

# Yemaya

No.24

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

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## From the Editor

Dear Friends,

This issue of *Yemaya* features articles from Brazil, India and Europe, as well as information on resources available and forthcoming workshops.

As always, there is a focus on women's organizations in fisheries and their efforts to get together around issues of common concern and to create networks of solidarity. The article from Brazil, for instance, documents the process by which women are consolidating their efforts to create a national organization of women in the fisheries sector, based on principles of solidarity, autonomy, democracy, respect of differences, and regard for the environment. Their struggle is for rights, and, as they put it, for life itself.

The article from Netherlands talks about an exchange programme in which women from the Dutch women-in-fisheries network, VinVis, hosted their counterparts from the Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries Network (NIWIF). The programme provided a chance for women from both networks to share their realities, and to energize and inspire one another. Interactions such as this are helping build up solidarity networks among women in the fisheries sector in Europe—small steps in a larger process. Thus, NIWIF is hosting the Second Conference and the Second General Body meeting of AKTEA: European Network of Women's Organizations in Fisheries and Aquaculture, in Northern Ireland in April 2007.



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From India comes an article about women seaweed collectors in the Gulf of Mannar, in Tamil Nadu in southern India. This area is both a national park and a biosphere reserve, and several restrictions on extraction activities, including seaweed collection, are being put in place. For the 5,000 or so women seaweed collectors in the area, these restrictions have direct implications for their livelihoods. The article discusses some of the challenges facing these women and their future in the only livelihood they have known. The challenge lies in ensuring that their perspectives are incorporated into the upcoming management plan for the national park and biosphere reserve, and in its implementation.

Another article from India takes a look, from a gender perspective, at the just-published Marine Fisheries Census 2005. The need for reliable gender-disaggregated data on women's work in fishing and in fisheries-related work has often been stressed as fundamental to good planning and policymaking. Data from the census clearly establishes the important role of women in fisheries-related activities, particularly in marketing and processing fish, and should provide the springboard for further research and analysis.

We also carry information on several interesting publications and films, as well as announcements of meetings coming up. As always, we invite you to share with us your experiences and accounts of relevance to women in fisheries and fishing communities. Please send us articles for the next issue of *Yemaya* by 30 May 2007.

**Latin America/ Brazil****Struggle for life always!**

***Fisherwomen in Brazil create their own national organization to struggle for their rights, and for life***

**By Naína Pierri, Professor of the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil, and Man Yu Chang, Adviser, Department of Environment and Water Resources, State Secretary of Paraná, Brazil**

In March 2006, fisherwomen of Brazil took an important step towards their organization and mobilization. At the Second National Conference on Fisheries in Brasilia, fisherwomen from different regions of Brazil organized themselves and struggled very successfully to highlight their specific rights. At the end of the conference, an independent national organization called 'National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil' was created. One month later, on 8 and 9 April 2006, the organization had its first meeting in Recife, Pernambuco. In the subsequent month, this newborn organization was accepted as a regular member of the National Council for Fisheries, comprising different interest groups and institutions related to the sector.

During the first term of the administration of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, from 2002 to 2006, two national conferences on aquaculture and fisheries were organized, in September 2003 and March 2006. These conferences were preceded by State-level conferences throughout the country. A national meeting for women workers in fisheries was also organized in December 2004, again preceded by State-level meetings.

The purpose of the conferences and meetings was to provide opportunities to government officials to interact directly with fisherfolk in order to ensure that their situation and demands could be incorporated into specific public policies. At the same time, the conferences were undoubtedly precious opportunities for fishworkers to consolidate their class consciousness and set up their own organizations. During the three-day events, over 2,000 representatives of the sector, from different parts of

the country, met and reported on their specific realities, and defined and discussed their priorities and demands. Fisherwomen delegates were particularly aware that such opportunities were rare, and so they used these conferences as an opportunity to strengthen their consciousness, organization and mobilization, grounded in vision, courage and dignity.

