



31 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

The United Nations Ocean Conference held in New York on 5-9 June 2017, focussed on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), and called for the sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources. At the conference plenary, the Women's Major Group, representing 1300 member organizations and networks from across the world, presented a position paper, pointing out the interconnections among the various SDGs, in particular, between SDG 14 and SDG 5 (gender equality). The paper argued strongly for the recognition of universal human rights, particularly the human rights of indigenous and local communities, and women. It called for an end to fossil fuel extraction and for a "just transition" to low-carbon and truly sustainable economies. It therefore called for due recognition for the important role played by the small-scale fisheries and associated coastal communities in integrated management and securing food security.

The call for linking SDG 5 with SDG 14 was a timely reminder of the critical role played by women in promoting sustainable fishing and sustaining the livelihood of small fishing communities. However, despite this critical role, women are systematically discriminated against, both socially and economically, in the small-scale fisheries. We learn from the article 'Moving Pictures' in this issue of *Yemaya* that although women make up more than 55 per cent of the seafood industry, in roles including harvest, research, compliance, transport, and marketing, only five per cent occupy decision making positions. Many women in fishing communities have been raising their voices against this discrimination. The article 'Roadmap for Survival' for instance, informs us that women from the Sundarbans in India are no longer willing to accept the status quo, and are debating the need for women's fishworker organizations across occupational sectors with the exclusive or main participation of women.

Agency to women fishers, particularly for post-harvest work is vital for guaranteeing economic stability and food and nutritional security in fishing communities. It is critical that women's access to fish, fish processing and drying areas, transport facilities, markets, capital and credit, insurance, and new technologies be safeguarded and enhanced. Efforts must be directed, in particular, towards reducing post-capture losses, which are known to destroy up to half the catch. In this respect, the FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique, or the FTT, described in the article from the Ivory Coast, has met with considerable success, enhancing food safety and quality, improving working conditions, reducing post-harvest loss and increasing incomes.

The article from Sri Lanka describes the double struggle of women in fisheries for their rights as community members and as women, in today's post-war and post-tsunami Sri Lanka. While the problem of "disappeared" and "missing persons" is a common tale, many displaced families are strangers in their own land, awaiting restoration of their homes and lands, which, in many cases, are under occupation. This is a critical lesson in the context of increasing stress among fishing communities, whether from climate induced factors, or from human destructive factors such as war and conflict, and as the articles in this issue demonstrate, women are often the most directly impacted in these adverse circumstances. ❖



Ivory Coast	2
Profile	3
Sri Lanka	4
Milestones.....	8
India	9
What's New Webby?	10
Flims	11
Brazil.....	14
Ocean Conference	16
Q & A.....	19
Yemaya Mama.....	19
Yemaya Recommends.....	20

Brighter future

Recently introduced, an innovative processing technology promises a brighter future for women fish processors in fishing communities of the Ivory Coast

This article is based on an interview with **Micheline Dion Somplehi** (avepffa@yahoo.fr) by **Beatrice Gorez** (cffa.cape@gmail.com) in French. Translated from French by **Gildas** (digor-mor@orange.fr)

Smoked and dried fish is a vital source of food and income for many African coastal communities. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, about 20-30 per cent of the local catch in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, or Ivory Coast, is consumed as smoked fish.

A new technology, initiated by the FAO and supported by the Ivorian authorities, is now available for drying and smoking fish which reduces risks to health, enhances food safety as well as the quality of production, improves working conditions and incomes, and reduces post-capture losses.

The FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique or the FTT system, developed by a Senegalese woman engineer, includes a furnace and a device made of vegetal sponge that filters out smoke and catches its toxic elements before it reaches the fish. There is also a fat-collecting tray.

Fish smoked and dried using this system is of high quality. It can be stored for several months and distributed over long distances. The system can be installed in a shed, allowing women to carry out processing in all seasons. Earlier, when conventional techniques were used, post-harvest losses during the rainy season could be as high as 50 per cent for some products.

Micheline Dion Somplehi, chairperson of a women fish processors cooperative and coordinator of the Women's Programme of the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional Organizations (CAOPA), says: "In 2010, we established an association of women fishmongers and fish processors. In 2012, during the celebration of World Fisheries Day organized by CAOPA, we became more visible at the national level. This helped us to obtain some of the FAO pilot ovens, which have given us better working conditions and increased our production. It also takes less time to smoke the fish: this is really important because, in our communities, women are both engaged in household chores (taking care of the children, working in the kitchen) and carrying out fish processing activities."

Traditional fish smoking generates carcinogens that pose risks to the health of women processors and the young children accompanying them. The FTT technique alleviates their hard work as they are less exposed to heat, burns and smoke. "Smoking fish no longer threatens our eyes and respiratory system," comments Micheline.

Traditional techniques leave blackish residues on the processed fish, which alters taste and quality, and negatively affects sales. When women process the fish in this manner, drops of fat fall on the embers, fueling flames that burn the fish and produce toxic residues.

With the new FAO oven, the oil does not fall into the fire: it is collected on a metal tray, and can then be used as cooking oil or to produce soap for washing dishes.

The FTT oven has another significant advantage: it consumes much less firewood/charcoal. With traditional smoking, women processors need considerable amounts of firewood, which adds to the problem of deforestation, particularly in the mangrove areas.

The FTT oven uses much less fuel, and can accommodate up to five times more fish than traditional ovens. With less fuel needed per kilo of processed fish, women save on costs. This technique can also be operated with alternative and environment-friendly fuel sources including coconut husks or shells, corn cobs, millet or rice stalks.


Micheline further points out: "We must think about the future. We were able to obtain pilot ovens for some of our co-ops thanks to the FAO and government support. With the profits accruing, we have already constructed a shed in another co-op. It is now ready to house FTT ovens. We need more financing to acquire more ovens for our co-ops so that we can process more products during the high season and continue to sell during the low season. We should access more fish for processing during the low season. We are exploring the possibility of buying *faux thon* (tuna by catch) at a fair price from European tuna companies that unload at Abidjan under the EU-Ivory Coast fisheries agreement. Some positive talks have already taken place on the matter with the authorities on both sides and with the boat-owners. We also need to upgrade the landing sites with appropriate infrastructures that comply with quality and hygiene standards. Otherwise, our production will not be up to standards and we shall continue

to suffer, earning a paltry income, unable to offer a decent living to our families.”

Micheline also looks forward to a fully equipped landing site currently being built by Moroccan cooperation authorities at Locodjro, north of Abidjan. Covering 1.5 hectares, it is designed to accommodate up to 2400 fishers

and 1600 women fish processors. It will include spaces for cleaning, smoking, storing, two mechanical workshops, a cold room and an ice plant. In addition, there will be a medical unit, a nursery and sanitation facilities. These are essential services for improving the life of women processors and their families. ❏

Fish smoked and dried using this system is of high quality



Every morning Helan Jasitha Fernando gets up at 2 am and walks five kilometres from her home to her fishing hut. Dressed appropriately for fishing, she puts all her equipment into her canoe and uses her bamboo paddle to propel herself and her vessel around seven kilometres out to sea, off Talaimannar beach on the northern coast of Sri Lanka. There she joins the men who are already working, to catch prawn, shark, sardine and yellow fin tuna.

Fernando, who is 69, has been doing this job since three months after her husband died in 1999.

PROFILE

Breaking boundaries: A 69-year-old Talaimannar fisherwoman breaks social boundaries

By **Daya Neththasinha**,
Courtesy:
<http://thecatamaran.org/2016/07/25/the-69-year-old-talaimannar-fisherwoman-breaking-social-boundaries>

“I was born in Ulhitiyawa, Wennappuwa, and my husband was from Katuneriya,” she explains. “We married in 1968 but our families objected to our marriage. One day my husband went home and all of his clothes had been thrown out of the window and the door was locked to him. I went home and all my clothes had been burned. So, in 1970, we came to Talaimannar with just the clothes on our backs,” says Fernando.

