



32 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

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Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

July 2018 witnessed the release of the flagship report of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) 2018. A trove of information that, in the months to come, will be unpacked and discussed by activists and researchers in the fishery and aquaculture sectors, SOFIA 2018 presents, for the first time, sex-segregated employment data—a step forward by the FAO towards implementing in its work the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) that call for gender equity and equality throughout the fisheries, including in information and communication.

There is no doubt that global awareness of the role and contribution of women in fisheries is on the rise. Some sources estimate women as constituting nearly half of the total employment along the fish value chain. However, government enumerations across the world tend to still undercount women's participation and undervalue their contribution to the sector. Thus, based on country reports, SOFIA 2018 estimates women's participation in fisheries and aquaculture to be only around 15 per cent. How does this low enumeration impact women? The article 'Outside the Net' in this issue discusses how, in Sri Lanka, government statistics show declining levels of women's employment in the fisheries, a trend that commentators point out may simply indicate the growing invisibility of women's work in the sector. Further, country data as reflected in SOFIA 2018 continues to exclude vital reproductive work, such as gleaning, that women engage in to feed their families and that ensures food security in fishing communities. Such lack of recognition disbars women from policies and programmes supporting livelihood development.

Lack of recognition is not only at the level of data. In this issue, Nalini Nayak's review of a recently released FAO publication finds a stark contrast between the increasing recognition of women's contributions to fisheries and their continuing low access to decision making roles, within both government and non-government organisations. Recognition of women's work is only the first step in mainstreaming their roles within decisionmaking in the sector.

Women's work as fishworkers and caregivers is becoming increasingly fraught in the face of rapid climate change, responsible for an increasing frequency of extreme weather events and presenting grave threats to fisheries. This year, the cyclone Ockhi ravaged communities and took the lives of 348 fishermen in the southern coast of India. The tragedy points to continuing weaknesses in the ability of states to address issues of early warning mechanisms, last mile connectivity in communications, training of local communities, the need to take on board traditional knowledge systems, and post-disaster relief and rehabilitation.

Environmental challenges, however, sometimes spark innovation. In eastern India, annual monsoon floods and the changing course of the river Brahmaputra wreaks regular and devastating damage on communities along the river's banks. This issue covers a unique initiative called 'Ships of Hope' which, through financial contributions from individuals and corporate entities, and the dedication of health workers, brings medical care literally to the shores of these communities. Such examples represent hope in troubled times. **M**



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Outside the net

The lack of recognition by the state continues to cast women in fishing outside the net in Sri Lanka

By **Gayathri Lokuge**
(gayathri@cepa.lk)
Senior Researcher,
Centre for Poverty
Analysis, Colombo,
Sri Lanka and
Chandima Arambepola
(chandima@cepa.lk)
Senior Researcher,
Centre for Poverty
Analysis, Colombo,
Sri Lanka

While increasingly, around the globe, women's participation in fisheries is being captured in government statistical records, the data on active fishers compiled by the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Sri Lanka is not disaggregated by sex. The underlying reasoning is that the number of women contributing to the fisheries sector is so low that it does not warrant such data disaggregation. However, primary data collected for doctoral research by the first author of this article showed that there were a sizeable 596 women engaged in fisheries in Trincomalee, one of the main fish producing districts located in the eastern province of the country. Therefore, exclusion of women from government enumeration deepens their invisibility in the sector.

Women's invisibility in the labour market is a current issue of debate in Sri Lanka's policy and advocacy circles. While social media activists, elected officials and the media take sides on a range of issues regarding women, alarms are being sounded on the declining female labour force participation. Women's participation in the labour force is fundamental for the larger national economy. Further, at the micro level, the work of women contributes to the well-being of the family, in particular, the welfare of children and most importantly to the women themselves. The question here is whether the declining trends of women's labour force participation is because they are not counted in government data, especially in sectors where their labour is rendered invisible by government action, as in the case of the fisheries sector.

This article highlights the difficult physical terrain that women navigate in order to make a living in coastal Trincomalee in Sri Lanka; and their inability to access services that the Government of Sri Lanka provides to the fisher community, solely because they lack recognition by the State. Women fishers therefore lack the financial and physical support required to improve their livelihood opportunities.

The case of Trincomalee fisheries shows the need to treat women as a heterogeneous group, understand the different sub-groupings that they belong to, and recognise how these sub-groups are marginalised by the actions of the state and society. The notion of intersectionality seeks to analyse how multiple identities work simultaneously to create fissures of power and victimisation among different groups of fishers. This analysis highlights how women bear the brunt of being left out of access to government support, primarily because of gender discrimination in fisheries policy. Women fishers also get excluded due to ethno-religious affiliations, and because of where they live.

Trincomalee is an ethno-religiously diverse district in Sri Lanka, where all three major ethnic groups—Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese—engage in fishing. Cultural norms in all three groupings dictate that fisheries related spaces are not for women; in fact, participation of women is seen as bringing misfortune to an activity that is very strongly dependent on chance. The following extract brings out this cultural bias.

Interviewer:

"Have you been to sea by boat?"

Respondent (daughter of female gleaner, Muslim):

"People will not take the girls in the *vallam* (beach seine boat). They don't allow the women to touch the boat even. They say that there won't be a fish catch if we touch the boat. They say it will bring *tharthiriyam* (misfortune). Small girls are allowed to touch the boats but not young and married women. Once my elder brother scolded me when I touched the boat, and after that I have never touched it."