The foundation of the 'National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil' was the culmination of a process that had begun at least three years ago, in September 2003, during the First National Conference on Fisheries, when fisherwomen from different parts of the country began to discuss their situation. They realized soon enough that the general conference did not give proper attention to their specific problems, and, therefore, requested the government to organize a national meeting of fisherwomen. The government accepted their demand, and, in the following year, 2004, the First National Meeting of Women Workers in Fisheries was organized, preceded by State-level meetings. Despite the fact that the national meeting was convened by the government, it was very helpful for fisherwomen to voice their demands publicly, in an independent and forceful manner.

When fisherwomen arrived at the Second National General Conference on Fisheries in March 2006, they had already accumulated organizational experience. This made them the group with the highest mobilizing capacity among all participants. They had clearly defined three goals for the conference: (i) to gain a slot in the proceedings schedule for a fisherwoman to deliver a speech at the opening and closing ceremony, to express their specific needs; (ii) to change the rules and settings of the conference by adding a clause to ensure that the composition of the permanent presiding table had at least 30 per cent women representatives; and (iii) to get the General Conference to approve the document finalized at the National Meeting of Women Workers in Fisheries, in 2004, as a way to legitimize their demands of being part of the fisheries class.

A strong demonstration by fisherwomen prior to the opening of the conference called the attention of the organizing committee, and the opportunity was created for a speech to be delivered by a fisherwoman



representative during the opening ceremony. The group also succeeded in ensuring that the organizing committee of the conference comprised 30 per cent women. Two hundred signatures were collected for the approval of this change in the general assembly of the conference, a change that was finally approved by all delegates. The group also collected more than 400 signatures in two hours in support of a legislative change that would recognize activities performed by women, related both directly and indirectly to fisheries. Several activities, both in the pre- and post-harvest sector, are usually performed by women. It was hoped that this project would ensure recognition of this work and confer labour rights on fisherwomen.

Following the intense and successful mobilization, the women's group met one more time and founded the 'National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil'. The first meeting of this organization took place during 8 and 9 April 2006 in Recife, with the support of the Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP), a branch of the Catholic church committed to social causes. There were around 70 participants.

Fisherwomen discussed the principles and goals of the organization, and defined the first plan of action for the next term. A foundation letter was written, which synthesized the history of the struggle of fisherwomen, expressed their main problems, and established principles and priority demands. The

principles highlighted were: solidarity, autonomy, democracy, respect of differences, and respect for the environment. Among the demands prioritized were the valorization of the fisherwomen's identity and their struggle against discrimination and violence of all kinds. The foundation letter ended with the phrase "Struggle for life always!", which synthesized well the spirit of these courageous women founders. The main challenges at present are to increase grassroots participation; promote gender and class consciousness; and strengthen mobilization at local, regional and national levels.

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## Asia/ India

### Uncertain future

*Women seaweed collectors in the Gulf of Mannar region of Tamil Nadu face an uncertain future*

**This piece is based on an interview by Ramya Rajagopalan, Consultant, ICSF Documentation Centre**

Shanti, a 34-year old woman from Meenarvar-kuppam, a small fishing hamlet on the Kilakarai coast of Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, India, has been collecting seaweed right from the day she was 10 years old, from the islands in the Gulf of Mannar area. She collects seaweed everyday, except on Fridays, a day designated as a no-collection day by the village leadership. Women from Meenarvar-kuppam regularly visit the islands of Appa, Valai, Muli, Musa and Manali.

Earlier, Shanti used to stay on the islands during the peak season—from December to February—and collect seaweed. Now, she goes to the islands using an outboard motor (OBM)-powered *vallam* (plank-built canoe). She goes with about 10 other women, with a man on board to navigate. They leave early in the morning by 6 a.m., cooking and packing

their two meals before they set off to sea, and return by 6 p.m.