Both Fernando and her husband are Sinhalese but they managed to make a new life among the Tamil people in the north of the island nation. “The sea here saved us! By 1990, we had two boats, 13 smaller boats, a cart and around a hundred nets. We also had a herd of goats.”

But then the civil war started and the couple and their family were forced to move. They had to leave everything behind and returned to Wennappuwa.

“We left there with nothing,” Fernando sighs, “and we went back with nothing.”

In 1999, Fernando’s husband passed away suddenly, leaving their six children in her sole care. So, despite the fact that she had never been fishing and did not know how to swim, she took to sea in a boat her husband

once used and went to catch food for her family.

“On my very first day I came home with a net filled with 600 rupees’ worth of fish,” Fernando says. “That was a lot of money in those days.”

Was she frightened?

Fernando says she had no choice. “There was nobody to give us any help. My husband’s rafter and my confidence were all I had left.”

“Navy officers used to stop and ask me what I was doing out there,” Fernando says smiling. “I would always tell them I was just there to do my job. Young men used to tease me. One time my rafter capsized and people came to save me.”

Fernando says she catches fish every day although sometimes it is worth LKR 3,000 (around US\$ 21) and other days only LKR 500 (around US\$ 3). She says she is certainly no longer worried about going out to sea at night.

“What would I have to be afraid of? I have walked these sands for so long. I know the sea and I know everyone in this area. I can speak Sinhala and Tamil. No man my age goes fishing the way I do and people love me for it,” she explains.

Despite the fact that her six children are all adults now and have their own jobs, Fernando wants to keep working. She has a very particular reason for this. “I have a seventh child now,” she explains.

Around 13 years ago one of her co-workers died. On his deathbed he asked her to promise to take care of his new-born son. The baby’s mother also wanted this, so Fernando adopted the boy. He started respectfully calling her *nonama*, the name by which she is now known all around the beach.

Fernando continues to pay for the boy’s schooling and upkeep. As this courageous woman, who fights the tides and the weather daily, says: “I will not beg from anyone when I am still strong enough to earn a living. So I will continue to go fishing until he is old enough to earn his own money.”

Visit the site to see a film on Fernando (<http://thecatamaran.org/2016/07/25/the-69-year-old-talaimannar-fisherwoman-breaking-social-boundaries>). ❏

A double struggle

Fishing communities, in particular women, in Sri Lanka's war and disaster ravaged regions require support

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Sri Lanka receives many tourists from all over the world, attracted by its beautiful coasts and other natural and cultural treasures. But few people know that small-scale fishing communities in Sri Lanka face difficult challenges and hardships, in particular, due to displacement and eviction from coastal beaches and lands, which have been their home and working space for many generations.

Ever since reconstruction began after the tsunami of 2004, small-scale fishing communities have faced severe problems of displacement due to the government's policy of promoting tourism and urban and industrial development, in particular at Negombo, Kalpitya, Hambantota, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara.

After Sri Lanka's civil war ended in 2009, fishing communities of the Tamil population in north Sri Lanka began facing severe hardships as they tried to rebuild their livelihoods. For decades they were denied access to their fishing grounds by the armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and yet the post-war period has not brought them much respite. Licences are provided to better equipped fishers from the southern districts of the country to fish in their northern waters. Acres of their ancestral lands continue to be under occupation by the military.

Women are in the forefront of the struggle to reclaim the rights of their communities. Many of them, in particular in the War-affected

North and East Sri Lanka, are widows and women whose husbands and other relatives are missing. They organize sit-in protests in front of military camps and local government offices in cities such as Mannar, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Killinochi, Mullaithivu, Batticaloa and Ampara. Besides struggling for their communities' rights, they also need to fight for their rights as women.

While in earlier reports on Sri Lanka (see *Yemaya* 41 and *Yemaya* 50), I have described the situation of women in the fishing communities of Batticaloa and Mannar, my visit to Sri Lanka this year included the district of Mullaithivu. The visit was intended to get a glimpse of the post-war situation and learn about the lives and work of the local fishing communities, in particular about the struggles of the women of whom I had learned through the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), a Sri Lankan national small-scale fisheries' organization, and other media.

The fishing community of the Mullaithivu district in Northeast Sri Lanka went through tremendous devastation during the last phase of the War, and before that, the tsunami and decades of displacement. Almost every family has lost one or more persons; most of their homes were devastated and their fishing livelihoods were brought to a standstill. Yet the post-war period has not brought any real improvement in their lives. According to government data, in 2012-13, Mullaithivu had the highest percentage of poor households in the country at 24.7 per cent. The District Secretariat records reveal that Mullaithivu has nearly 6000 women who are the sole breadwinners in the family. At least 5000 are widows, many of them being 'war-widows'. Over 750 people are reported missing in the district.

Writing in in May this year in the *Daily Mirror*, one of Sri Lanka's English language national newspapers, the Sri Lankan researcher Ahilan Kadigamar, a regular visitor to Mullaithivu, expressed his concern: "After the War, the Rajapaksa regime further humiliated this population by interning them in camps, undermined their economic revival with militarized restrictions on fishing, and intimidated them for years with surveillance. Sadly, even after regime change two years ago, their economic situation has become worse. Their fishing livelihoods have been undermined by the arrival of hordes of fishing enterprises from other regions.

CORNELIE QUIST



The livelihoods of women here have been further undermined after the War by the hordes of fishing enterprises that have arrived from other regions

Ironically, it is the Fisheries Ministry responsible for developing sustainable local fisheries that is at the centre of the current controversy. Excessive licences are granted to hundreds of gill-net fishermen and companies that send divers to collect sea cucumber for exports. The large inflow of licenced fishermen has also provided cover for unlicensed fishermen and illegal fishing practices including the use of light course and dynamite, which are all draining the ability of the Mullaitivu fishing community to recover.”

Our visit to Mullaitivu is between late June and early July 2017. Every morning, we go to the beautiful beach in a village near Mullaitivu town, where we mingle with the local fishermen and women amongst colourful fibreglass boats illustrated with the names of donor agencies, to observe their work and listen to their stories. Earlier, we had befriended a Tamil fisherman who lived in a refugee camp in India for 20 years and only recently returned to his home in Mullaitivu. Now he is our ‘interpreter’. There are a lot of people on the beach, both men and women, helping with pushing boats on shore, cleaning nets, reorganizing hook and line and gill nets, and sorting the catch. “In our community there are many jobless people and also many widows. We are all one family, we help each other,” we are told.

The community does not seem to have boats for every fisher family. We learn that after the tsunami and the War, several NGOs came to donate boats on loan. Many fishers already had high debts, and so, only a limited number could afford to purchase boats and nets. Their daily catch does not look very big: on the average, one boat has about four kilos of big, commercially valuable fish (such as ribbon fish, tuna, barracuda) and a few kilos of small fish, primarily sardine. The big fish is taken to the traders who wait with their weighing equipments and refrigerated vans in small sheds near the beach. Their vans announce where they have come from and it seems that most are from the far south of the country. The small fish is mostly kept aside, and distributed among those who are helping or sold to local people.

We are invited by a friendly fisher couple to their home. Every morning, the woman brings fresh tea and food to the beach for her husband and the helpers. She is also responsible for distributing and selling the small fish. We sit under a big mango tree in front of their simple home. “This mango tree was planted by my uncle 40 years ago. Like

us, it has survived both the tsunami and the War,” she says, adding softly, “We are so happy that there is peace now.” She and her husband lost three daughters during the 2004 tsunami. Twice her house was destroyed, once during the tsunami and another time during the last phase of the War in 2009, when there was continuous shelling and bombing. They lived in a refugee camp for two years. They have one son left, who is fifteen now and goes to school. With support from NGOs, they were able to rebuild their house and restart their livelihood. “I love my husband and son very much. I never want to leave them or my community. We all are one big family here and help each other,” she says with renewed strength in her voice. Her husband smiles broadly and hugs his wife. Then he adds, “We love our way of life but we are worried because our catches are declining.” He explains how after the War, Indian trawlers intruded in their waters using destructive gears to catch shrimp. (On 6 July 2017, the Sri Lankan Parliament approved a law that prohibits bottom trawling. This ban on trawling particularly hits Indian fishers from Tamil Nadu, who engage in bottom trawling and are often found trespassing into Sri Lanka’s territorial waters.)

