

Yemaya

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ICSF's NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

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From the Editor

Dear Friends

The tsunami of 26 December 2004 has been devastating. It has taken lives. It has destroyed livelihoods. It has rendered hundreds of thousands homeless. The scars and trauma will remain for a long time.

Reports from several countries, including India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, indicate that more women and children died in the tsunami than men. Several reasons have been put forward for this sex difference in casualties: women were weaker; the clothes they were wearing hindered their ability to flee; they did not know how to swim or climb trees; they got delayed trying to rescue their children; they were on the shore selling fish/ waiting for fish landings, and so on.

Whatever the reasons, more women and children fell victim to the tsunami. Reports describe the difficulty facing men now left alone to bring up children and run households, the anguish of parents whose children have been washed away, and the travails of women left without their husbands.

In this issue of *Yemaya*, we carry excerpts from several reports about women in tsunami-affected areas. We have a report on issues raised by women victims of the tsunami disaster, during public hearings held in Tamil Nadu, India. Women's groups and agencies have come out with various sets of recommendations highlighting the need for gender-sensitive relief and rehabilitation measures. The

recommendations put forward by the National Commission on Women in Tamil Nadu, India are included in this issue.

We also carry excerpts from a report put together by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), describing some of the main issues facing women in affected countries, and key recommendations.

Women's groups working in disaster areas have often stressed that recovery is not a simple process of recreating what was there, but an opportunity to build a better society. They have stressed that actions to reduce vulnerability of social groups and increase gender equality must be included in the recovery proposals. In this context, the recently announced shelter policy of the government of the tsunami-hit south Indian State of Tamil Nadu, which provides for joint ownership of reconstructed houses, is interesting and relevant.

Three months after the disaster, people are slowly trying to pick up the pieces and to start living again. Some fishing has started, nets and boats are being repaired, and the beaches are no longer desolate and deserted. Women can be seen starting small trading and economic activities, some even as they are still in the relief camps.

We express our solidarity with tsunami-affected communities and salute their resilience in the face of such a great disaster and loss.



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