Interestingly, despite restrictive cultural norms and ideologies, many Tamil and Muslim women also participate in fisheries, fishing in shallow sea areas and gleaning clams, prawns and crab in the numerous lagoons. But the women's work is not visible since landing sites and fish markets are clearly identified as public spaces dominated by men. This is an extension of the idea that women's role is within the safe confines of the household, and not in public spaces where one's safety cannot be guaranteed.

The three-decade long civil war in Sri Lanka that directly affected the Trincomalee district

also shaped notions of security and safety, especially for women. However, women have to leave their homes to pursue livelihood options. During certain times of the year, in an area just South of Trincomalee town called Kinniya, on the beach itself, women wait patiently on the margins until the beach seine nets are pulled ashore by men who dump 'leftovers' on the beach, which the women sieve through for seaweed. In other locations, women leave for the lagoon after they finish their morning household chores and return just before noon, with a day's catch of prawn or clam. These women use the income they generate to support their daily expenses, purchase assets, and save for future investments.

Women, however, tend to steer clear of public spaces such as fish landing sites and stay closer to home—a trend noted specifically among Muslim women, who have a strong presence in the lagoons, mostly because their houses are located in the nearby vicinity in Trincomalee. They sell their fish catch locally, within their own communities. For Tamil Hindu women engaging in fishing, their caste identities and pre-existing informal networks are critical factors, either to their benefit or detriment. Muslim and Tamil women are also often stopped and questioned by the Sri Lankan military which is largely composed of the majority Sinhalese ethnicity, when attempting to access the lagoons. With no proper identification cards issued by the Fisheries Department, the women have had to defend their livelihood options, often through negotiations that involve their male relatives.

However, it is among the indigenous Veder community that the study notes marked differences compared to the other women in Trincomalee. The women and men work side by side, pulling the nets ashore and working together in order to earn a living. However, while women have more freedom to engage in fishing, the community as a whole encounters other obstacles. They literally occupy the margins of Trincomalee, living in an area called Vakarai, bordering Trincomalee and Batticaloa. They have poor access to education and health, leaving them outside larger post-war development processes taking place in the Eastern Province. Therefore, they continue to depend on the traditional livelihood of fishing, that too within strict geographic confines.

Some interesting trends are also noted in the fish markets. Sinhalese men dominate the large scale buying and selling of fish. A relatively younger generation of Sinhalese 'war entrepreneurs' moved in from Northern Trincomalee, to fill the void created by the older generation of businessmen who were displaced from Trincomalee by war-related violence. The new entrepreneurs established control over the wholesale market by negotiating the complex civil-military bureaucracy that was in place during the war. The Muslims and Tamils remain outside these markets. Their male identity is not adequate for the men from the minority ethnicities to carve out a space within the fish markets of Trincomalee fisheries wholesale sector.

Thus, for both women and men engaged in fishing, attempting to understand their life chances through the lens of only a gender or an ethnic identity fails to capture the multitude of ways in power has to be negotiated within the sector.

At present, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Sri Lanka is redrafting the fisheries policy, an exercise that drew upon insights from our study. In any attempt to promote sustainable livelihoods among women, especially in the war-affected regions such as Trincomalee, women's contribution to the fishing industry must be duly acknowledged and recognised. The policy being drafted can help women working in the fringes of the sector, to be given due recognition, and access to policy support and assistance they deserve. While Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.10 of the Draft Bill categorically mention the support to be rendered to women, at present, policy support is restricted to women who are the wives of men who are registered as fishers with the Fisheries Department. Ironically, the women struggling to earn a living in the brackish backwaters in the lagoons remain invisible and excluded in the new policy document.

In discussions around women in fisheries, while it is important to explore new avenues of employment generation, it is equally important to address issues faced by women in their existing occupations; and government policy interventions should seek to support their work. Such interventions can generate multiplier effects, with positive impacts on women's working conditions, their earnings, and the well-being of their families. ❏

Attempting to understand life chances through the lens of only a gender or a ethnic identity fails to capture the multitude of ways in power has to be negotiated

Ships of hope

Innovative boat clinics bring health and hope to thousands of men, women and children, among India's poorest, who live along the mighty Brahmaputra river

By **Bhaswati K Goswami**
(bhaswatigoswami@yahoo.co.in),
Communications Officer,
Centre for North East
Studies and Policy
Research (C-NES),
New Delhi, India

As the monsoon rages, floodwaters ravage the remote island of Lamba Sapor in Dhemaji district in the northeastern state of Assam in India. Trapped in their waterlogged home, Punyadhar and Oipuli Morang are in dire distress. Their two-year child has had an acute asthmatic attack. There is little they can do, but hope for some help. Time ticks on; each moment's breath a greater burden on the infant. Enter Boat Clinic 'Shahnaz'. On a return trip from a health camp, the boat spots villagers frantically waving at them to stop. Its health team swings to the rescue. Treated with adequate doses of Salbutamol, the child recovers within minutes. For Punyadhar and Oipuli, the team is no less than godsend.