Lately, fishers from far away regions of Sri Lanka have been coming in big numbers to Mullaitivu attracted by its rich fish resources. “We are willing to share our resources, but the livelihood and future of our local community need to be protected. In our community, we live and work in harmony, but we feel so powerless to protect ourselves against these outsiders that come to destroy our livelihood,” says the fisherman sadly. We ask about the big holiday resort built on the beach in the corner of the lagoon. We had been told it was built by a German and would open soon. To us the beach looked too small to be shared by both the fisher people and the tourists. The fisher couple looks at us with uncertainty. Our question, about whether they were consulted about the construction of the resort in their village and on the beach where they work, seems to surprise them.

On our walks along the coast to Mullaitivu town, we observe the many ruins of houses, still not rebuilt. We are moved to see that real efforts are being made to decorate gates and house fronts as beautifully as possible, as if in an attempt to bring colour and life back into the environment of destruction.

Mullaitivu’s beaches are beautiful and clean, but every time our path is blocked by

It is very important to continually extend support to the campaigns of these courageous women’s groups

a military camp and are we sent back by the soldiers on duty. They are very friendly, but somehow we feel the War is not over yet.

Arriving at Mullaithivu town, it is impossible not to notice the group of women sitting in a shed with many portraits of mostly young people, in front of the District Government Agent Office. They are women whose family members disappeared during and short after the civil war ended in 2009. "I 'surrendered' my only son to the LTTE during the final stages of their battle against the Sri Lankan armed forces and since then he is missing," says one of the women, who is from a fishing community. She firmly believes that her son is alive. Being a widow, having the support of her only son is of enormous importance to her. The other women are already engaged in a sit-in for more than 150 days demanding that the national government disclose the names of their near and dear who are now missing—political prisoners, detainees and those who surrendered to the armed forces. "Without knowing where our loved ones are, we cannot pick up our lives again. Everything feels meaningless," she says with deep sadness. Together with women of other areas in the former War zones who have joined this protest, they have met and petitioned various commissions and government officials. Till now the list of names has not been released.

We also go to Keppapilavu, a village on the other side of the lagoon, where 138 families held a sit-in protest in front of a military camp to reclaim their ancestral lands occupied by the army. As their lands and beaches had been occupied by the army for decades, they had lost access to their traditional livelihood activities.

We are led to a shed put up at the entrance of an army camp. It is covered with banners that announce, in Sinhalese and Tamil, the main issues and demands. We sit in a circle with the protesters, most of whom are women, and listen to their stories. They had started their sit-in on the 9th of February this year and today was already Day 121 of their protest. The military had cut off electricity and drinking water facilities and blocked the road. Several women had fallen ill due to the difficult conditions of their long sit-in. In one case of a woman who developed a serious heart condition, the ambulance could not reach the sit-in site. Their places of worship have been made inaccessible by the road blocks. "We have lost everything. We have been running for a long time—displaced continuously. When will we return to our homes and lands? I am an old woman now.

I want to die on my ancestral lands. These lands won't be there for our children if we don't continue our protest," says one woman, among the courageous many who have been in the protest from the beginning.

Among the affected families are 60 'war-widows'. Several have their sons 'disappeared'.

The leadership of the protest is mostly in the hands of women. They have petitioned many commissions and met countless officials, both at the district and central level. They even held a protest in front of the President's office in Colombo. Many politicians came to meet them and their representatives even met Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe. However, only a few families got their lands back. The majority is still waiting.

Why is this the case, we ask? The women say that it primarily has to do with a lack of genuine concern of the politicians and authorities. "Politicians in neither Colombo nor Jaffna know anything about how we live in Mullaithivu or the hardships we undergo," says Jeyaseeli, an outspoken woman leader of the Keppapilavu families. The women feel abandoned. They are convinced that the central government is not interested in allowing the people of the former War zones to come up in life, and that protecting the interests of the army is their priority.

After the War, the army began to exploit the lands they had occupied in the north and east. They now cultivate cash crops for additional income and compete with local farmers. Sometimes they lease out large tracts of the lands they occupy to big companies for commercial crops. On beaches, the army participates in the construction and operation of tourist resorts. Some of these activities are detailed here. This is all lucrative business and therefore the army is not willing to give up these lands without proper compensation by the government. The women in Keppapilavu have heard that the army has received SLR 5,000,000 (US\$ 32,895) compensation by the government for 189 acres of occupied agriculture land at Keppapilavu. But the lands have not yet been released. Further, these 189 acres are also only a part of the 482 acres that the villagers claim to be their ancestral lands.

The return of their land is of vital importance to them, emphasize the women of Keppapilavu. "Before the War we had a good life, we had our own houses and our own livelihoods on the land or on the shore," they say, adding that only when they are back on their ancestral land can they feel at peace; only then can they pick up their lives again

and rebuild their livelihood. “We can then regain our self-confidence and give up our lives as ‘losers,’” says one of the women. How do you survive now, we ask? They tell us that they live in temporary houses with little or no facilities, or stay with relatives. Because families have expanded in the last decade, they are now forced to live in crowded conditions. They are dependent on irregular daily wage labour and odd jobs in exchange for a small income or some food. There is not enough work, the women say. Mullaithivu is dependent on agriculture and fisheries, and local fishers and farmers find it hard to invest, facing not only threats from external sources but also declining production. This year it is even worse because of the drought, the women say. They now make and sell food items in the village or package grocery items in small quantities, but they can’t really make a living from this.

Last year, Hirdarami, one of Sri Lanka’s largest apparel companies, built a factory at Mullaithivu. The company worked closely with the Sri Lankan army. The army not only helped the company find a suitable location for the factory but also allowed a workers’ training centre to be set up within the premises of its headquarters.

Jobs in this company are only for the happy few. Usually these are young unmarried women from families with friendly connections with the army. It is common knowledge that the women workers in the factory must work standing on their feet all day in order to earn a few hundred rupees daily.

Do women face different problems from the men of their community, we ask. The women unanimously answer ‘yes’. Women face huge economic hardships, they say, in particular, the War widows and other single women heading households. Daily labour opportunities in agriculture and fisheries are few and mostly given to men. Daily wages for men are also almost twice as much as for women. Women must walk long distances, sometimes up to six or seven kilometres, for a daily wage job and, despite the lack of safety on the roads, they return home late, after dark. Women are also primarily responsible for household chores, and because wells have dried up due to drought, they have to walk miles to fetch water. Most women take loans, particularly for the education of their children or to set up some small business, and many find themselves deeply trapped in debt. Some women are even forced to go into prostitution for income and food. There are some governmental and NGO income



Mullaithivu-women’s protest release list of disappeared children and relatives. War widows and other single women heading households face economic hardships.

generation programmes that teach women to sew, make sweets or *pappadam* (a lentil-based cracker), but these do not help generate meaningful incomes because of marketing constraints. And there is also discrimination in the selection of beneficiaries, the women say. Often the poorest women are not selected, particularly if they are known to have engaged in prostitution or are suspected of having connections with LTTE fighters. One of the women recalls how she used to dry fish in earlier times. The income was meagre but regular. “Now that has become impossible!” she says. After the War, the Rajapakse regime introduced a new system of Rural Fisheries Societies (RFS) through which it extends financial support for economic activities in the fisheries. However, not only did these RFSs tend to exclude women, they turned out to be highly prone to political patronage as well as destructive to the long tradition of fisheries cooperatives through which the local fisheries were managed. The present government has not changed this policy. Women, with the exception of the very few who represent their husband’s business, participate neither in the RFSs nor in the fishermen’s cooperatives.

