizations from France and Spain had their first international exposure through participation in international workshops with women in fisheries from Philippines, Thailand, India, Senegal and Canada. The workshops aimed at making women's role in fisheries visible through the sharing of experiences, understanding root causes of gender discrimination and encouraging international solidarity linkages.

Participating in this meeting were women from all over Europe: from Spain came Rosa dos Ventos, an association of five women's action groups of the fisher communities of the Rias Bajas coast in south Galicia, one of the major fishery regions of Spain. Three of

AKTEA



In 2008, AKTEA organized the 3rd annual European Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture conference at Arcachon, France, from 12 to 14 June

the other groups that participated were those of women who supported their husbands who were crew on the distant water fleet and in frequent conflict with ship owners over demands for better working conditions and security of employment. Of the remaining groups, one was a group of net makers and the other of women shell fish gatherers who worked on foot and had come together to protect their rights.

A group of women leaders from the Fishery Survival Committee (FSC) also participated. The FSC was formed in defence of the artisanal fishing sector in France in 1993 when fish stocks were in crisis and the entry of large quantities of fresh

fish from outside the European Economic Community (EEC) brought the fish prices down by 50 percent. This movement had its major base in Bretagne (Brittany).

1999:

A session held during the interregional meeting of the European Union's Fisheries Program on women's role in the fisheries sector brought together women from different member states to discuss their participation in fisheries and the support needed for women in the sector to organize. The meeting was called by the Directorate General Fish (DG Fish) of the European Commission.



PROFILE

A.G. Chitrani: Transforming others' lives with her courage

Leader from Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

By **Herman Kumara** (hermankumara@gmail.com), National Convener, National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), Sri Lanka

Born and brought up in Nelsonpura in the Gravets divisional secretariat area of Trincomalee in Sri Lanka, A.G. Chitrani is one of thousands of women victims of the brutal and protracted war between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In April 1991, her husband, a fisherman, was lost at sea while fishing in the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. When her husband disappeared, Chitrani was 35 years old with four children between the ages of 15 and 22. After days of weeping, with no one but her children to cling to, a devastated Chitrani realized that she

in Trincomalee district. Under Chitrani's leadership, there are now 350 women members from 15 villages working together in Uthayan to address women's issues.

"We know how difficult it is to lose the family breadwinner. An obvious concern is that of survival. Also, ensuring that our families stay protected from society and from the military are other issues we face. This is very worrying especially when families have girl-children", says Chitrani.

In 2004, with the war not yet over, the beleaguered women and men of Sri Lanka faced another difficulty—the Asian Tsunami. During these trying times, the Diriya Kantha Sanwidanaya, with support from many funding agencies, extended basic help to families who had suffered losses. It reached out to men who had lost their boats and engines and engaged in other forms of rehabilitative work.

"From one disaster to another, we women had the courage to face our difficulties and to organize support to rebuild the lives of our children and our communities", says Chitrani.

Recently, Uthayan launched a campaign on violence against women. In October 2015, it also launched an education campaign in Trincomalee and approached the District Secretary with a petition demanding immediate action against child abuse and violence against women.

Uthayan's participation in the National Fisher Women Federation, the active women's wing of a national fisher peoples' movement, has ensured that its voice can now be heard from the district right up to national level. Chitrani, as the Executive Committee member of the Federation, leads the women of her community to a future full of hope. ■

could not afford to spend any more precious time mourning her loss. Several other families were coping with similar war-related disappearances. It seemed to her that they would have to rise from the difficulties they collectively faced.

Eking out a living by selling string hoppers, Chitrani, over time, initiated the formation of a group of women hailing from ten families in her village, all of whom shared the experience of dealing with the disappearance of a family member. As 35 women from 15 other villages of Trincomalee district joined, the group expanded and came to be known as Diriya Kantha Sanwidanaya (Organization of Women with Courage). At a later stage, National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO) intervened to form a district women federation, named Uthayan

2001:

The Green Paper on the future of the EU Common Fisheries Policy for the first time mentioned the role of women in fisheries in Europe.

ICSF organized a workshop “Women in European Fisheries” with women of fishing communities and fishworker organizations from the Netherlands, Spain, France and Norway to discuss the review process of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and to identify common issues for action as contribution to the consultation process of the CFP review, the so-called “Green Paper Process”. The key issues that the women wanted to emphasize included the recognition of their work, access to training, integration of women in professional bodies and organizations, and exchanges of women across Europe. The existing systems to manage fisheries did not take into account the problems and particular interests of women. The importance of the participation of both men and women needed to be recognized so as to empower communities to negotiate with political and economic authorities. The recognition of the role of women would contribute towards implementing a fisheries policy that was less aggressive and more sustainable.

These “Issues of Concern for Women in European Fisheries”, were presented by the French fisherwoman Danièle le Sauce in the European Parliament, Fisheries Committee Meeting on 20 November 2001. (See [Yemaya 8, December 2001](#))

The DG Fish (European Commission) commissioned a study on the role of women in the European fishery sector, whose recommendations were implemented in 2001. One of the principal recommendations concerned acknowledging, upgrading and expanding women’s shore-side support role in their role as “Collaborating Spouses”. (

See [Directorate General for Fisheries, European Commission, Final Rep. 1443/R/03/A, March 2002](#))

2002:

A three years research project Programme named FEMMES “Women in fisheries and aquaculture in Europe” (2002-2005) was started by a collaborative group of university departments and fisher organizations with support from the European Commission (EC), under the 5th Framework Programme for Research (CCE-DG Fish, contract n° Q5TN-2002-5th). The programme aimed to promote the recognition of women’s role and status in fisheries and aquaculture through networking of researchers and women’s

associations. Under the FEMMES programme, three workshops were organized where fisherwomen and researchers from nine European countries exchanged experiences, issues and knowledge. The first workshop dealt with fisherwomen’s role in the private space, the second with fisherwomen’s role in the public space and the third aimed to prepare two agendas, one with action points on enhancing women’s role in fisheries, and the second with supporting research needs.