Plying along the mighty Brahmaputra which bisects Assam, sweeping along 891 kms of its territory, before turning south into Bangladesh, are the 'Ships of Hope'. From Dhubri on Assam's southwestern border with Bangladesh, to Tinsukia in the east, the floating clinics have a deep mission to fulfill.

There are over 2.5 million people like Punyadhar and Oipuli inhabiting the islands

of the Brahmaputra. Known popularly as *chars* or *saporis*, these are among the most backward areas of Assam. The people here are largely untouched by development activities and remain marginalised, poor and vulnerable. Entire families with young children spend their days in the fields to meet daily needs. Many live in thatched bamboo huts with a small piece of cultivable land. Their homes and farmlands are often temporary in nature, dependent on the whims of the river which often changes its course with ravaging effects on the communities on its banks. There is no access to communications and people are badly hit by recurring floods. Post flood problems—losing homes and assets such as livestock—are common. Children seldom go to school.

The Center for North East Studies and Policy Research's (C-NES') innovative health initiative is aimed precisely at these vulnerable and marginalised communities. The organisation makes an invaluable contribution to their lives through specially designed Boat Clinics.

This unique health clinic story began with a single boat, a prototype called Akha (which means hope in Assamese). Akha received the World Bank's India Development Market Place Award for the year 2004 for unique innovations and transforming the lives of rural communities. With funds from that award, the first boat took shape at Majanghat, Dibrugarh. From that one boat, the initiative was extended to include nine more.

WWW.C-NES.ORG



Boat clinics in Brahmaputra river, Assam, India. The floating clinics have a mission to fulfill for 2.5 million people inhabiting the islands of the river, who are marginalised, poor and vulnerable

C-NES's Managing Trustee, eminent journalist and writer Sanjoy Hazarika, who conceptualised the programme, says that the outreach is beyond his expectations. "We began with a simple idea, with one boat, in one district—Dibrugarh," says Hazarika. "Today, the implementation of the programme in 13 districts with a staff of nearly 200, including doctors, nurses and paramedics, as well as the unstinted support we have received from NHM and UNICEF shows that truly there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come; we are delivering not just healthcare but enabling people to access their basic right to a better quality of life."

Five of the boats have been financed by the prominent editor and economist, Swaminathan S Aiyar, and named after members of his family. The Boat for the Jorhat Boat Clinic has been donated by Oil India Limited (as part of its golden jubilee celebration). The Sonitpur and Kamrup Boat has been donated by Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL). The remaining are hired boats. They are designed and equipped to conduct basic healthcare services either on the boat or on the riverbanks of the *char/sapori* villages with space for an out-patient department (OPD), a laboratory, pharmacy, cabins for medical staff, kitchen, toilets and crew quarters, equipped with generators, water tanks and powered by 120 hp engines. The Bengaluru-based SELCO Foundation has donated solar panels for four Boat Clinics. There is provision for dental healthcare in the Jorhat and Bongaigaon boats with support from Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Service Ltd as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

While the main focus of the initiative, in partnership with National Health Mission (NHM), has been on women and children, its benefits accrue to the population at large in 13 districts across Assam: Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Kamrup, Morigaon, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. In these districts, the Boat Clinics are reaching the poor and marginalised with sustained healthcare for the first time. Many had never seen a doctor, a stethoscope or a syringe ever before. At a Dhemaji Camp, an elated health team was informed by villagers that the first child in their village, whose mother was under the team's supervision for her prenatal check-ups, was named 'Doctor'—a reflection of how much the teams have managed to penetrate communities and make their presence felt and appreciated. Besides medical services, the psychological aid that the

programme has brought to these scattered communities is adding to their overall well-being. Problems of alcoholism, depression and hopelessness abound in the islands where dwellers lose whatever little they own, year after year, to the river.

In Dibrugarh's Karmi Chuksapori, 25-year-old Phaguni Payeng, married to a daily wage earner and a mother of four, lived in constant dread of another pregnancy. Repeated childbirth had made her weak, anaemic and unable to work in the fields to supplement the meagre family income. Each year, the river would sweep away her temporary home. Only the previous year she lost her only cow and entire belongings. Her life looked unbearably bleak until a neighbour told her about 'Akha' and the health camps.

The health team has since provided Phaguni with an awareness of and education on family planning methods. The team supplies her with iron tablets in the regular camps, which she attends without fail. It conducts immunisation programmes and regular medical check-ups for her children. Today an optimistic Phaguni asks fellow villagers to attend the camps and follow what the team has to say.

Each district has a total strength of 15 team members. This includes one District Programme Officer (DPO), two Medical Officers, one general nurse cum midwife (GNM), one pharmacist, one laboratory technician, two auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs), two community workers and four crew members. The boats go to the islands for three to five days at a stretch with doctors and paramedical staff. Camps usually begin at nine in the morning and continue with a brief break till three in the afternoon, when the team boards the boat for the next destination. After a night's rest, they set out for the next camp. Around 18 to 20 camps are conducted on an average every month. Local communities and leaders are involved in the conduct of the camps, which often are held in difficult conditions with teams battling floods and erosion in the monsoon, and shallow routes and long walking distances to remote villages in the winter.