“Both government and NGO programmes generally make people compete with each other and so, they divide us,” says Jayaseeli sadly. However, if there is a silver lining in the dark clouds that face her and other women in fishing communities, it is the support of NAFSO, which has been organizing leadership training as well as raising awareness around the international guidelines governing tenure and the small-scale fisheries. With the support of NAFSO, the women have united with other women at the district level and formed an organization called Thenral. “Earlier we had no voice. We did not know how to confront

government officials and politicians with our problems and how to negotiate with them for our rights,” says Jayaseeli, “Earlier we lived in isolation. Now we have links with people in other parts of the country, particularly with women’s groups and groups from the southern districts. They could learn about our struggles and extend solidarity just as we also extended our solidarity for their struggles.”

Due to her leadership skills, Jeyaseeli was selected to be part of the Sri Lanka civil society delegation for the fifth review of Sri Lanka by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR) at Geneva in June this year. The UNCESCR is a body of 18 independent experts responsible for monitoring the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by state parties. It was an unforgettable experience for Jayaseeli, who is extremely happy with the recommendations passed. Particularly noteworthy are Recommendation 50 of the 5th Periodic Report of Sri Lanka, which asks the Sri Lanka government to “end military involvement in commercial and other civilian activities and establish and develop a national land policy, in line with the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission,” and Recommendation 54 that asks the government “to ensure that women headed households have access to livelihood assistance, housing and land in their own name, as well as low

interest or interest free credit schemes. It also urges the state party to ensure those officials who commit sexual exploitation, bribery and harassment are prosecuted and sentenced, and victims to have access to remedy and compensation.”

Subsequent to our visit, a delegation from Keppapilavu was received by the Ministry of Resettlement in Colombo. There, on the 26th of July, they were informed about the decision of the central government to release their lands in a phased manner within a period of six months—110 acres, 30 acres and finally 70 acres. The Keppapilavu people responded by resolving not to give up their protest “until they were all settled and able to drink a cup of tea on their ancestral lands”.

Upon returning from Sri Lanka, I have been reflecting upon the question of what visitors, be they development practitioners, researchers or just tourists like me, can do by way of supporting Sri Lanka’s fishing communities. Given the existing power dynamics, these fishing communities will not be free from the existential threats they face. The burden will fall mainly on the shoulders of the women, who, admirably, still find the strength to stand up for their rights. In one way or another, it is very important to continually extend support to the campaigns of these courageous women’s groups in the north and south of Sri Lanka as well as to organizations like NAFSO that support them. Writing this report is only one step. 📄



Milestones

By **Venugopalan N**
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Towards gender-equitable fisheries

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently released the publication titled *Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development—A handbook*. Prepared by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), this handbook aims at providing practical guidance on how to achieve gender-equitable small-scale fisheries in the context of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication or the SSF Guidelines.

Women play a key role in the small-scale fisheries, in particular in post-harvest activities relating to processing, marketing and trade, but their role remains undervalued, a gap that this handbook tries to address. The target of this handbook is twofold: (i) policy makers/public administrators working with small-scale fisheries will be informed about ways to ensure gender-sensitive policies, investments and small-scale fisheries sector support, (ii) CSOs/Fisheries organizations will receive guidance on how to actively support the empowerment of

women in small-scale fisheries. However, this publication is also relevant for other audiences who can provide a support function to other key audiences such as academics, researchers, donors and their resource partners.

The preparatory process for this handbook included the gathering of case studies and illustrative examples of small-scale fishing communities and government agencies from all over the world, to highlight and interpret the principles and recommendations of the SSF Guidelines in support of gender equality.

An online survey as well as two regional workshops (in Costa Rica and in Senegal) gathered input from people who have worked in the sector for many years and at many levels, including government, civil society organizations (CSOs), research and academia, and regional organizations and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). On behalf of ICSF, Mariette Correa coordinated the preparatory process and the draft was authored by Nilanjana Biswas.

To access the handbook, please visit <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7419e.pdf> 📄

Roadmap for survival

In a two-day interactive workshop, women fishworkers in Kolkata, India, discussed strategies for future struggle and organizing

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The contribution of women fishworkers in India has been at least equal to that of men. However, despite being a colossal human resource that plays a significant role in food security, income and employment generation, women have been systematically discriminated against, both socially and economically.

Based in West Bengal in India, the Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF), a fishworkers' organization, has been facing many difficulties in mobilizing women workers. At a time when we are witnessing an all round attack on natural resource based livelihood options, including fishing, the mobilization of women fishworkers to protect water, fish and fisherpeople is of critical importance.

Experience has taught the DMF that in order to build independent women fishworker's organizations, two factors are important: one, the identification of the problems that women face both as fishworkers and as women, as well as the means to address these problems; and two, the importance of building a separate organization for women fishworkers.

In that context, the DMF organised two workshops with women fishworker activists. The first was held in collaboration with the Rabindra Bharati University on 30-31

March 2016; and the second was organized at Namkhana in West Bengal on 1-2 June 2017. These two workshops were complementary in their aims. The first tried to identify the problems faced by women fishworkers and means to address the problems. The second tried to identify the importance of building a separate organization for women fishworkers.

Building on the observations, findings and recommendations of the workshops, the DMF then organized a state level workshop on 15-16 June 2017, at Seva Kendra in Kolkata, in collaboration with two organizations, DISHA and ActionAid. Titled 'Women Fishworkers in West Bengal—Road Map for the Struggle to Survive,' the workshop witnessed the participation of 40 women fishworker representatives from six districts of West Bengal, three women fishworker leaders from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, four representatives from ActionAid and DISHA, and eight office bearers of DMF and its branches.

The inaugural session was chaired by the President of DISHA, Santanu Chacraverti. Welcoming the participants, Sasanka Dev, Secretary of DISHA, pointed out that such workshops were very important to develop a better understanding of the issues that women fishworkers face. Following a round of self-introduction by the participants, Milan Das, General Secretary, DMF, delivered the opening address for the workshop. He highlighted the activities pursued by the DMF in organizing the women fishworkers in West Bengal, emphasizing the important role played by women activists. Next, Jesu Rethinam, a woman fishworker leader from Tamil Nadu, spoke on the national perspective of the women fishworkers' struggle. She stressed upon the need for strengthening their struggles at the national level and listed out several impending threats to the livelihood of fishworkers, including the dilution of the Coastal Regulation Zone 2011 Notification, which provided fishing communities a measure of protection; development measures such as the creation of industrial and economic corridors along the coasts; and the Sagarmala project, a port modernization venture. The session concluded with an address by the session chair.

The next session, on livelihood issues and concerns, was chaired by Shilpa Nandy, Executive Member, DISHA. Two presentations were made. The first discussed the findings

SOMENATH BHATTACHARJEE



Inaugural session of the workshop on Women Fishworkers in West Bengal—Road Map for the Struggle to Survive, 15-16 June 2017, Kolkata, India

The mobilization of women fishworkers to protect water, fish and fisherpeople is of critical importance

of a primary study conducted on women fishworkers in West Bengal. The second discussed the conclusions of the two workshops held earlier on women fishworkers' issues. Pradip Chatterjee made the first presentation. He presented the main findings of the study, which included the status of women fishworkers and the problems they face at different levels, for example, with respect to family, society, education, financial inclusion, income, occupation and self-organization. Shilpa Nandy, who made the second presentation, pointed out that the two earlier workshops were actually complementary to each other: one came out with detailed recommendations on the demands of different categories of women fishworkers, while the other detailed the need for separate organizational initiatives for women fishworkers to carry forward their demands.