2003:

The EC organized a two-day conference on 22nd and 23rd January to discuss ways to enhance the role of women in the fisheries sector of Europe under the newly reformed CFP. It was the first time in history that the EC organized a conference on this subject. The conference was also unique in that participants were largely women of fishing communities (135 out of 200) from EU member states, who got a chance to directly speak with the Commission. This resulted in a lively exchange on women’s current roles and potential for participation on various issues like conservation of fish resources, representation of the sector’s interests, contribution to social and economic structures in areas dependent on fishing, and contribution to the reformed CFP. That their voice was being heard greatly encouraged the women in their struggle for recognition. (See [Yemaya 12, April 2003](#) for a report of the conference by the Dutch women in fisheries network: VinVis)

2004:

The FEMMES programme organized an international conference: “Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture: lessons from the past, current actions and dreams for the future”, from 10 – 13 November 2004 at Santiago de Compostela (Spain). The conference aimed at extending the networking and association linkages of women of fishing communities from Europe to other parts of the world. It created a unique opportunity for the women of fishing communities to meet with researchers from different disciplines of social sciences working on women-in-fisheries-related issues, and for the researchers themselves to discuss their work. There were more than 170 participants—fisherwomen, shellfish gatherers, fish processors, fish sellers and researchers, administrators, social workers and women activists—from all over the globe. The outcome was a shared agenda with actions needed to support women’s role in fisheries and aquaculture. The shared

agenda was published in four languages and sent to all members of the European Parliament and also to national policy makers. (See *Samudra Report*, 41, July 2005)

2005:

The FEMMES programme published the Agenda for Research on Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe. This agenda was the result of the three years interactive research programme with women in fisheries and aquaculture in Europe that had started in 2002 and was circulated to decision-makers in the field of research policy at all levels, local, national and European.

The European Parliament accepted a resolution on [Women's Networks: Fishing, farming and diversification \(2004/2263\(INI\)\)](#). The resolution called on the European Commission and the Member States to launch the necessary actions to secure greater legal and social recognition, and raise the profile of the work of women in the fisheries sector; to support their efforts to obtain better living conditions for their families and communities; and to guarantee, social and economic rights, including wage equality, unemployment benefit in case of interruption of work (temporary or definitive), the right to obtain a pension, the reconciliation of work and family life and access to parental leave, access to social security and free health service, and the protection of safety and health at work.

The resolution also called on the Commission to recognize the importance of supporting the role of women in fisheries networks and their potential to contribute to the socio-economic fabric and well being of fisheries-dependent communities. Their effective participation in advisory fisheries bodies at European, national and regional level, was sought. Financial support, including from the European Fisheries Fund for fisheries networks was also sought.

The resolution was based on a report by European MP Elspeth Attwool of the Committee on Fisheries of European Parliament.

2006:

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Regulation adopted the principle of gender equality. The Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 establishing the EFF framework for the 2007-2013 aimed to:

“help the sector attain the objectives defined as part of the Common Fisheries Policy. Aid granted in this framework must therefore stimulate the development of an economically profitable and environmentally responsible sector that contributes to the wellbeing of the

populations dependent on fisheries, in other words, to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. From that perspective, the projects cofinanced by the EFF must help strike a balance between resources and fishing capacity, protect and enhance the environment and natural resources, support the sector's competitiveness and economic viability, improve the quality of life in areas with fishing activity and promote gender equality for those working in the sector.”

The regulation furthermore had a separate article on Equality between men and women (Article 11):

“The Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective are promoted during the various stages of implementation of the EFF, including the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Member States shall ensure that operations to enhance the role of women in the fisheries sector are promoted.”

In May 2006, AKTEA, the European Network of Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture was formally established at Ancona. The objectives of AKTEA were to promote the visibility and recognition of women's role in fisheries and aquaculture, exchange of experiences, problems and resolutions among women in European fisheries and aquaculture; to foster the acceptance of women and women's organization within the fisheries and aquaculture political and institutional frame; to facilitate the enhancement of women's self confidence; and, to promote a sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture and the preservation of fisheries and coastal communities.

The founding members were: the French networks Femmes entre Terre et Mer (Brittany); CIVAM l'Etang de Thau and the Association “Femmes de Pêcheurs en Méditerranée”; VinVis of the Netherlands; Estrela do Mar of Portugal; the Pan-Hellenic union of women in fisheries of Greece; Network Kystentil Kamp of Norway; Tyrius Association of Spain; the Italian women in fisheries network Penelope; the Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries (UK) and the North Sea Women's Network (UK). (See reports on the founding of AKTEA [here](#) and [here](#).)

2007:

AKTEA organized its 2nd European “Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture” conference at Annalong (Northern Ireland), from 26 to 29 April 2007. Eighty women from eight European countries—the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, France, Spain,

Portugal, Italy and Greece—representing 15 women in fisheries organizations discussed the future actions of the organization.

The important issues for AKTEA were recognition of the status of the collaborative spouse according to the Council directive 86/613 EEC; the application of the principle of equal treatment of men and women engaged in any activity in a self-employed capacity; and protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood. The term ‘self-employed’ included spouses not being employees or partners, where they habitually, under the conditions laid down by national law, participated in the activities of the self-employed worker and performed the same tasks or ancillary tasks.

Since July 2007, France is the only EU state to have made the collaborative status, as per the EU directive 86/613, mandatory for all French fishers and shellfish farmers’ wives contributing to the activities of enterprises of less than 20 employees. Spouses could choose from three types of status: wage earner, associate spouse, or collaborative spouse. The law came into force from the 1st of July 2007.

French fishers and shellfish farmers’ wives now have the right to represent the family enterprise, to be elected in the boards of fishermen’s organizations and also to join a social security scheme. (See related reports [here](#) and [here](#).)

2008:

The European parliament published the report “[The role of women in the sustainable development of European Fisheries Areas](#)”. Several AKTEA members contributed to it. The report highlighted the important role

of women in fisheries, including fishing, aquaculture and the processing of aquatic products. Women were also recognized as major agents in the diversification of income from fisheries, especially in areas affected by the decline of fishing. They were active in self-organizing and networking to promote gender equality in many areas across Europe. Nevertheless, they faced many constraints and barriers. The report reviewed a variety of best practices to enhance women’s role in the fishing areas of fourteen EU countries. It also recommended actions for the European Fisheries Fund to promote initiatives for women in European Fisheries Areas. The report also made recommendations for policy makers and fisheries organizations.