"At times, we walk six to seven kilometres or more just to get to a village and hold a camp," said a Medical Officer. "But the experience is enriching since the villagers see us as people who are bringing an improvement to their lives; this is visible from our many visits. It is exhausting work but also deeply fulfilling." From Sadiya to Dhubri, children, women, and the elderly crowd the Boat Clinics with health queries and for general check-ups.

There has been a distinct change in attitude, with increasing numbers of young mothers with babies clinging to their backs coming to the immunisation centres

Laboratories which include semi auto-analysers and pharmacies in the boats become functional as soon as the health camps start. Nurses take position in a separate enclosure near the check-up booth that caters to children and women for immunisations, antenatal care (ANC) and postnatal care (PNC). Diarrhoea, dysentery, ear and skin infections (both caused by prolonged exposure to river water, especially among children who are not in school), anaemia and fever are common ailments and most are preventable. The health team gives villagers a lesson or two on maintaining personal hygiene.

There has been a distinct change in attitude, with increasing numbers of young mothers with babies clinging to their backs coming to the immunisation centres. Continuous visits and interactions with the health team with residents have created this transformation. Gone are the days when the very idea of an immunisation team coming

to their homes was met with suspicion. There are examples of women asking for family planning because they did not want more children since this could pose a danger to their health. At the close of camps, Medical Officers conduct an interactive session where they speak of the need for family planning, the importance of women's health and that of spacing children. Their audiences listen with rapt interest. This is the Akha model: initiatives, innovativeness, motivation, mobilisation, training, self-help and sustainability, giving all a stake in improving their lives, not just relying on governments and other agencies.

The Boat Clinics have a more popular name—they are called 'Doctor's Boat' by the children of the islands. They run along with the boat on the riverbank, waving their hands in great anticipation as the boat passes by their *sapori*, and continue doing so till it becomes a mere speck in the horizon. And the river quietly flows by..... ❏



PROFILE

Fish, ponds and empowered lives

Under Suman Singh's leadership, women in Madhubani, India, gain greater control over their lives

By **Venugopalan N**
(icsf@icsf.net),
Programme Manager,
ICSF

Women in inland fisheries in the Madhubani district of Bihar, India, started organizing way back in the year 1999, first registering a district level fisherwomen's cooperative, and then cooperatives at the block or sub-district level throughout Madhubani. At the helm of movement building was a non-governmental organisation (NGO) named Sakhi led by the efforts of its secretary, Suman Singh.

Suman Singh's work in Madhubani started even before Sakhi was formally registered as an NGO. She was part of a team involved in coordinating one of the field projects of

Singh taking on the mantle of Secretary. Suman Singh became active in organising the poor fisherwomen into groups and having these groups registered as fisherwomen's cooperatives. She took the initiative to link these cooperatives with the credit programmes of bank and worked towards getting ponds leased to women by the government. She also organised training for the fisherwomen in a variety of fields: freshwater fish culture; pond management; fish breeding; fish vending and *makhana* (lotus seeds) cultivation, processing, and marketing.

With Suman Singh driving the efforts, Sakhi, then decided to introduce the components of health and education into their programmes. The health programme focused on reproductive and child health, while the education programme consisted of running non-formal education centres where girl children in the age group of six to fourteen could gain an education.

Word soon began to spread about how these fisherwomen and their communities were benefiting from Sakhi's work. This brought increasing demand from other communities for similar support and Suman and her organisation decided to increase their coverage, turning their attention to other areas as well.

Today it may be said that, through a range of initiatives, Suman Singh and Sakhi have greatly helped fisherwomen in Madhubani to gain control over their fish, their ponds and their lives. ❏

another organisation. This project, initiated with the support of Swiss Red Cross in the Andhrathari Block of Madhubani District in 1990, targeted fisherwomen engaged in inland, pond-based fisheries, helping them gain access to government ponds on lease, equipping them with technical and managerial skills, providing start-up capital support, and over time, contributing to a steady enhancement in their income levels.

As the project gained critical mass, it was registered as an independent entity named Sakhi in the year 1999 with Suman

Where have all the women gone?

Sex-segregated employment data in the recently released State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018 report points to the need for better and more standardised data collection

By **Nilanjana Biswas**
(nilanjanabiswas@yahoo.com),
Independent Researcher

July 2018 witnessed the launch of 'The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018' (SOFIA 2018)—the flagship report of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

What makes this report particularly interesting is that for the first time, there is the reporting of sex-disaggregated employment statistics. The demand for sex-segregated data has been a long standing one of fishers, their representatives, fishery researchers and civil society organisations struggling for gender equality and equity. This step by the FAO, which is wholly in line with the recommendations of the SSF Guidelines, is therefore indeed very encouraging and useful.

From the pages of SOFIA 2018, we excerpt below the table on: Reporting of Sex-Disaggregated Employment (Women, Men and Unspecified) in Fisheries and Aquaculture, by Region, 2016. The data brings out the dominance of Asia in employment within the sector. Asia accounts for nearly 80 per cent of employment in fisheries and 94 per cent in aquaculture.