The next session started with the screening of a documentary on the women canoe fishers of Kultoli that depicted the lives and livelihood struggles of women fishing in the difficult waters of the mangrove-rich Sundarbans, who face the risk of tiger and crocodile attacks on the one hand, and of torture and harassment by staff of the forest department, on the other.

The third session, chaired by Manasi Bera, Executive Member, DMF, was on organizational issues and concerns. Milan Das introduced the idea of a separate women's organization and the possible forms such an organization might take. After that, the women

fishworker participants joined a group exercise on organizational planning. The participants formed themselves into four groups, according to their occupational categories, to work out suggestions and recommendations with respect to possible organizational forms for women fishworker organizations to take up their issues.

Thereafter, these groups presented their main suggestions. These included forming women fishworker organizations in various occupational sectors with the exclusive or main participation of women; forming women fishworker platforms at all organizational levels of and in all areas covered by the DMF, and also, the need for adequate and effective representation of women in the various DMF committees.

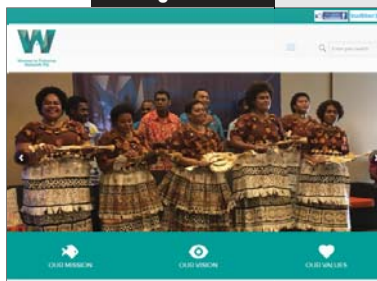
Pradip Chatterjee, in a special rejoinder, recalled the experience of women's participation in the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) and the efforts taken by leaders like Thomas Kochery and Harekrishna Debnath in the matter. He also pointed out some of the limitations that may be encountered in the effort and commented on the role that women's organizations can play in producing and activating women's leadership in both fishworkers' unions and in society at large. He stressed however that the issue has political and cultural significance and linkages, and that these need to be understood by the women leaders.

Manasi Bera ended the session with concluding remarks. ❏

The Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji

<https://womeninfisheriesfiji.org/>

What's New, Webby?



By Venugopalan N
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This website is a rich trove of information about the Women in Fisheries Network—Fiji (WiFN-Fiji), a not-for-profit organization working to strengthen the involvement, and improve the conditions, of women in Fiji's fisheries sector.

WiFN-Fiji was established to fulfil several key objectives. These include supporting, strengthening and empowering women engaged in the fisheries; supporting and evaluating pilot fisheries projects; supporting research that contributes to sustainable fisheries, livelihoods and food security; making effective interventions in national policy; conducting policy and advocacy campaigns amongst researchers,

activists and policy makers; providing a forum to help build expertise in the field of women in fisheries; and, finally, disseminating information on the role of women in fisheries.

WiFN-Fiji works in partnership with other non-governmental organizations, government ministries, and national and regional agencies in deciding, designing and implementing its activities. The organization also has an interest in ensuring the sector is supported by an appropriate policy environment that takes the role of women into account.

Apart from the activities of WiFN-Fiji, the website also carries community stories, films and information about trainings and workshops. ❏

Moving pictures

A video competition attracted a fascinating set of entries on the lives and work of women in the fisheries across the world

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Women are active participants in the fishing sector. Nearly half of those who earn incomes from the fisheries are women, and the proportion is much higher in the case of aquaculture. In the fisheries, women and men work together, women being heavily employed in the post-harvest sector. In certain regions, women work not just in post-harvest but in all aspects of the sector. For some, it is their mainstay; for others, it is a supporting activity.

All these aspects of women's work in the fisheries were brought to life on film in the entries submitted for a video competition on 'Women in Seafood', that was announced recently, in preparation for the World Seafood Congress to be held in Iceland in 2017. The organizers hoped that this would provide a platform for sharing stories about the status, of women in the seafood industry, the problems they face and potential solutions. The competition attracted 14 entries from all over the world.

The videos were from different parts of the world, representing the diversity of women's roles in fisheries. A common feature of these videos was that they often relied on interviews with women in the sector, filmed at work, who answered questions even as their hands were busy sorting, cleaning, peeling and filleting. Clearly, time was of the essence and not to be wasted, for after this work was done, there remained the housework to be completed. Most of the women featured in the videos, especially from the less developed countries were mired in poverty, and so, earning to maintain their families was of great importance. But for those from the developed world, the focus was more on environmental sustainability and responsible fishing.

The winner of the competition was the film titled *The Women of Petatán*, made by Carmen Pedroza-Gutiérrez. This five-minute video, which focuses on fish filleters from a fishing village bordering Lake Chapala in Mexico, features a set of candid interviews.

As women steadily fillet piles of carp and other fish, they explain why they have taken on this work. The wages are piece rate, which means no fixed hours, and the women get paid for what they do. The flexibility is important as they have to take care of their homes and children. Some begin to work at an early age, sometimes soon after leaving primary school as extra family income becomes necessary. Others join the sector because they prefer this work to cleaning houses or working in the fields. The money they earn they may spend on themselves or on their families as circumstances demand. Injuries are the greatest fear as cutting themselves on a sharp knife may warrant stitches and then 'who will provide the food when they take a break'?

Three other videos also focussed on the post-harvest processing sector.

ICAR-CIFE: Women in Seafoods by Gomathy.V is about processing units in the Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu, one of India's coastal states. Besides working in these units, women also participate in the harvest of crabs which are then processed for export. The processing sector is dominated by young women, mostly from the fishing community. While the film provides a lot of statistical information, there are technical glitches related to voice-over and subtitling which interfere with the viewing experience.

Women in Salted Fish Industry at Tambak Lorok by Zahrah Izzaturrahim looks at the lives of the women in the salted fish industry in Tambak Lorok, the biggest fishing village in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The video includes brief interviews with women who buy, process and sell salted fish. The money earned often forms a significant proportion of the family income and, as always, the work is in addition to the household work of women. This recognition of women's work and their needs is important but greater attention could have been paid to the difficulties faced at home and the workplace.

Gutting for Living: Unromantic tale of fishermen's wives, the title of the documentary made by Prasad Kaushalya Dodangodage, featuring fisherwomen from Negumbo, Sri Lanka, is a bit misleading. While the film does begin with a focus on fish processors whose work is to gut fish meant for drying, there is a sudden and inexplicable shift to the relatively

wealthier class of women fish sellers in Negumbo fish market.

The film begins with the processing of dry fish by women who are seen cleaning and cutting fish brought ashore in huge baskets. Sharp knives in hand, the work proceeds at a fast pace since the money earned is proportional to the quantity of fish processed. The temporary shelters these women work in offer only a modicum of meagre shade. But for those who have to dry the fish on coir mats or plastic sheets out in the open, there is no option but to work in the harsh sun. These are women whose lives are poverty stricken. Lakshmi, a fish processor, describes the work, as her hands keep busy cutting fish. For most women, she says, their work supports the work the men do; for example, they may repair fishing nets. They take up these tasks only after their household chores are finished. They may work together as a team or as couples. Lakshmi is clear that she does not want her children to follow this occupation. Thereafter, the story suddenly moves on to the Negumbo fish market, which is dominated by women fish vendors who are relatively well-off. From there, it journeys on to explore the role of women in Sri Lanka's fisheries sector and the export potential of the sector. From Negumbo's fish market where women rule, we move to the second largest fish market in Mexico Zaponan, Jalisco, Mexico, where also women dominate. But here is an altogether different atmosphere.

Business Women in a Wholesale Fish Market by Carmen Pedroza-Gutiérrez shows that women work in every position including positions of leadership. The president of the market is a woman. More and more women are going out fishing and doing what used to be men's work, including filleting. There is increased understanding about women's rights and the need to get organized.

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, the focus today is on environmental sustainability. *Afashionado* by Hana Nelson talks about a group of fishmongers who work to provide seafood to customers in the most transparent way possible. They connect harvesters—low impact fishers and small-scale aquaculturists—and customers, and through education and awareness, also promote sustainable seafood. This approach seems credible and the viewer is left feeling that it should garner greater support and become a worldwide movement.