Like all the other women with her, Shanti collects seaweed with her hands. She uses goggles to protect her eyes. The net is tied to her hip, and metal plates are fixed to her legs to help her keep swimming. She dives up to a depth of 6-7 m to collect seashells and seaweed. She spends eight hours in the water, often in neck-deep waters, with her back bent, collecting seaweeds with her hands. She earns roughly Rs 50-100 (US\$1-2) per day—this is one of the main sources of income for her family of five, which includes her husband and three daughters.

Seaweed can be collected for a period of only six months, from October to March, as, during the rest of the year, it is too windy. Even during the seaweed season, collection is not possible when the waters are murky. During the off-season, Shanti catches fish and crabs.

There are about 50 women from the same village who have been collecting seaweed on a regular basis from these islands, earning Rs 50-100 per day. They collect around 500-600 kg of seaweed each day. They also collect other molluscs and ornamental shells. These women are sure they would not like their children to collect seaweed for their livelihoods.

The main species of seaweed collected are *Gelidiella acerosa* and *Sargassum*. These are sold fresh to the trader, who comes and collects it from the village, at a rate of Rs 4 (US\$0.1) per kg in the case of *G. acerosa*, and of Rs 10 (US\$0.2) per kg for *Sargassum*. While *G. acerosa* is available throughout the year, *Sargassum* is available only for a period of three months—October, November and December. The traders collect the seaweed, dry them and sell them to the two agar-processing companies in Madurai.

The seaweed is collected from the islands closer to Meenavarkuppam. These islands are part of the 21-island chain of the Gulf of Mannar region, which was notified as a National Park (Marine Protected Area) by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 1986, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA), 1972. The national

park is being managed by the Wildlife Warden, Department of Environment and Forests, Government of Tamil Nadu.

The seaweeds grow only in the shallow waters around the islands. According to the WPA, extraction of any resource from a national park is prohibited. Though the park was declared in 1986, there was no strict implementation of regulations until 2002. It was only in 2002 that people were asked to stop collecting seaweed from the area around the islands.

These islands also form part of the 'core' area of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, which was declared in 1989. As part of the management of the biosphere reserve, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Global Environment Facility (GEF)-Government of India (GOI) project was initiated in 2002, and the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GOMBRT) was set up to handle the management aspects of the biosphere reserve. A number of talks have been organized among scientists working on seaweed, seaweed collectors, traders and other related industry groups, to discuss conservation strategies for seaweed through this initiative.

In the Gulf of Mannar region, there are around 5,000 women from approximately 25 villages dependent on seaweed collection for their livelihoods. Many of them are part of the Ramnad Fishermen's Union. The sudden restriction on seaweed collection in 2002 had severe implications for these women. Several discussions took place at both the union and village level, and it was decided to regulate collection activities—the method of seaweed collection and the number of days it could be collected. Prior to 2005, for example, seaweed was collected using metal scrapers, considered destructive to their further propagation. In 2006, the union and a number of villages decided to ban collection of seaweeds using metal scrapers. Traders were also asked not to purchase seaweed collected in this fashion.

However, despite these efforts at self-regulation, women seaweed collectors face harassment on a regular basis as seaweed collection around the islands is officially forbidden. They have to pay off local forest



guards and rangers if they want to go to collect seaweed.

A joint meeting of seaweed collectors, wholesale merchants, manufacturers of seaweed products (the All India Agar and Alginate Manufacturers Association), research institutes, GOMBRT and the management of the Gulf of Mannar National Park was held on 17 December 2006 in order to discuss some of these issues. The meeting agreed that seaweed collection should be avoided in national park areas, that only non-destructive methods of collection should be adopted, and that seaweed collection should be banned in the months of March, April and May, considered the growing season for seaweed, to help in further propagation of seaweeds. The traders were asked to fix a reasonable price according to the species and quality, and not to purchase immature seaweed and seaweed collected using destructive methods. The GOMBRT was asked to organize women self-help groups (SHGs) for seaweed culture, and to create awareness about the importance of seaweed in maintaining biodiversity.