According to the data in this table, women make up only 15 per cent of the workforce, both for the fisheries and the aquaculture sector. In both sectors, a significant proportion

of the workforce—nearly 10 per cent—consists of the category 'Unspecified'. This category would in reality consist of both men and women—we don't know for sure because the data that was collected did not specify gender. For discussion's sake, let us assume that all the workers under the category 'Unspecified' are only women. Even then, this would push up the proportion of women in the workforce in fisheries and aquaculture to just about 25 per cent. Previous data however suggests that women make up nearly half the workforce. The Hidden Harvest report (World Bank, FAO and WorldFish, 2012), for example, found that women make up 47 per cent of fisheries supply-chain workers in the harvest and post-harvest sectors. With the current data adding up to 25 per cent at best, this means in effect that half the women working in fisheries or aquaculture are missing in the data collected, even when the 'Unspecified' category is included in the reckoning.

It is not clear whether the table covers employment data in only the primary sector (that is, production or harvest) or in both primary and secondary (post-harvest) sectors. If it covers both sectors, then, given that the Hidden Harvest report states that when both harvest and post-harvest sectors are combined, women make up nearly half the workforce, women in fisheries and aquaculture employment seem to be significantly under-represented in SOFIA 2018.

These preliminary inferences point to certain shortcomings and discrepancies in the data text. This may be in part due to the use of non-standardised and divergent methodologies across studies. Another example of data discrepancy is immediately observable. Because of different research methodologies employed in the Hidden Harvest report and in SOFIA 2018, women's participation in capture fisheries of developed countries is estimated in the Hidden Harvest report to be about 27 per cent, while in SOFIA 2018 the sex-disaggregated employment of women in fisheries reported from North America and Europe is pegged at just two per cent (See table). This is a considerable difference by any reckoning. At a minimum, there is a need to improve data collection and reporting, and for the use of more standardised methodologies across data sets. ■

Reporting of Sex-Disaggregated Employment (Women, Men and Unspecified) in Fisheries and Aquaculture, by region, 2016

Region	Women		Men		Unspecified	
	No. ('000)	%	No. ('000)	%	No. ('000)	%
Fisheries						
Africa	585.1	11	4,248.3	79	532.6	10
Latin America and the Caribbean	394.4	19	1,383.6	66	306.7	15
North America	<0.1	0	37.9	18	171.1	82
Asia	4,843.9	15	25,020.5	78	2,125.2	7
Europe	6.4	2	115.3	33	232.0	66
Oceania	49.1	15	150.0	45	134.7	40
Aquaculture						
Africa	33.1	11	211.8	70	58.6	19
Latin America and the Caribbean	29.3	8	229.8	60	122.3	32
North America		0		0	9.3	100
Asia	2,764.3	15	14,068.5	76	1,645.5	9
Europe	16.7	18	56.7	62	17.5	19
Oceania	1.5	19	5.2	68	1.0	13

Enablers, drivers and barriers

This article reviews a recent publication on women's participation and leadership in fisherfolk organisations and collective action in fisheries

By **Nalini Nayak**
(nalini.nayak@gmail.com),
Member, ICSF Trust, India

For all those who have been working with women in fisheries, this review of literature, undertaken by Enrique Alonso-Población and Susana V. Siar for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is indeed a fine overview of what is written and documented about women in fisheries.

Further, through an insightful logical framework, various aspects of the changes that have taken place and the actual evolution of women's collective action and their participation in leadership in fishworkers' organisations has been sifted out and highlighted. This desk study was undertaken to understand the barriers and constraints women face when participating in fisher organisations as members and leaders; identify opportunities where women have

successfully participated in organisations and how such examples could be scaled up in other situations where constraints are high; and identify good practices that promote and strengthen women's participation in a meaningful and effective way.

The document first sets the scene regarding women in fisheries—their extensive work yet limited participation. It then moves on to enablers and entities that play a role in fostering women's collective action and participation in organisations, followed by the drivers for organising and the barriers to women's participation in organisations. Following a lucid conclusion, the authors also make a series of useful recommendations to the various stakeholder groups.

Towards this end, the authors have used an interesting methodology to select documents that were studied, classifying papers using the Mendeley desktop tool, and further classifying papers in four categories.

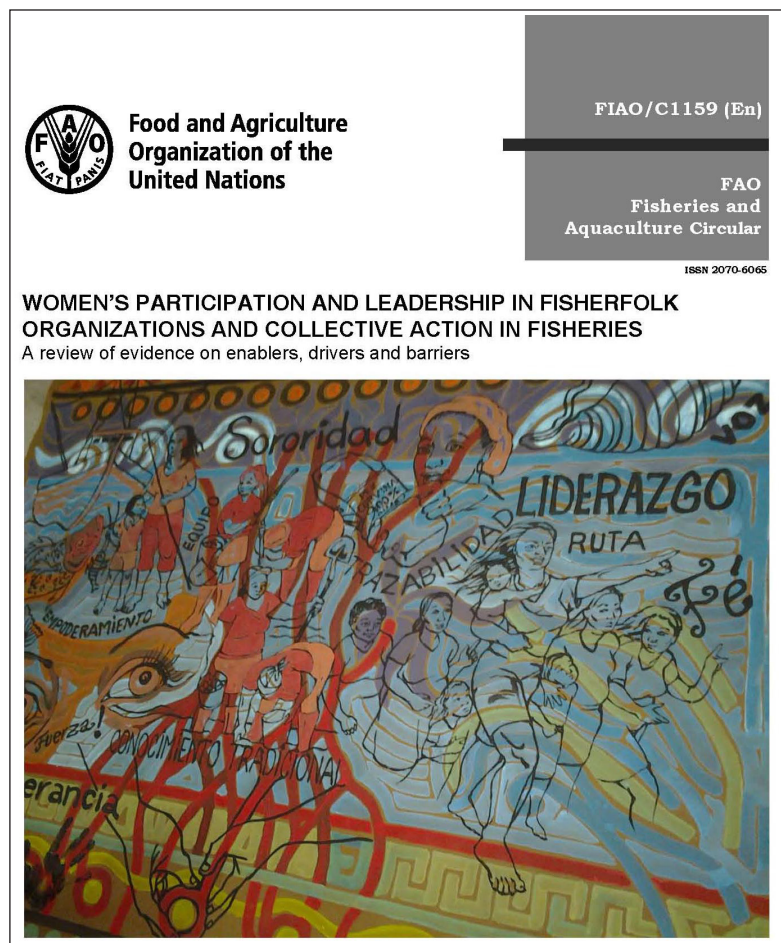
Papers categorised as Level 1 focused on the roles of women in fisherfolk organisations, specifically analysing participation and leadership, and studying the various factors, such as historical, economic, and policy-related, responsible for the current status.