Women's roles in the seafood sector have been mostly in the post-harvest sector. But why should it be so? Is it possible for women, if they so desire, to be integrated into a traditionally male sector—working as crew to carry out the activities of a long distance vessel?

Women on Board by Maria Caldiero is the result of a research and participative observation under an initiative named Project Redmar where the focus was not merely on harvesting but also on gender, safety and environment related issues. Currently, no crew in Spanish fishing vessels are women though they may be present as scientific observers. The film focuses on a woman named Ascensió, who emerges as a role model for other women entering the sector.

"It is time to start the conversation to enable change, considering the role women play in the industry," is the message from the film titled *Seafood Women Making a Difference* by Jen Shaw, which is about the women in the seafood industry in Australia. The film shows how, despite the fact that women make up more than 55 per cent of the seafood community in all facets, from harvesting to research, compliance, transport, and marketing, barely five per cent are decision- and change-makers in the boardroom or in senior management. Women's representation at top levels is well below the average, as compared to other primary sectors. To achieve balanced outcomes, there needs to be greater gender diversity, and women in the seafood industry should gain greater all-round visibility.

Similar thoughts are echoed in *Something Happens with Fishing: An original idea by ARVI*, a film made by Cooperativa de Armadores de Pescadel Puerto de Vigo from Vigo, Spain. Through a series of questions and answers, the film establishes the importance of fishing in terms of generating employment and food security, as well as of the team work involved.

Aportes de las Mujeres en las Pesquerías de Pequeñaescala or *Women's Contributions to Small-scale Fisheries* is by CoopeSoliDar. Through the voices of many women working in the small-scale sector in fisheries in Costa Rica, it shows the variety of women's work in the sector and the pride women take in it, no matter how hard the labour. These women believe they deserve recognition. They believe that a national fisherwomen agenda is needed so that their voices may reach relevant political bodies.

To ensure that one's voice is heard at the highest level means a lot of hard work. *Journey for a Voice* by Leonie Noble is a film from the Abrolhos Islands off the western coast of Australia. It shows the kind of effort that is needed for the voices of women workers in the predominantly rural, seafood industry to reach the Senate: a 4000 km journey that starts at dawn with a walk to the jetty to drive the dinghy to an airstrip two islands away, followed by the first of the four flights needed to reach the capital, Canberra, 12 hours and three time zones away. The journey certainly helps to put things in perspective!


Challenges of Women in Seafood by Ngozi Margaret Oguguah does not easily fall into any category. It simply gives a quick view of the state of fishers in Sagbokoji village, Lagos State, Nigeria. A riverine village settlement near Lagos port, it has only a primary school and though the women who sell fish do not want their daughters to do the same, there appear to be few alternatives even for those who have schooling. Some of the women fish sellers were born into families where fishing was the mainstay; others entered the sector independently and learnt by watching others. With no access to basic facilities like hospitals, water supply and power, the community's poverty emerges sharply against the backdrop of huge cranes and other infrastructure of Lagos port.

Some of the films highlight the important issues of self-sufficiency and food security. *Making Waves: Rethinking Seaweed Farming for Women's Empowerment*, a film by Cecile Brugere, highlights the three-decade-old seaweed farming activities supported by Sea PoWer, an organization that works with

communities of women across East Africa. Aerial shots show rectangular patches of seagrass farms in water, with the higher value seaweed farms in deeper waters, an innovation to overcome the problems associated with traditional peg and rope seaweed farming as global temperatures rise. This initiative by SeaPoWer is supported by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. While the film addresses important issues, the new tubular net, apparently an easier technology to operate, could have been better explained in the video.

In Barisal District, Bangladesh, not the sea but household ponds are the focus for improved food security. *Gill Nets Boost Women's Involvement in Aquaculture in Bangladesh* by Kate Bevitt, shows how a simple net that can be operated from the pond bank can release women from dependence on men to harvest fish. Women do not enter the pond to harvest fish and men are not always available to do this. Gill nets that can be handled from the bank have helped women to harvest small varieties of fish, and women have also been taught to cook the fish so as to optimise nutrition, thus enhancing food security.

A picture is worth a thousand words, and when it is a moving picture, the impact is greater still. Images that bring alive the harsh realities of life and also the power of change are absolutely essential to get the story across. These films are a testimony to the dynamism, determination and dedication of the women in the seafood sector.

For more information, and to watch these films, visit <https://www.womeninseafood.com/videos?cn=bWVudGlvbg%3D%3D> 



Building knowledge

A report on the 13th Women's World
& Fazendo Gênero 11 held in Brazil recently

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The Women's Worlds Congress was organized with the aim of providing a forum for global debate beyond the North-South perspective. Held from 31 July to 4 August 2017, in the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) at Florianópolis, Brazil, the Congress featured an interesting session on 'Transformations, Connections, Displacements of Feminism: Gender, work, educational formation, and traditional communities,' provided the space for discussions on innovative feminist studies and activism in various walks of life. This session, organized by Dr Maria do Rosário de Fátima Andrade Leitão from the Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, and Dr. Maria Helena Santana Cruz from the Universidade Federal de Sergipe, helped establish a dialogue between the diversity of scientific and popular knowledge.

The scope of the session was defined as "scientific studies analysing the conditions of life in traditional communities, their unequal access to political actions and the space of women in communities of fisherwomen and

fishermen; and the equal participation of women and men at all levels of political decision-making processes in public and private spaces".

Seven studies were presented, analysing the roles and work of women in small scale and artisanal fisheries, and their gendered relations within fishing communities. The studies were located variously in freshwater, lagoon, estuarine, marine and continental ecosystems. From Brazil, Hellebrandt and Galvão made a presentation on women in fishing activities in the South while Abreu and Alencar, and Diógenes and colleagues, talked about women in fisheries in the north; Nascimento and Lima presented a case study from the northeast of Brazil. Further, Pedroza presented a case study of freshwater and marine fisheries in Mexico; and Souza and colleagues presented a bibliographic analysis of the research done in Brazil on women in fisheries.

Pedroza from Mexico described gender relations in the community of Petatán on Lake Chapala as well as in the fishing community in Yucatan. While analysing the role of women along the value chain in the lucrative sea cucumber fisheries, she discussed the social and economic costs borne by them. She described the health consequences suffered by women who remain standing for many hours as they carry out fish processing.

ADRIANA ABREU



At the Women's Worlds Congress held from 31 July to 4 August 2017 in Brazil, participants opined that the role of women in fisheries was devalued because of the lack of recognition for their activities

She also discussed the social impacts of high profit margins, including the effect on families and communities, and of sex work fuelled by the money that sea cucumber fishery generates.

In Brazil, the study by Nascimento and Lima highlighted the role played by the Quilombola women in community struggles, in the Cumbe /Aracati mangrove swamps in the State of Ceará, to defend their territorial and livelihood rights. The Quilombola community is descended from fugitive slaves from colonial days in Brazil. The community's livelihood has been severely threatened by conflicting economic activities, including the installation of wind energy in dune fields, and shrimp farming in mangroves; activities which are a violation of the community's constitutionally guaranteed rights to livelihood.

The issue of access rights to natural resources was also the focus of studies by Galvão and Hellebrandt in southern Brazil. Galvão highlighted the impact of port activities on the ecological system of the Patos Lagoon estuary. She explained how port activities impacted the livelihood of fishing communities in Rio Grande in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. She described the various adaptive strategies that the community's women were engaged in, both in the fishing sector and outside, including taking up temporary jobs. She pointed out how traditional fisheries management perpetuated gender inequality.

Hellebrandt's critique of fisheries management was based on two experiences involving women in a fishing community in Pelotas in the State of Rio Grande do Sul: one, pertaining to a religious festival, and the other, to a cooperative ice-making venture. Thus, the involvement of women in both cultural and economic activities established their identity as fisherwomen, an identity that went beyond the narrow definition of the "professional artisanal fisherman" in Brazil. This definition is used to guarantee social security benefits in Brazilian fishing but excludes a large number of women who do not participate directly in catching fish. She therefore criticized the restrictive boundaries imposed by formal fisheries management systems.