Also in the year 2008, AKTEA organized the 3rd annual “European Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture” conference at Arcachon France, from 12 to 14 June. The Conference discussed the involvement of women’s organizations in Regional Advisory Councils –Fisheries (RACs). Four members of AKTEA participated in four different RACs: the North Sea Women’s Network is a member of the North Sea RAC, the Scandinavian women’s network belongs to the Baltic Sea RAC, Mnana Mara of Ireland is a member of the North-western Waters RAC, and Estrela do Mar of Portugal is part of the South-western Waters RAC. (See related reports [here](#) and [here](#).)

2009:

The European Commission published the Green Paper “Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy 2010-2020”. This did not have any reference to women’s role in fisheries, or the principle of equal treatment of men and



Milestones

By **Ramya Rajagopalan**
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General Recommendation on the Rights of Rural Women

On 3 March 2016, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted a General Recommendation on the rights of rural women that identifies the Voluntary Guidelines as a standard for gender mainstreaming. The General Recommendation calls on states to integrate and mainstream a gender perspective in all agricultural and rural development policies, strategies, plans and programmes, enabling rural women to act and be visible as stakeholders, decision-makers and beneficiaries, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on tenure, and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries

in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

This call is placed within a recognition of the unique situation of rural women, their contribution to poverty reduction, food and nutrition security and the sustainable management of natural resources, taking into account that rural women’s rights to land, natural resources, including water, seeds, forestry, as well as fisheries, are fundamental human rights.

Read the General Recommendations here:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf

women, which were part of the Green Paper of 2001.

In response, AKTEA highlighted the important role women played in fishing communities in Europe, and expressed its disappointment over the absence of recognition of this role in the latest Green Paper. It regretted that despite EU parliament recommendations and various EC reports, there were still no gender based statistics on fisheries at the EU level. It noted that many women working in fisheries were not included in the statistics as they were not recognized as fishers. Women throughout Europe wanted recognition of their role in fishing enterprises in order to access social benefits and representation. The “collaborative spouse” status (EU directive 86/613) was a major step forward, but this status has not been applied to women in fisheries in most member states of the European Union. AKTEA also explained how the quota system in EU fisheries discriminated against women and had a negative social impact in fishing communities. AKTEA appealed to the EC to develop social indicators to assess the social impact of new fishery regulations on fishing communities. (*Read AKTEA’s response [here](#).*)

AKTEA’s 4th annual meeting and its conference on “European Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture” was held from 27 to 31 October, 2009 at Sines, Portugal, hosted by the Portuguese network Estrela do Mar. The response by AKTEA to the Green Paper was the main issue on the agenda. The AKTEA network also responded to the consultation on the EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2008-2012. It commented that while the Roadmap has several articles referring to the rights of women working with their spouse in the family fisheries enterprises, implementation of these in fisheries policies was practically absent. (*Read the meeting report [here](#).*)

2010:

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (2009/2106 INI of 25 February 2010). It stressed as a fundamental objective the full involvement of women in activities in the sector, on an equal footing with men, and for this objective to be reflected in all policies and measures adopted for the sector.

The resolution mentioned several issues important for the social protection of women in fisheries. It called on the Commission and

the Member States to cooperate in order to promote the principle of equal opportunities at the various stages of the implementation of the European Fisheries Fund, as provided for in Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006. Furthermore the Commission was urged to ensure that the most vulnerable groups in the fisheries sector, especially working women, fisherwomen and women shellfish gatherers were not disadvantaged in access rights, and to encourage their participation in the RACs. (*Read the resolution [here](#).*)

ICSF Europe and AKTEA together organized a workshop “Strengthening the voice of women of fishing communities in Europe”, on February 13, 2010, to prepare inputs from Europe for the international workshop “Recasting the Net: Defining a Gender Agenda for Sustaining Life and Livelihoods in Fishing Communities”, organized by ICSF at Mahabalipuram, India, during 7-10 July 2010. AKTEA members from Spain, Portugal, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands and Northern Ireland contributed to the workshop. The workshop report covered women’s work in fisheries, access to decision making, views on rights to coastal and fishery resources and fishery management. (*See the workshop report [here](#) and AKTEA’s presentation [here](#).*)

The European Parliament and European Council enforced the [European Directive 2010/41/EU](#) on the principle of equal treatment of men and women engaged in self-employed work, on July 7. The principle also applied to spouses or life partners who has established business together. A national social protection system for self-employed workers, and spouses or life partners of self-employed workers was also mandated. Member States could decide whether the social protection was implemented on a mandatory or voluntary basis. Accordingly Council Directive 86/613/EEC was repealed.

The European Parliament organized a public hearing on December 1st 2010 on “[Women and the Sustainable Development of Fisheries Areas](#)”. Several women in fisheries organizations, most of them members of AKTEA, presented their work and role within the European fisheries sector. The public hearing highlighted that the EP recognized the important role of women in the fisheries sector, but women needed to get more support. (*Read the report of the public hearing [here](#).*)

AKTEA had her 5th annual meeting on 2nd December 2010 at the EU Parliament and the future of the network was discussed. The European Commissioner proposed to finance a European Network, more

institutionalized than AKTEA. It was discussed if AKTEA should become part of, and guide the establishment of, such a network. Members agreed that the network should move towards institutionalization because it needed public subsidies to ensure its expansion and develop its activity in all member states. AKTEA decided to request a meeting with the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) to discuss the possibilities of becoming the official European network. (*Read a report on the 5th annual meeting of AKTEA [here](#)*)

2011:

The interim evaluation of the European Fisheries Fund (2007-2013) concluded that regarding Article 11 on Gender Equality, very little was achieved. Women in Fisheries' organizations were hardly involved in the Monitoring Committee (MC), representing between 0 to 8 percent of total members. Only seven of 23 Member States surveyed (Ireland, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, and Romania) had representatives from women's organizations on the MC. The maximum in any committee was a single woman representative. Further, the implementation of Axis 4 had really taken off only in 2010 and impacts were barely perceivable at this stage.

The selected projects fell under Article 44.1 (support the sustainable development of fisheries areas), while measures under 44.2 (improvement of professional skills, and equal opportunities for women) had not yet been implemented. (*Read the Interim Evaluation Report [here](#).*)

2013:

The European Parliament Committee on Fisheries commissioned a note "[Women in fisheries: a European perspective](#)". It recommended how the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) could better integrate gender equality in its operational programme.