Level 2 comprised papers in which the roles of women in fisherfolk organisations were not the main focus but which provided insights on the roles of women in organisations and collective action as well as on the reasons responsible for the current status.

Level 3 papers focused on gender in fisheries and aquaculture, containing theoretical discussions of interest for the present work, or for their ethnographic or theoretical contributions to the topic of gender and fisheries.

Papers categorised as Level 4 were those that analysed the current status and argued that improved management and livelihood outcomes would be achieved through enhanced participation of women in fisherfolk organisations, or gave explanations for their lack of participation.

The authors highlight that an increased recognition of the multiplicity of roles played by women in, and their crucial contributions



to, the fisheries sector exists in stark contrast with the low presence of women in fisherfolk organisations around the globe, and their lack of access to decisionmaking positions in many formal fisheries related organisations.

Various actors like state institutions, social movements and civil society organisations, development and conservation projects, religious movements, academia, endogenous mobilisation, the presence of charismatic individuals and the occurrence of coincidences have been identified as the key enablers of women's participation in collective action. Dwindling resources and the need to secure management roles, modernisation, the allocation of fishing rights, economic changes, family welfare and women's rights are identified by various authors as the main drivers or catalysts of women's engagement in collective action.

In all these sections, the authors have selected interesting evidence-based case studies to back up the points being made. This selection of case studies are learning tools for social interveners, community organisers and leaders of gender-sensitive development programmes although it is important that the particular historical or political context in which the change took place be kept in mind. No generalisations have been made, which also

indicates that methodology from one context cannot be automatically extrapolated to other different contexts. The documentation also points out certain unconventional players or barriers in change processes, highlighting the role of certain individuals or religious institutions and focussing on diversity.

The authors also finally make a set of recommendations addressed to the various players in the process which are also very insightful and realistic. They begin with suggestions to all stakeholders, then to fisherwomen, researchers, academia and research institutions, the states, social movements and CSOs, NGOs and UN agencies, all extremely pertinent and clear. These recommendations indicate the need for collective and collaborative strategies that should be kept in mind if fisheries and women in fisheries have to be sustained. These recommendations also draw attention to the lacunae in existing research which are important pointers for future work and action.

Personally, I commend the authors for work meticulously undertaken and the FAO for commanding such a study. I think this is important documentation that captures in a meaningful nutshell the work among women in fisheries of the past 50 years, making the experience available to young activists,

This is important documentation that captures in a meaningful nutshell the work among women in fisheries of the past 50 years.



Milestones

By **Venugopalan N**
(icsf@icsf.net),
Programme Manager, ICSF

Taking action: Costa Rica initiates steps to implement the SSF Guidelines

Costa Rica is among the first few countries to respond immediately and favourably to the question of implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). In a move that extends overwhelming support to the small-scale fisheries, in particular to women in the sector, the Costa Rican government, in association with the country's fishers and their representatives, and civil society organisations, has introduced a bill for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. Titled 'General Law for the sustainability of small-scale, artisanal fisheries in the context of food security, poverty eradication and shared governance', this bill is presently under consideration by the representatives of the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly.

The bill acknowledges and underlines the fundamental role played by women in the value chain of small-scale fisheries, promoting

their participation in coastal development, organisation and local entrepreneurship as well as strengthening their capacities. It acknowledges that all regulation, public policy, political decisions and administrative acts, in general, must be dictated and enforced in order to guarantee gender equality and equity, in particular, the economic or material equality between genders. Recognising the crucial role played by women engaged in the small-scale, artisanal fishing activity and in all activities along the value chain, the bill mandates the state to promote equal rights and opportunities, encouraging differentiated policies in pursuit of equity. The bill recognises that measures governing the small-scale, artisanal fisheries sector must be in harmony with human rights regarding women and based on the specific women's needs of each community.

The bill is available for download at:
<https://www.icsf.net/costaricabill>

researchers and communities themselves who can further intervene and take the role of women in fisheries ahead. I feel truly fortunate to have been active in this process of working with the women in the sector, learning all along, and meeting and interacting with powerful and committed women who have been a part of these processes and writings.