With the upcoming three-month ban on seaweed collection looming large, women in the community fear they are going to be badly affected, given that seaweed collection is their main source of income and livelihood. In most villages, few options for alternative livelihoods have been provided. Discussions on the viability of culturing *G. acerosa* and *Sargassum* are still going on.

Many issues face the women seaweed collectors in the Gulf of Mannar, including restriction of access to seaweed resources, methods to be used to harvest seaweed in non-destructive ways, closed season, and low market prices. Their future in the only livelihood they have known depends on whether their perspectives are incorporated into the upcoming management plan for the national park and biosphere reserve, and on the manner in which these plans are implemented.

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## Asia/ India

### Getting the count right

*The Marine Fisheries Census 2005 provides, among other things, information on women's work in fisheries-related activities in India*

**By Chandrika Sharma, Executive Secretary, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers**

The fisheries sector in India is estimated to provide employment to several million people. There can be no denying the importance of good data about the people who harvest, process and trade in fish resources, to put in place effective management systems, given that fisheries management is about managing people and their interactions with the resource base.

The Marine Fisheries Census 2005, commissioned by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, and conducted by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) is a commendable effort in this direction. The census provides a wealth of information that will be useful for policymakers, researchers and others in the sector.

The last comprehensive census was conducted by CMFRI in 1980. It covered 2,132 marine fishing villages, with 1,442 landing centres and 333,038

households. The 2005 census covered 3,202 marine fishing villages, 1,332 landing centres and 756,212 households (a total of 3.52 mn marine fisherfolk) in all maritime States and Union Territories of India. It does not cover the Andaman and Nicobar islands and the islands of Lakshadweep.

Notably, the census has data on women working in fisheries-related activities in the marine fisheries sector. The lack of reliable data on women's work in the fisheries sector has long been pointed out as a major lacuna in fisheries statistics, in India and elsewhere. It has been stressed that lack of data reinforces the invisibility of women's work, and is a major reason for gender-blind fisheries policies that assume that it is men who dominate the sector.

The census was conducted with the following objectives:

- determine population size and structure at a micro level;
- assess the educational and socio-religious status of fisherfolk;
- determine the number of active fishermen engaged in fishing;
- determine gender-wise occupation in fishery-related activities;
- determine the number of craft and gear owned by fisherfolk;
- quantify the number of craft and gear in the fishery;
- obtain information on infrastructure facilities, such as landing centres;
- obtain information on other utilitarian facilities and social aspects; and
- provide information on the number of fishing villages, landing centres, fisherfolk population, active fishermen, occupational status, fishing craft and gear and related parameters.

In keeping with the above objectives, the census provides detailed information on several aspects of the fisheries sector, including population size and structure, educational level, craft and gear, ownership of craft and gear, as well as the availability of basic

facilities, such as health and education. The attempt below is to look at some of this large volume of data, from a gender perspective.

The census notes that women form 48.6 per cent of the marine fisherfolk population, with 948 females for 1,000 males—the all India sex ratio, according to the Census of India 2001, is 933 ([http://www.censusindia.net/t\\_00\\_003.html](http://www.censusindia.net/t_00_003.html)). The sex ratio for fishing communities is maximum in Kerala (980) and minimum in West Bengal (898), among the States of India. According to data from the 2001 Census of India, the sex ratio for Kerala as a whole is 1,058, and for West Bengal it is 934. Why is the sex ratio in fishing communities so low in Kerala, given that for the State as a whole, the ratio is favourable? Several such issues need to be further explored by researchers and others working in the sector.

It is noteworthy that the census provides information on community issues, such as availability of electricity, banks, accessible roads, health and education facilities, housing, and membership in co-operative societies. There is also information on the fishery-related infrastructure available—boatyards, ice factories, cold storage, freezing and canning plants, curing yards, peeling sheds and fishmeal plants. Undoubtedly, this data should be used by policymakers to improve access to basic facilities and infrastructure. Perhaps the next census could also include aspects such as access to water and sanitation, key issues for many fishing communities.