The European Parliament organized another public hearing on "[Developing the role of Women in European Fisheries and Aquaculture](#)", on October 14. The hearing was co-organized by the Committee in Fisheries and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. AKTEA and several of its members participated.

AKTEA's 6th annual meeting and conference "European Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture" was held on October 15, at Brussels. Women from member' organizations

from Portugal, Ireland, Spain, France and the Netherlands discussed the future of AKTEA. They unanimously decided to continue the network even without funding. The recognition of the network at EU level was seen as helpful for strengthening the national organizations. However, it was also noted at the meeting that most member organizations had difficulties recruiting new members, in particular young women. Strategies like the use of social media were seen as options to reach new women and expand the network.

2014:

The new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund: 2014-2020 (EMFF) included references to gender equality and making available funds to supports projects for women in fisheries.

Article 8 of the [EMFF regulation](#) stated: *The Union should, at all stages of implementation of the EMFF, aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women, as well as to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.*

To promote human capital, the creation of jobs and social dialogue, the EMFF calls on Member States to support "*networking and exchange of experiences and best practices between stakeholders, including among organizations promoting equal opportunities between men and women, promoting the role of women in fishing communities and promoting under-represented groups involved in small-scale coastal fishing or in on-foot fishing*" (ibid.). This action referred to fisheries and aquaculture articles (29 and 50).

For the first time the EMFF opened its funding support "*to spouses of self-employed fishermen or, where and in so far as recognized by national law, the life partners of self-employed fishermen, under the conditions laid down in point (b) of Article 2 of Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council. The same principle is available in fisheries and aquaculture*" (ibid.).

The regulation gave examples of the specific actions towards women through some of its articles, such as in article 31: "*In recognition of their role in fishing communities, spouses and life partners of self-employed fishermen should, under certain conditions, also be granted support for professional training, lifelong learning and the dissemination of knowledge, and for networking that contributes to their professional development*". 📌

Cooperative Action

Many opportunities for increased participation of women are open to a fisheries cooperative in an underprivileged community in Maharashtra, India

By **Suhas Wasave** (suhaswasave@gmail.com), Assistant Professor, College of Fisheries, Shirgaon, India, and **Arpita Sharma** (arpitasharma@cife.edu.in), Principal Scientist, Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai, India

Maharashtra is a prominent fishing state in India, with a coast line of 720 km and a fisher population of around 450,000, of whom around 55,000 are active fishers. The state has 304 registered primary marine fisheries cooperatives with a total membership of 114,000. The fisheries cooperatives are part of the strong producer-cooperative sector of rural Maharashtra with a history of over 100 years.

The fisheries cooperatives are formed with the objectives of production and marketing of fish. Many cooperatives have diversified their operations and added ancillary activities such as rendering economic assistance to fishers, undertaking grading, preservation, storage, transport and processing of fish. They also supply necessary fishery requisites like nets, ropes, oil and other requirements to cooperative members on economical rates.

The Adivasi Koli Machhimar Sahkari Sanstha (Tribal Fishermen Cooperative Society) is a cooperative with members from the Scheduled Caste community of the village Shrivardhan of Raigad district in Maharashtra. It was established in the year 1999 to improve competitiveness of its members through services, supply of fishery inputs and access to

Government benefit schemes for the fishing community.

The Cooperative Society has its own office building, office furniture and computers at the centre of village connected with telephone and internet facility. It owns assets worth around INR 840,000 (USD 12666). It has 162 members, all from the so-called Scheduled Caste community called Mahadev Koli. Ten members have Below Poverty Line (BPL) status, which serves as an entitlement to certain welfare provisions. Around sixty members were reported to be illiterate. This illiteracy was found especially among women members and the elderly. Most of the younger members were educated.

The male members of the cooperative are engaged in trawl net, *dol* net, gill net and traditional fishing practices. Seven members own trawlers. Twelve members have businesses related to *dol* net operations. Only one member operates with gill nets and there are no purse-seine net operators. There are 35 women members in the Society. They are involved in either fish processing or marketing of fresh or dry fishes in the local market.

The Cooperative members generally sell their own catch as the Cooperative is not able to provide marketing support to their members. Hence, data on quantum of fish caught by members of is not available with their office. Members sell their fish catch through auction at the landing centre of village after every fishing trip.

The Cooperative Society functions according to the Indian Cooperative Society Act of 1960. Its activities fall under the purview of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies of Raigad district. The Cooperative accounts are audited every year by an internal auditor as well as a Government auditor. The Cooperative holds an Annual General Meeting every year when the annual accounts are presented and passed and important decisions are ratified.

The Board of Management meets every month to discuss administration and financial issues. Two women members are part of the Board of Management. It was however observed that women's participation in the decision making of the Cooperative was poor. Most decisions were being taken by men. Women were not much aware of the operations of the cooperative

SHUDDHAWATI S PEKE / ICSF



The Cooperative members generally sell their own catch as the Cooperative is not able to provide marketing support to their members

and most did not attend the Annual General Meetings.

The Cooperative Society has three permanent employees, all from Scheduled Caste community.

The main functions of the Cooperative are supply of subsidized diesel to members, and getting members insured under Group Insurance schemes implemented by Maharashtra Government. However, many Government schemes and services meant for the Scheduled Caste community are not being accessed by the Cooperative. The Cooperative leadership attributed the poor implementation

of Government schemes to reasons such as lack of awareness, complex documentation requirement for availing Government schemes and lack of financial assistance from nationalized banks.

Members felt that the Cooperative should take initiative in marketing of fish catch, providing infrastructure facilities for landing and berthing of vessels, providing basic facilities at landing centres such as electricity, roads, drinking water, ice plant and fishery requisites shops. They also felt the Cooperative should proactively work to avail various Government schemes. ❏

It was however observed that women's participation in the decision making of the Cooperative was poor.

ASIA

INDIA

Evocations of the Sea

A recent music concert in Bengaluru, India explored the universal metaphor of the ocean in mystic poetry—a space beyond identity where social divisions such as those of gender, class, caste and race hold little meaning

By **Vipul Rikhi**
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The Kabir Project,
Srishti Institute of Art,
Design & Technology,
Bengaluru, India

(Editor's note: Film maker Shabnam Virmani, and the author of this piece, the poet Vipul Rikhi – singers both – are part of the Kabir Project (www.kabirproject.org), initiated in 2003, which explores contemporary spiritual and socio-political resonances of mystic poets, such as the 15th century north Indian mystic, Kabir, through songs, images and conversations.)