However, I would disagree with the authors concluding that the literature on women in fisheries is limited. I personally am amazed to see the growth of writing and documentation on the subject from very perceptive angles from the time I commenced work in the communities in the early 1970s. These documents add to the nuanced and insightful understanding of the manner in which patriarchy works in providing spaces for women's agency or in dividing and inhibiting them.

As a reflective postscript, I must add that this review has not included a lot of material published by women in journals like ICSF's *Samudra Report* and *Yemaya*. Material not available online also seems to have been excluded. Further, important issues which carry significant implications for women's organising have not been taken into account.

An example is the backlash that greets women when they begin to raise their voice, as witnessed in India and South Africa where the predominantly male leadership of fishworker organisations used identity politics to oust women organisers who raised important but uncomfortable questions, on the grounds that they were not from the fishing community per se.

That it takes a significant amount of time for women to actually outgrow the patriarchal socialisation and become visible in leadership is a reality and that the space for a different kind of collective leadership has not yet been created in society at large. This has also impacted on the growth of women in leadership in organisations. Worse, anti-women politics seem to be overtaking fishing societies as unpublished research in India undertaken by some of us indicates, revealing a fall in the female sex ratio with the capitalisation of the fishery, indicative of growing sex pre-selection in favour of male offspring in coastal communities in India.

This is just to say there is a lot more out there which is not easily accessible, on the experience of women in fisheries, and which should form part of any serious and comprehensive review on the subject. ❏

What's New, Webby?



By Venugopalan N
(icsf@icsf.net),
Programme Manager,
ICSF

Gender on the Agenda in the Seafood Industry

<https://wsi-asso.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/WSI-WATCH-2017.pdf>

Women in Seafood Industry (WSI) is an international not-for-profit organization whose aim is to reinforce the voices of women in the seafood industry, amplifying their visibility through projects and collaborations with existing associations, and by supporting relevant initiatives and sharing information on the worldwide web.

The WSI website, <https://wsi-asso.org>, has two interesting reports. One, titled 'Putting Gender Equality on the Seafood Industry's Agenda: Results of a Global Survey' published in July 2018 is based on a survey carried out by WSI in Autumn 2017 among 700 seafood professionals. It discusses their perception of the situation of women at the workplace and in the seafood industry in general. Through insightful analysis, this report identifies knowledge gaps and new

avenues to address challenges that women in the sector face. This report is available at: <https://wsi-asso.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/WSI-Survey-2018.pdf>

The second is the annual report of the WSI. Titled 'WSI Watch 2017', this is an inaugural compilation which reports relevant news, events and research that happened in 2017 at the intersection of women/gender and the seafood industry. It highlights over 50 stories from 30 countries, from the developed and the developing worlds, where contexts vary significantly but where surprisingly similar norms and stereotypes deeply rooted in this "male dominated" industry persist.

This report is available at: <https://wsi-asso.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/WSI-WATCH-2017.pdf> ❏

In Ockhi's wake

The painful aftermath of Cyclone Ockhi reveals the multiple dimensions of disaster preparedness that still need attention in India

By **Shibani Chaudhury**
(shibani.chaudhury@gmail.com),
filmmaker and
development
professional based in
New Delhi, India

"It was as dark as night at 9am."

"The waves were higher than a coconut tree."

"We tied ourselves to our boat so our bodies could be recognised..."

30th November 2017. While scientific terms for it were still being confirmed and relayed on land, hundreds of fishworkers at sea were already hit by the violent terror of a deadly cyclonic storm. More than 300 lives were lost, either battling Ockhi, or in the deathly silence after—tragic conquerors of the cyclone who died exhausted, wasted—waiting for rescue that could not reach them.

'God's own country' is the famous cliché used to describe the stunning beauty of coastal Kerala. This holds true for the entire Comorin coast curving into the southernmost tip of India. In April 2018 though, as we travelled the Kerala and Tamil Nadu coast to film our documentary 'In Ockhi's Wake', this tagline bore out a devastating irony. Churches across the region stood stoic witness to the pain of those mourning Ockhi's victims. A shore famed for its intrepid seafaring fishers was left bereft, with unanswered questions and an unprecedented official number of 348 men dead or missing at sea. There were 205 missing in deep sea in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, and 119 near shore and 24 deep sea casualties in Kerala.

Those that perished in deep sea had sailed earlier and were lost due to lack of connectivity. The lives lost near shore were of fishermen who went out just before the onset of the storm, unaware of the warnings of the Indian Meteorological Department

(IMD) issued on 29th November. Apocalypse, either way. Post Ockhi, many issues are being examined: early warning mechanisms, last mile communication, offshore connectivity, preparedness and training of responders and community, integration of traditional knowledge, post disaster relief and rehab, trauma management. Hopefully the urgency of this will not be forgotten and the gaps will be effectively addressed. Meanwhile, what of the void? For every life lost at sea there are at least two or more connected lives on shore grappling with grief and the desperation of completely altered reality. Aging parents, little children, younger siblings, wives—a trail of anguished families lie devastated in Ockhi's wake.