Women's agency was highlighted in the work of Abreu and Alencar. Their study described the construction of the Jaruá Fisheries Agreement, whose purpose was to manage the *pirarucu* (Arapaima gigas) fishery



Women filleting fish in the community of Petatán, Michoacán, México.

in Marimaruá in the State of Amazonas. The authors discussed how daily practices contradicted the formal dichotomy used in most discourses, on water as "space for men" versus land as "space for women". They highlighted the critical role of women act in different stages and spaces of the fishing activity.

In another study on the Amazon region, Diógenes et al. described daily lives of women fishers from the communities of São Sebastião da Brasília e Santo Antônio da Catispera, in the municipality of Parintins in the State of Amazonas. According to the authors, fishing freshwater shrimp was one of the main sources of income in the community, in which women were also involved throughout the value chain, fishing and selling shrimp in the municipal market. However, the role of women was devalued because of the lack of recognition for their activities.

Souza presented a bibliographical review of Brazilian studies on women in fisheries. She updated and presented a status report reviewing texts from the 1970s to 2017. The research addressed many of the themes highlighted in the works described here. ❏

The involvement of women in both cultural and economic activities established their identity as fisherwomen, an identity that went beyond the narrow definition of the "professional artisanal fisherman"

In the name of future generations

The Women's Major Group had the opportunity to present a position paper at the United Nations Ocean's Conference held in New York in June this year

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The Women's Major Group (WMG) was created at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. Since then, the Group has been recognized by the United Nations (UN) in its deliberations on Sustainable Development, and since 1996 in the United Nations Environment Programme. With over 1300 member organizations and networks from every region of the world, the Group has called for joint efforts for the conservation, sustainability and fair use of ocean resources; a defence of the Commons; and careful attention to social, economic and ecological sustainability in all oceans-related decisions arising from the first ever United Nations Ocean Conference held in New York between 5 and 9 June 2017.

On behalf of the WMG, I presented a Position Paper at the Plenary Session of the UN General Assembly on 7 June 2017, outlining the Group's demand to safeguard the rights and responsibility of the people of the seas and ocean, and calling for respect of all cultures, diverse voices and ways of life, without placing economic interests as the central or sole concern.

The full text of the Position Paper is given below:

As women from all over the world, and represented by the Women's Major Group made up of over 1300 groups and networks from every region, we recognize the importance and timeliness of this meeting. We must join efforts towards the conservation, sustainability and fair use of our ocean resources, defend the Commons, and ensure that we are paying careful attention to social, economic and ecological sustainability in all oceans-related decisions arising from this conference, and in future processes.

This UN Ocean Conference process provides an important venue to broaden UN discussions on oceans through a transformative approach that is sufficient to

the unprecedented challenges our planet faces in coming decades. Specifically, such conferences must serve as a useful political space to raise issues such as ridge-to-reef approaches, global marine governance, impacts of deep-sea mining and nuclear waste, impacts of economic partnership agreements and trade agreements on fisheries, the impact on distant-water fisheries on local communities, the need to move quickly to fossil-free futures, gender justice and women's human rights and universal human rights related to oceans, indigenous peoples' rights to free prior and informed consent, and the need to protect long agreed sustainable principles of common but differentiated responsibilities.

In fulfillment of a key conference objective—to “share experiences gained at the national, regional, and international levels in the implementation of Goal 14”—delegates must surely articulate linkages both between SDG 14 and other relevant goals, especially SDG 5, on gender and also on health, economics, climate change, and means of implementation. We especially call for increased clarity on intergovernmental processes following this conference and coherence with overall HLPF (High-level Political Forum) and other multilateral processes, with substantive engagement of civil society, major groups and other stakeholders, especially women and girls from all regions.

Humanity has today the potential of addressing the structural issues rooted in an inequitable world but we sadly do not yet see this clearly and strongly reflected in this first conference. As Women's Major Group representatives, we continue to assert the importance of challenging structural barriers to really recognize the fulfillment of SDG 14 as a core part of Agenda 2030, and work with all governments and stakeholders to ensure this occurs.

The ocean and its coasts are givers of life—life that provides wealth and richness but, as the Ministry of Agriculture of Costa Rica (Minister Arauz) mentioned yesterday, we have both immense wealth in the oceans,

and immense poverty on the coast. Ocean wealth is not translating into well-being for coastal communities. A few get most of the profit from the oceans, thus encouraging the overexploitation of the oceans by both large- and small-scale fisheries. This is occurring in a context where we have crossed several planetary boundaries, already severely damaged and dying coral reefs, sea-level rise and decline of water lens and waterways, major pollution on land and in oceans, and with major changes already to marine biodiversity.

We must clearly convey the rights and responsibility of the people of the seas and ocean, respect all cultures, respect diverse voices, and respect their ways of life without placing economic interests as the central or sole concern.

On this planet with one shared ocean, nearly half of our population lives in poverty and collectively holds the same wealth as just eight men. This horrific fact underpins our urgent demand to tackle systemic barriers and structural inequalities, including neoliberal capitalism, fundamentalisms, racism and

patriarchy, that cause and exacerbate such unimaginable inequalities. It also requires addressing issues of militarism, corporatisation of governance and their influence of multilateral processes, consumption and production, inequalities within and between states, and shrinking civil society space.

We assert that SDG 14 is indivisible from other SDG goals. Gender inequality (SDG 5) must be addressed in order to change one of the most pervasive inequalities evidenced by predominant extractive industrial agricultural and fisheries models that are not sustainable, and favour large agri-businesses and distant-water fisheries, while pushing out small farmers and artisanal fisherpeople, a majority of whom are women who typically employ more sustainable practices.

We need now a quick and just transition towards true democratization and a human rights based approach to SDG 14 implementation that explicitly recognizes the human rights of small-scale fishing communities, including women, to participate in, and take responsibility for, integrated management of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP (WMG)



Vivienne Solis presenting a Position Paper on behalf of WMG at the Plenary Session of the UN General Assembly on 7 June 2017, New York. We must join efforts towards the conservation, sustainability and fair use of our ocean resources as well as defend the Commons

A memorable address

Representing a fishing community from India, Lisba Yesuda delivered a Plenary Session address at the United Nations Ocean Conference

By Friends of Marine Life team, India

A memorable highlight of the United Nations Ocean Conference, held in New York from 5 to 9 June, 2017, was an address delivered at the plenary by Lisba Yesuda, a young woman from a fishing community in India who spoke on behalf of Friends of Marine Life (FML), an indigenous coastal community voluntary organization.

Lisba began by describing the environmentally significant work being done by FML, which includes conducting seabed ecosystem studies over a 3000 sq. km area in South India. She stated that in India only one per cent of marine protected areas have been identified, far lower than the estimated coverage, and pointed out the importance of such seabed ecosystem studies in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources.



Lisba stated that their organization has been working with UNESCO-IPBES Asia Pacific region to document, and disseminate information about, the bio-cultural diversity of coastal fishing communities including its language and oral traditions.

Towards the promotion of sustainable fisheries, she urged for the implementation of suitable control measures via marine policy and blue economy initiatives, and pointed out that fishers should be encouraged to follow responsible fishery practices. Finally, she urged that the indigenous and local knowledge of coastal communities be incorporated with due diligence into solutions for sustainable fisheries and conservation. 📌

While we recognize the number of voluntary commitments coming into the conference, we still see very little recognition by all stakeholders of the input of women of all ages into this SDG 14 approach, and few affirmative actions that will rebalance unequal power structures and unfair gendered norms relating to oceans.

We urge you, in the name of future generations and *buen vivir*, to move on to accountability with strength by defining clear indicators that enable us to sail from today with speed, equity and fairness, and speaking

the truth of where we are, and where we must go from here.