“Evocations of the Sea”—this is how we titled our music concert, which was to be the final session of a 3-day conference on ‘Exploring the Scope of collaborations in Marine Biology and Biotechnology between France and India’, held at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, India from 7-9 March 2016, organized jointly by IISc and Dakshin Foundation. When my colleague Shabnam Virmani and I were approached to present an evening of music as part of this conference, we mused upon how the ocean is evoked in the folk music of Kabir and other Bhakti and Baul poets of India.

The sea is a field of mystery, just as life is, and so it becomes a common theme and metaphor within mystic poetry. Life itself is often described as *bhavsagar*, or the ocean of becoming. And we have somehow to cross or navigate this ocean, which throws us about, with skill.

The very first song we presented speaks of an ocean which is full of jewels!

Your ocean is full of precious jewels

Some brave pearl-diver will bring them up

The word for pearl-diver in Hindi is *marjeeva*, which literally means one who dies in order to live again. The pearl-diver plunges to his or her death, into the depths of the ocean, and when s/he comes up again, it's as if s/he were born anew. This becomes a powerful spiritual metaphor for Kabir and other poets, to indicate this practice of dying to oneself again and again.

The pearl-divers' country is a wondrous land

An aimless one can't reach there

One on the path knows the diver's pulse

Now she cannot be swayed from her path

Giving up the self, she sits in the ocean

And fixes her attention on the pearl

She brings back that beautiful jewel

Now there is no leaving this ocean

The second song that we sang was also a folk tune from the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh in central India, like the first one. It advises the seeker to ride the waves of the ocean.

Taste the waves of the ocean, friend

Pearls aren't found by plunging into puddles!

The depth and vastness of the ocean here becomes a figure for a wider and freer way of being, which has the reward of a ‘pearl’. This is contrasted with much shallower ways of being, clinging to small and limited identities and notions of self.

As both these songs show, the ocean immediately invokes a sense of vastness. Neither Kabir, nor many of the singers who

Life is often described as ... the ocean of becoming... we have somehow to cross or navigate this ocean, which throws us about, with skill.

have sung these songs for centuries, lived by the sea. And yet it is a powerful presence in the human imagination, provoking poetry and a sense of the expanse of life.

In January this year we met Dhruv Bhatt, a contemporary poet who writes in Gujarati. As we travelled with him over a period of a few days, he revealed to us how many of his poems 'come to him' as songs—that is, along with the tune. Lovingly he taught us these songs, in many of which the ocean is a strong presence. We presented two of his songs as part of the concert, presenting him in some sense as a contemporary mystic poet, and his songs have a strong folk flavour.

The first one is a delightful song which has a story behind it. Once Dhruvdada (elder brother) was doing a walking pilgrimage along the banks of the Narmada, a river considered holy, which originates in central India and flows to the west coast. On a hot day, he came across a poor farmer hard at work, sweating away in his small field. Moved, Dhruv dada approached him and asked him how he was doing. Flashing a thousand watt smile, the farmer looked up at him and said: "I'm full of joy!" It was an unexpected moment of transformation. It shifted something in Dhruvdada's approach to the man, and to himself. And later this poem came to him as a song.

*If, suddenly, I were to come across
Someone on the way
And if they were to ask me
Softly,
"How are you doing today?"
Then I would say,
Nature is so bountiful
And like waves in the ocean
I'm at play!*

When we first heard this song, we were utterly taken with it. It describes the joy and play of the ocean. In fact, the same word in Hindi (*maui*) can be used for both 'wave' and 'joy' – and the poet puns on this through the song.

*In my torn trouser-pocket hide
Many joyful, dancing waves
Even when alone
I'm in a carnival each day
...
Water in the eyes comes and goes
But the moistness within never dries
The shore may keep accounts
Of less and more*

*The ocean doesn't bother about such scores
The sun may rise and set everyday
The sky over me is always the same*

(See words and translation of the full song here, as well as a downloadable audio version: <http://cityoffeeling.blogspot.in/2016/03/ochintu-koi-raste-made.html>)

The other song of Dhruvdada which we sang also evokes the sea as a place of joy and bounty. On one side, it says, is the ocean with its waves; on the other, is the fertile, green earth. There is joy as far as the eye can see.

We also sang a song of Kabir which describes the journey of a boat. My boat is now sailing smoothly, says Kabir. It has fear neither of shallow nor of deep waters, no terror of storm or rain, no anxiety of turning upside down. This is because it has found the right navigator, the guru who is guiding its path.

But this guru, the boatman, is a somewhat strange figure.

*Kabir says the one who rows
Without a head
Only he can point out this path
This is an untellable tale
Of great benediction
Only a rare boatman
Can describe it*

And so we arrive into tales of headless boatmen! When we seek to navigate these waters with our limited minds, perhaps we are led astray. But when we give up our need for control and allow ourselves to be guided by something larger, a great benediction appears. Could this be the 'untellable' import of this song?

The sixth and final song we presented was a Baul song (from the Bengal region in the east of India) by a famous Baul fakir and poet called Lalon Fakir. It is a call in a simple and full voice. The poet is asking to be 'taken across'. He says that he cannot see the way. He has been left all alone on this shore, and the sun is setting on the horizon. Things appear dark, and this plea is his only support. In his helplessness, he still finds the strength to call out for help.

We had never before curated a whole concert just around the sea. It was a beautiful experience for Shabnam and me, to immerse in these waters, and perhaps come out on the other shore, refreshed.