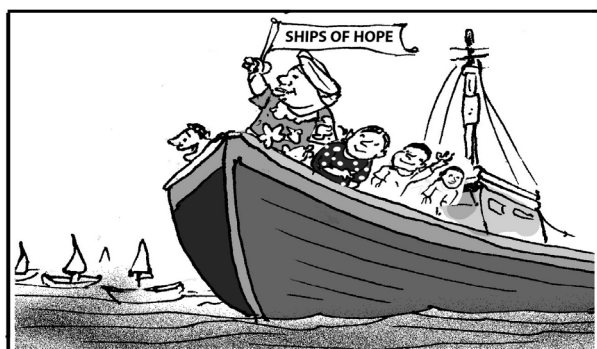
Vallavilai in Tamil Nadu is known for its skilled deep sea fishers. Of the 33 men lost on mechanised boats from this village, 29 were in their early thirties. In this one village, itself therefore, there are reportedly 20 or more widows in their mid-twenties. In the escalating conversations about preparedness and resilience, do the lives of these nameless women and their small children feature? Except for the efforts of the local parish priest to create therapeutic training centres and build skill, there seems to be no other active support to give these women the agency to take their young lives forward.

And, what of those who came back? Survivors, who faced the ordeal of fighting Ockhi, now struggle through a different agony. They survived the storm only to drown in the ruthless maelstrom of impaired livelihoods, lost investments, and deepening debt. The post disaster learnings must also consider the less visible collateral damage to the lives and livelihood of survivors, in Ockhi's wake.

Editorial note: The documentary film 'In Ockhi's Wake', being made by ICSF, is under production and will be made available on YouTube. Details will be announced in the next issue of *Yemaya*. ❧

YEMAYA MAMA

From dreams to reality



VIDEO ANIMATION

Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries: Gender equity and equality

Produced by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, and the Social Policies and Rural Institutions Divisions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); 6.04 minutes; English

By **Nicole Franz**
(Nicole.Franz@fao.org),
FAO Fishery Planning
Analyst, and
Ilaria Sisto
(Ilaria.Sisto@fao.org),
FAO Gender and
Development Officer

Small-scale fisheries contribute about half of all fish catches in developing countries, making a major contribution to food security and nutrition. They employ 90 per cent of the world's capture fishers and fishworkers, and women represent half of them! Women engage along the whole fisheries value chain, including fishing and mending nets, shellfish collection and diving for abalone and pearls. Often they are also responsible for post-harvest activities, including trade and labour-intensive value addition, such as drying, smoking and salting, besides being the caretakers of the family and communities.

Yet, there are still many inequalities in small-scale fisheries, and women's contributions are not always adequately recognised and paid. Strong power imbalances exist. Middlemen often dictate the prices of fish that women sell. Women have limited access to credit and often work in insanitary, poorly ventilated and hazardous conditions, and are at risk of violence and discrimination. It is crucial therefore to address gender issues in fisheries value chains, and ensure women's equal participation in decisionmaking processes and organisations.

In 2014, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) were endorsed. These Guidelines represent the first internationally negotiated instrument

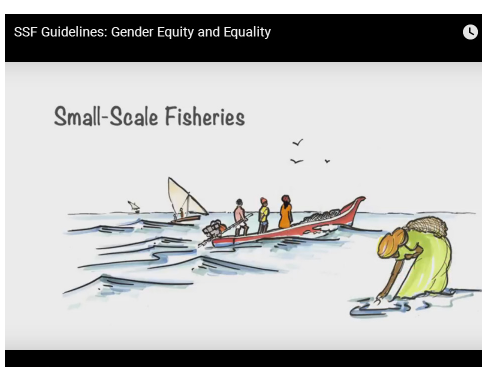
that specifically addresses small-scale fisheries, and, significantly emphasise gender equality and equity.

In this context, FAO produced a short animated video, to raise gender awareness and generate discussion about the relevance of gender equality in small-scale fisheries. Available on YouTube, the video is aimed to reach a broad audience, including the general public, and in particular policymakers, small-scale fisheries organisations and their support organisations. To develop the video, partners with expertise in small-scale fisheries and gender issues were contacted. Many had been involved in the development of the SSF Guidelines themselves and continue to support their implementation, including members of the IPC Fisheries Working Group, IFAD, the Too Big To Ignore network, genderaquafish.org, and ICSF, which had also prepared a Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development: A handbook.

The exchange with these experts showed the complexity of gender issues in small-scale fisheries-the vulnerability of indigenous women in the sector, the occupational and health hazards women in small-scale fisheries often face, the need to not only address gender issues within small-scale fishing communities, but also in the context of fisheries administrations and support organisations. The capacity of women, especially when organised, to innovate and participate in a constructive and dynamic way in small-scale fisheries development and governance was also emphasised.

The video represents a compromise around all these points, and tries to strike a balance between keeping it short and capturing the main issues related to gender equality in small-scale fisheries. The Spanish and French versions of the video are under preparation and will be released shortly.

The video may be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BolcVAAyEOW&feature=youtu.be>



PUBLISHED BY
the International Collective
in Support of Fishworkers Trust
22 First Floor,
Venkatrathinam Nagar, Adyar,
Chennai 600 020, India
Tel: (91) 44 2445 1216
Fax: (91) 44 2445 0216
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net

Web site: www.icsf.net

EDITED BY
Nilanjana Biswas

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Sandesh
(sandeshcartoonist@gmail.com)

DESIGNED BY
P. Sivasakthivel

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.