In the case of Costa Rica, CoopeSoliDar R.L., the local organization that I represent, and as part of our global Women's Major Group network, we recognize and call for more concrete initiatives, such as our adoption of the Guidelines for the Sustainability of Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) as a powerful instrument to advance issues related to human rights approaches: governance, gender equality,

We need now a quick and just transition towards true democratization and a human-rights-based approach

climate change, food and water security and sovereignty, and more just markets.

We reiterate the need to:

- Recognize universal human rights, and the rights and free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women in all their diversity
- Ensure safety of environmental and women human rights defenders
- Safeguard bodily autonomy, end violence against women, and enhance respect for girls and women of all ages, including by respecting, protecting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Mainstream gender equality and women's human rights
- Recognize the importance of small-scale fisheries and associated coastal communities in integrated management and securing food security and other benefits from coastal areas, and fully implementing the intent of SDG target 14B
- Move urgently to those social, economic and ecological policies and practices, including no new fossil fuels leaving the ground, and end exploitative and extractivist agriculture and fisheries practices through a just transition to low-carbon and truly sustainable economies.

We need to ensure the strongest human rights based approach and that the conservation and truly sustainable management of the ocean, air and land is at the centre of all our discussions in this conference and strongly reflected in all intergovernmental processes.

We call upon all of you to move on towards concrete actions that will recuperate the ocean spirit for all, and especially for those who need it the most. Oceans are our common heritage and we have the common responsibility—within the options in all our hands—to save them for ourselves and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide WMG vision and views to this first and urgent Ocean Conference. 🌊

Interview with Joana Rodrigues Mousinho, 61, fisherwoman, fisher representative and member of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP) and the Movement of Fishermen and Fisherwomen (MPP), Itapissuma, Pernambuco, Brazil

By Beatriz Mesquita Pedrosa Ferreira (mesquitabia@hotmail.com), Member, ICSF and Joaquim Nabuco Foundation, Brazil

Please tell us something about yourself.

I come from a family and region of fishers, and I've been fishing since I was eight. For six years, earlier, I used a net to fish—the only woman amidst male fishers—but today I mainly harvest blue crabs. I love fishing. When I go “to the tide” early in the morning, I feel well. Just seeing the sun rise or feeling the wind on my face makes me happy. I also try to take care of the environment, quarrelling with those who throw garbage and collecting waste plastic bags.

What are the main issues facing fisherwomen in Brazil?

After the 1979 struggle for recognition of fisherwomen in Brazil, today, the biggest challenge is to get fisheries officials to issue valid documentation—an activity currently suspended by this government for both men and women. In addition, we are working very hard for official recognition of fisherwomen's occupational health problems. Another urgent need is to have fishery statistics record fish production by sex. This is a big challenge nowadays, since, regardless of gender, no official fishery statistics are being collected currently in Brazil. Discrimination against women in fishing is probably greater than in other professions. Many men still do not accept women as fishers' union leaders or as movement leaders. Finally, the anti-poor social security reforms being carried out currently, pose a real threat to us.

How are women organizing to deal with these challenges?

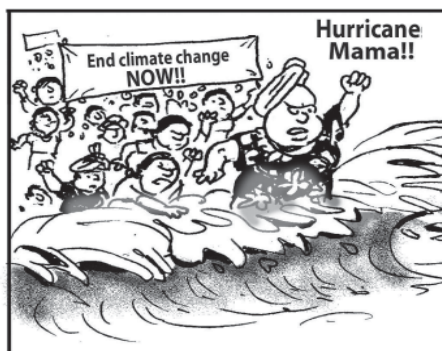
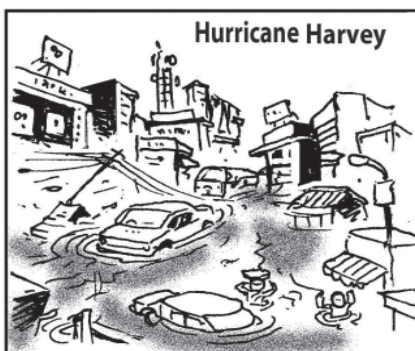
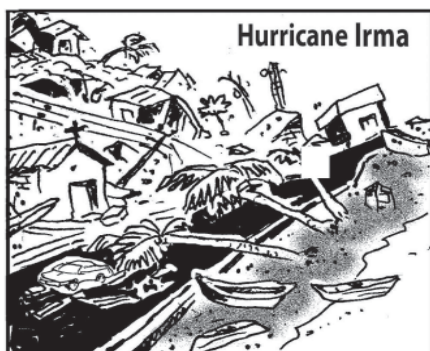
We are participating in meetings, events and struggles in defence of our rights. Our organization has grown in strength. We are proud that Itapissuma was the first city in Brazil where women gained fishing licences, thanks to the struggle we waged with support from the Catholic Church, particularly the nun Nilza, who gave me and others much encouragement. Not only has this spread to other locations via a national policy, but also, today, in Brazil, we have two new and organized forums to hold our discussions: the MPP and the ANP.

What recent developments have been of importance for women in fisheries in Brazil?

First and most importantly, would be the unity as well as the participation of women in fisheries movements and discussions. The involvement of the Ministry of Health in our work of identifying occupational diseases is also very significant. 🌊

YEMAYA MAMA

Weathering the storm!



DOCUMENT

Community fisheries organizations of Cambodia: Sharing processes, results and lessons learned in the context of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines

FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. 1138. Rome, Italy (102 pages)

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7206e.pdf>

By Nilanjana Biswas
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Researcher



This booklet, authored by John Kurien and published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, brings together important insights on community empowerment in the traditional fisheries in Cambodia gleaned through field work and consultations undertaken between 2012 and 2015.

Part I of the booklet, based on the experience of Cambodia, outlines a participatory process for evolving national guidelines for sustainable small-scale fisheries. It contains insights into the nature of small-scale fisheries, from different stakeholder perspectives; the evolution in objectives and governance within the communities over time; the views that communities hold for their own futures; and suggestions for incorporating these insights into a national policy framework.

The analysis is set in the context of a decade of change, from 2001 to 2011, when the fisheries sector in Cambodia received relatively greater community focus, with government support and enabling legislative measures. The proposed new guidelines in Cambodia covered recommendations for the internal structure of community fisheries; for the establishment of clear tenure rights; for structuring activities and finances, including access to external financial support, and promoting self-financing by communities; as well as establishing a system of information, monitoring and networking.

Part II of the booklet analyses the rapid disappearance of 'commons' within global communities, in the context of an accelerated development of private property in rural tenure regimes. In the context, the initiative

in Cambodia since 2001, which supported the idea of 'community commons', is a unique example of the attempt to honour the rights of traditional fishing communities. The initiative also upholds Para 5.8 of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) which calls upon states to "facilitate equitable access to fishery resources for small-scale fishing communities". In 2015, Cambodia had a reported 507 community fisheries institutions. The analysis looked at data from 13 of these community fisheries institutions, and used structured interviews and questionnaires to understand if these organizations truly represented examples of modern day 'commons'. The analysis found that only three of the 13 initiatives studied were functioning well, and could be truly called 'commons'; while three were doing badly and seven others had middling levels of performance.

The insights presented in the booklet allow an understanding of the possibilities for sustainable community organizations in the fisheries sector. This is significant, given the adverse conditions faced by most traditional fisheries organizations across the world. The possibility of developing a national supportive framework is valuable for community organizations in the field. However, as the author himself suggests, Cambodia represents a unique case in the attempt of the government to promote guidelines supporting fishing communities. Even within the country, it took a decade of advocacy for guidelines to get formulated and implemented. Further, even with supportive action, only three out of 13, or less than 25 per cent, of the traditional fisheries organizations in the country were seen as representing successfully functioning 'commons'. Clearly, traditional fishing communities still have a long struggle ahead. ❏



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 1200 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.