(All translations by Vipul Rikhi) ❧

Women in Fisheries in Asia: 1978 – 2016

From fisherwomen's struggles against unfair taxation in the 1970s in India to organizing global programmes to forge common understanding and strategy, women in fisheries in Asia have come a long way

By **Meryl Williams**
(MerylJWilliams@gmail.com), with inputs from Choo Poh Sze, Kaniz Fatema, Jayne Gallagher, Malasri Khumsri, Jin Yeong Kim, Mayanggita Kirana, Nalini Nayak, Mohammad Nuruzzaman, B. Shanthi, Indah Susilowatu and Veikila Vuki

This article on the milestones achieved by women in the fisheries in Asia-Pacific is based on existing material and contributions from several colleagues (see above). Many more milestones are still to be added, but the following will give a flavour of what has happened. The milestones summarised here are varied—sometimes uplifting, often depressing, some big, others small, but all indicative of women fishworkers' struggles. The milestones are just a start and are somewhat biased towards research and government agency actions, and contain less than we would like on grassroots action. Part of the lack of grassroots coverage is due to the lack of public visibility, especially on the internet, of women's grassroots groups and actions. Often, grassroots groups are hosted under national fisheries federations and do not have their own identities, websites and secretariats. Therefore, the present version of the Asia-Pacific milestones could be considered to be a work in progress, and we hope to keep it updated. Your contributions, corrections and comments are welcome.

1978

In Kerala, India, women fishworkers protested against exorbitant market taxes and won the struggle to not pay market tax if they took only one head load of fish to the market.

1982

In Kerala, India, women demanded the right to use public transport to take their fish to market. Without access to transport, women had to walk several kilometres, sometimes up to eight or ten km, to and from the market. After two years of discussions with the government, a decision was made to provide special buses for women to take their fish to the market. Eventually, these buses were run by the MatsyaFed (Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development). Initially there were several buses but the numbers gradually reduced as the bus timetables did not respond to the times that women demanded—or too few women used the services. Coordination of the service was poor and the MatsyaFed lacked the will to find amicable solutions. Nevertheless, a couple of buses still ply to the fish landing centres for women to purchase fish and bring it back to the market to sell.

In 1989, women in Kerala, India, were registered separately in the Fishermen's Welfare Corporation so that they too could get the benefits of the cooperatives and the famine cum relief scheme which recognized even single women fish vendors.

1989

From its headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC, then South Pacific Commission) began women in fisheries work, with a focus on women in post-harvest processing. In 1991, the SPC eventually appointed its first Women's Fisheries Programme Officer, but the post was only filled for about a year and remained vacant until 1995.

In Maharashtra, India, following a petition from women to the Railway Minister by the National Fishworkers Federation, a wagon on the train from Palghar to Mumbai was provided for women fish vendors. This is still operating.

1990

At the suggestion of Dr M.C. Nandeesh, the Asian Fisheries Society (Indian Branch) conducted its first Women in Fisheries in India Workshop in Mangalore, India, and [published the proceedings](#) in 1992.

PIYASHI DEBROY / ICAR



The Asian Fisheries Society's (AFS) 4th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF4) was held in Yeosu, South Korea

1993

A [Pacific Women in Fisheries Network](#) was established in Fiji. The Network is registered under the (Fiji) Charitable Trusts Act, and is a consortium of fishers, researchers, gender and development specialists and scientists from non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), governmental and regional agencies that share a common interest in addressing the urgent need to strengthen the involvement and improve the conditions of women in the fisheries sector in Fiji. At its height in the 1990s, it had some 60 members in the Pacific region. There was a ten-year lapse of activity due to core members proceeding on professional development stints but was revived in the mid-2013. In 1995, it published "[Fishing for Answers: Women and Fisheries in the Pacific Islands](#)." The Network now has a fulltime coordinator and it is currently working closely with World Conservation Society (WCS) in Fiji.

1994

At the instigation of Dr M.C. Nandeesha, the non-government organization, Partnership for Development in Kampuchea (PADEK), and partners organized the Women in Fisheries Cambodia Workshop, and published the proceedings (Note: For copies of the proceedings, please contact the author).

1995

At the 4th Asian Fisheries Forum in Beijing, the Asian Fisheries Society and PADEK held a women-in-fisheries photo competition.

The UNDP Women in Fisheries Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop was held in the Philippines and, in addition to a large volume of proceedings, agreed upon the Iloilo Resolution (UNDP SU/TCDC 1995) that was sent to the 4th World Conference on Women in Development, held in Beijing, China.

Also this year, the SPC started a Women's Fisheries Development Section and appointed an Officer to lead it.

1996

PADEK and several national partners held the "Women in Fisheries in the Indo-China Workshop" in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and published the proceedings (Note: For copies of the proceedings, please contact the author).

In South Korea, the first meeting of women in fishing villages was jointly organized by five fisheries cooperatives. Women's greater political activity in fishers' organizations was preceded by demographic changes, such as the aging of the rural population, increasing work opportunities elsewhere, and declining

fisheries resources. The work women did in the fisheries was being transformed, with some women even going to sea with their husbands.

1997

The Cambodian Women in Fisheries Network was established by the Cambodian Fisheries Administration (FIA).

The [SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin](#) was launched.

1998

The Asian Fisheries Society (AFS) Symposium on Women in Fisheries in Asia was held during the 5th Asian Fisheries Forum in Chiang-Mai, Thailand. This was the first such event by the AFS and the predecessor of similar events at each of the subsequent Asian Fisheries (and Aquaculture) Forums.

In the Philippines, registration of fisherfolk began to include women, in contrast to the past practice of recognizing only male fishers. The 1998 Fisheries Code (Section 19) provided for registration of municipal fisherfolk by local government units.

In the Pacific, the SPC transformed its Women's Fisheries Development Section into the Community Fisheries Section. At this time, in the Western and Central Pacific region, many male fisheries leaders expressed concern that development work that focused on women was not inclusive of all members of the community. By 2003, the Community Fisheries Section had moved even further from focusing on women when it became the Coastal Fisheries Management Section.

1999

Yemaya, the ICSF newsletter on women and fisheries was launched from the ICSF Secretariat Office in Chennai, India. *Yemaya* regularly covers gender issues in fisheries. It has systematically documented the various forms of gender based inequalities. Its articles deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities, including recent research or meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. It also contains life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for recognition of their work within the fishery.

Also this year, the Vietnamese Women in Fisheries Network was established by Department of Fisheries (DoF)

The Lao Women in Fisheries Network was established by the Department of Fisheries and Livestock (DLF) and Living Aquatic Resources and Research Center (LAREC)

2000

Philippines researchers and other experts established the nation-wide NGO [National Network on Women in Fisheries \(WINFISH\)](#) to maintain the visibility of women and gender agenda in agency programs, undertake research and advocacy work through its biennial conference, training engagements, publications and individual members' areas of influence. WINFISH was officially incorporated in 2001.

The Thailand Women in Fisheries Network was established by the Department of Fisheries (DoF).

The Mekong Network for Gender Promotion in Fisheries Development (NGF) was formed, as a regional forum for the networks already established in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The NGF has been continuously supported by the Mekong River Commission's Fisheries Programme in organizing its regular annual meetings for updating of network activities implementation and sharing experiences on gender awareness and mainstreaming activities implemented in the four member countries.

In Australia, the national [Women's Industry Network Seafood Community \(WINSC\)](#) was formed and incorporated as a Registrable Australian Body. WINSC is the only national organisation in Australia which represents the women of the seafood industry. It provides a unique network role in tapping a valuable resource of Australia.

2001

The AFS Symposium on Women in Global Fisheries was held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, as part of the 6th Asian Fisheries Forum. After this conference, the organisers decided to broaden their theme to be "gender and fisheries (and aquaculture)."

In Bangladesh in 2001, the Government passed a law prohibiting harvest of wild shrimp post larvae (PL) from coastal river mouths. More than a decade later, this law, driven by conservation considerations, was to have unintended gender consequences when it was finally policed. Then 400,000-500,000 wild shrimp post-larvae (PL) collectors living in coastal slums felt the brunt of the law. They now urgently need new livelihood options. By 2015, with the help of the Navy and Coast Guard, all PL gears and traps were being destroyed, leading coastal people to migrate to inland cities and towns, even though they lack the skills and capital to prosper there. Women and children have become particularly vulnerable.

2002

At the SPC in the Pacific, the EU funded PROCFish project on coastal finfish and invertebrate fisheries. By the time this project was finished in 2009, it had collected and analysed a large volume of gender disaggregated catch and fishing participation data. The final report of the PROCFish Project is available [here](#).

2004

The AFS First Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF1) was held in Penang, Malaysia, at the 7th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum.

2005

In 2005 in Indonesia, the fisher women's cooperative [Puspita Bahari](#) was initiated to change the marginalization of women through this fisher woman cooperative. Puspita Bahari works with the community to learn about gender equality and income-generating activities.

2006

With the increasing feminization of the Bangladesh fish sector labor force, especially in the shrimp and aquaculture segments, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) began a capacity building program for factory workers and managers. Over several years, through the program, UNIDO produced a training manual, training of trainers to develop Master Trainers and gender focused training for factory level workers in most of the operating factories in the major coastal districts.

In the shrimp industry in Bangladesh, the Solidarity Center (SC) a US based NGO working on labor rights, lodged a Global System of Preferences (GSP) withdrawal case against Bangladesh, blaming the use of child laborers and causing Bangladesh to lose its trade preference status, and therefore many workers, including many women, to lose their jobs.

In Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, the women members of the Maharashtra Fishworkers Union succeeded, after several years of action, to get the government to accept that they had rights and that street and other markets should be protected. Later, the government assisted them to map their markets so that their rights to the public space would be protected in keeping with the Street Vendors Act of 2012.

In Tamil Nadu, India, from 2006-2015, a study was undertaken by researchers at the Central Institute for Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) to gain a picture of rural

women in small-scale aquaculture. Urban male migration and other social problems were leading to an increased number of permanently or temporarily women headed households. The nature and extent of involvement of women in aquaculture was found to vary greatly from place to place and within a place it varied according to caste, religion and position in the family hierarchy.

2007

The Asian Fisheries Society held the 2nd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF2) in Kochi, India, at the 8th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum.

2009

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines proclaimed Act No. 9710, “An Act Providing for the Magna Carta of Women,”—landmark legislation that was enacted in March 2010. Its provisions address rights, benefits and the role of women fisherfolk especially in coastal communities

2010

The 2010 FAO-NACA Global Aquaculture Conference (Phuket, Thailand) included a gender themed paper for the first time, “Sustaining aquaculture by developing human capacity and enhancing opportunities for women.” The resulting Phuket Declaration called all to “support gender sensitive policies and implement programmes that facilitate economic, social and political empowerment of women through their active participation in aquaculture development, in line with the globally accepted principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment.”

At Mahabalipuram, India, ICSF held the global workshop “[Recasting the Net: Defining a Gender Agenda for Sustaining Life and Livelihoods in Fishing Communities](#).” This was a defining event and its comprehensive report very important as an input to the consultative processes of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines, adopted in 2014.

The Spain-FAO Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (S & SE Asia) (RFLP, 2009-2013) began its gender element, working on normative products and projects in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

2011

The Spain-FAO-RFLP produced the manual “Mainstreaming gender into project cycle management in the fisheries sector.”

The AFS 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF3) was held in Shanghai, China as part of the

9th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum. Back to back with this event, FAO held the workshop “Workshop on Future Directions for Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries: Action, Research and Development.” This workshop subsequently led FAO to undertake an internal stock taking and planning exercise on “Mainstreaming Gender in Fisheries and Aquaculture.”

In South Korea, the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives adopted a Charter on Fisherwomen. The Federation of Korean Fisherwomen was launched under the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives [NFFC, or Suhypu].

2012

Arising from global FAO promotion of gender awareness in food and aquaculture, and also from the GAF3 events of 2011, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) undertook internal planning and produced the “[Gender in Fisheries Roadmap](#)” for India.

2013

The AFS 4th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF4) was held in Yeosu, South Korea.

In South Korea, 39 regional unions had a membership 7,702 fisherwomen. The Female Farmers and Fishers Act was passed to help improve the status of fisherwomen. It protects the women’s rights and interests, and gives the women professional status. State and local governments support the political, economic, social and cultural development of fisherwomen’s skills, establishes a comprehensive policy to improve the quality of life, and provides financial support. Fisherwomen’s technical training and management is being developed, and producer groups are supported. Fisherwomen’s participation in decision-making is improving, along with the women’s status in fisheries.

In the Philippines, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has drawn up a Comprehensive Gender Mainstreaming Program that integrates the gender dimension in its structures, policies, procedures and culture with gender equality as a goal. BFAR reconstituted the Gender and Development Focal Point System and has an [active Facebook page](#) promoting news of its gender equality activities.

2014

In 2014 in Bangladesh, following the disastrous Rana Plaza (garment factory) building collapse in 2013, the International Labour Organization (ILO) took over the UNIDO

fish processing factory work initiated in 2006 by UNIDO. For the shrimp factories, ILO initiated Health Risk Assessment training and the UNIDO BEST project started Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) training.

The Labor Laws 2006 were amended in 2014. Over 80 provisos were changed with the aim to provide better treatment of women workers. Explicit labor rules were enacted in 2015 for the first time.

In Indonesia, 2014 recorded a drop in female employment in the fisheries with 14.5 million women found to be work in in fisheries-related jobs, down from the 2008 women's workforce figure of 16 million. This drop was attributed largely to industrial modernization and mechanization.

The NACA-USAID MARKET gender project in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam was launched. This was the first gender project of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific. It was finalized in 2015.

2015

From 2015 in Bangladesh, the Solidarity Center (SC) ended nine years of lobbying against the shrimp industry and began to engage with the shrimp processing factories. SC started running factory based labor training for the shrimp processing workers. Of 50,000-60,000 workers in the Bangladesh fish and shrimp processing factories, the UNIDO, ILO and SC programs have trained 7,500 people in labor rights.

In Manila, Philippines, 14 civil society organizations from Southeast Asian countries met in the Regional Workshop on Management of Community-Based Coastal Resources. The Workshop discussed the importance of women's role and the need to protect their rights in small-scale fisheries and coastal resource management. 📌

Interview of Mercy Antony, fish vendor from Adimalathurai (literally means the coastal village below the hill), Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, India

This interview is by **Venugopalan N** (icsf@icsf.net), ICSF Documentation Centre

How long have you been selling fish?

I have been working for the last seven years as a fish vendor at Mukkola fish market in Kerala. We sell mostly marine fish, and, occasionally, dry fish. We reach the market either in the morning at 7 or 10 am, or in the afternoons at 2.00 pm. There are about 20 women fish vendors working at Mukkola.

What are the problems you face?

Our fish markets don't have even the most basic facilities for women to work: no toilets; no water to clean fish; no permits to sell fish without interference from male fish vendors. The market buildings have not been designed with our needs in mind, and particularly during monsoon and summer time, sitting and selling fish is most difficult here. Often, male men fish vendors misbehave with us; they are violent, and sometimes they even destroy our fish baskets. Because of this social situation, at times even consumers behave without a sense of propriety. We urgently need proper transport facilities to take our fish to fish markets.

Are you part of any union or organization?

I have studied only up to the 7th grade, and until recently, I was not aware of what we could demand as our legitimate rights as fish vendors from the Government, from the Municipal Corporation, and so on. I learnt about all this only after joining the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Union. As a member of the union, I feel I am not alone anymore and that we must collectively fight for our rights.

Are there any demands you have of the government?

Recently on TV, I listened to the budget speech of the Minister [in charge of Fisheries] outlining a number of schemes for the fishing community. Unfortunately, from experience we know that the implementation of such schemes is very poor. As fish vendors, we do not get any benefits except under MATSYAFED (Kerala State Cooperative Federation for Fisheries Development). MATSYAFED schemes are generally good, and they have also promised to set up a Women Fish Vendors' Cooperative society at Adimalathurai soon. Apart from this, we need financial assistance with low interest loans from the Government. At the moment, we pay interest rates as high as 24- to 60 percent on loans taken from private individuals and financial institutions. We also need financial assistance for house construction and children's education; identity cards for women fish vendors; women fish vendors' Cooperative societies, uniforms for selling of fish; and training in the management of Cooperative societies. 📌

YEMAYA MAMA

"Fishery Fishy Data!"



FILM

Oceans, the Voice of the Invisible

The 56 min. film clearly brings out the double side of INGOs

This review is by **Alain Le Sann** (ad.lesann@orange.fr), Honorary Member, ICSF and translated by **Daniele Le Sann**

The documentary film “Oceans, the voice of the invisible” by film maker Mathilde Jounot, is a bold step in denouncing the role played by large international non-government organizations (INGOs) such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in association with investment banks and multinational corporations, to control the oceans. The film clearly brings out the double speak of these organizations, and shows how artisanal fishworkers around the world can no longer be fooled by the rhetoric of these INGOs.

The idea of making the film to expose the dubious role of the INGOs came to Mathilde from her friend Robert Bouguéon, a Breton fisherman whom she met in 2015 when both happened to be on the same panel as jury members during the film festival “Fishermen of the World”. He suggested to her to investigate the role of big INGOs in controlling the discourse around oceans. This was not an easy project to undertake. When she first presented it to the National Cinema Centre and other

television financiers, she met with a blunt refusal, despite her credentials as a documentary film maker. The INGOs with their reach and power are considered sacred cows even within documentary film circles. However Mathilde did not give up her resolve to go ahead with her project, and, through crowd funding as well as support from local television channels and the French organization Mission de la mer (Apostleship of the sea), she was able to raise the necessary resources.




Mathilde Jounot

The 56-minute film documentary follows various conferences and discussions within the official Conference of Parties (COP) 21 in Paris in December 2015. The film reveals Maria Damanaki, former European Commissioner for Fisheries, in her new role as TNC head advocating the transformation of marine areas into huge reserves to serve tourism interests with help from the World Bank and private investment banks, as TNC has done in the Seychelles Islands. A lawyer and an academic decipher for the viewer the unholy alliance of INGOs and multinational corporations in weakening state regulation of ocean resources to the great detriment of local artisanal fishworkers.

Next we hear the voices of dissent within the COP 21. In a dark basement, amidst the roar of protest, representatives of the fishworker's organizations (WFF and WFFP) such as Riza Damanik, Herman Kumara, Sherry Pictou and Margaret Nakato denounce the privatisation of the oceans and forcefully assert the human rights of fishers. Testimonies from various artisanal fishworkers are heard. There are no INGO representatives here.

Since its start in 2008, the festival “Fishermen of the World” has presented hundreds of films on fishworkers worldwide. However, even within this milieu, this particular documentary stands out as a searing critique of INGOs and their unholy alliance with investment banks and multinational interests. Viewers reacted saying that the film was a “staggering blow” that exposed the sordid reality of INGOs. Nevertheless, the portrayal of the resistance of fishing communities across the world to these developments makes the film an optimistic one. The fishermen present at the screening said that they were “relieved to be finally understood”.

Made in French, this film deserves to be disseminated beyond the French speaking public. An English version of the film will be available soon. 



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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.