The census defines a 'marine fisherman' as a person—man or woman—engaged in marine fishing or any other activity associated with marine fishery, or both. Fishing is defined to include activities like seed collection. The data that has been collected provides information on fishermen engaged in active fishing (full-time, part-time or occasional). However, the absence of gender-disaggregated data on those who fish makes it difficult to estimate the number of women engaged in actual marine fishing in India. Even if the number of women fishing is small, this information would have been useful. It is known, for example, that along some parts of the coast, women engage in shrimp seed collection; beach-seining; crab, shellfish and seaweed



collection; and so on. It would also have been useful to obtain a gender-differentiated picture on ownership of craft and gear.

Gender-disaggregated data is, however, available, as mentioned earlier, for those engaged in fishery-related activities, for example, marketing, providing labour, processing, net-making, and so on. The 2005 census notes that among women, the major fishing-related activities are marketing (41.8 per cent), labour (18.4 per cent) and curing/processing (18 per cent). Further, as many as 73.6 per cent of those engaged in marketing are women, while 75.7 per cent of those in curing and processing are also women. It is apparent that women dominate marketing and processing activities in marine fisheries.

Statewise data indicates that the largest numbers of women in marketing are in Maharashtra (39,288), Tamil Nadu (31,019) and Andhra Pradesh (27,160). Significant numbers of women engage in processing/curing activities in Andhra Pradesh (24,524), Orissa (16,447) and Maharashtra (8,584). Men, on the other hand, predominate in activities such as repair and net making, and in providing labour for fishing activities.

A look at total numbers is also interesting. The total fisherfolk population is 3,519,116. Of this, 889,528 are classified as active fishermen; 390,928 men are found to engage in fishing-associated activities, while the corresponding figure for women is 365,463. Women, in other words, account for 48.3 per cent of

the fisherfolk in fishing-associated activities.

The data collected proves beyond doubt that women are an integral part of the marine fisheries sector in India. It is to be hoped that this data is used effectively for the formulation of policies that reinforce and support women's roles in the fisheries, in activities such as marketing and processing, and stimulates further research. The detailed data and information available in the Statewise census reports should prove invaluable for this.

It is also to be hoped that such censuses are conducted with periodic regularity, and that efforts are made to improve the methodology used, the dimensions and issues explored and the reliability of data collected. Further, the scope for better integrating the Marine Fisheries Census with the National Census needs to be explored. No doubt, lessons can be drawn from other countries that have undertaken similar efforts.

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## Europe/ Netherlands

### Sharing, learning, inspiring

*Women of Northern Irish fishing communities meet with their counterparts in the Netherlands*

**By Cornelia Quist, a supporter of VinVis and a member of ICSF, with inputs from Louise Henning and Trish Slater (NIWIF) and Marja Bekendam and Mariet Groen (VinVis)**

In September 2006, 14 women from the Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries Network (NIWIF) visited the Netherlands to meet with their counterparts in VinVis, the Dutch Women in Fisheries Network. The visit was the result of contacts made last May at the founding meeting of AKTEA, the European Network of Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe.

The NIWIF network is a new organization, formed by women-in-fisheries (WIF) groups based in the three major fishing harbours of Northern Ireland: Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie. The network was

initiated by women of the Fishermen's Wives Support group of Kilkeel, who had been participating in several WIF events in Europe and had been inspired by WIF networks that existed in other countries, such as the Dutch VinVis. The NIWIF network chose VinVis for its first exchange visit because the Dutch network had already been in existence for six years and the Northern Irish women were interested in learning from the Dutch women's experiences and in exploring ideas about how to regenerate their own ailing fishery industry.

The Dutch WIF network, VinVis, is a network of women from family-based fishing enterprises from all important fishing regions of the Netherlands. The Dutch women saw it as a big challenge to host their Northern Irish counterparts. It was decided to focus the visit on the three most important living fishing communities: Wieringen (multi-species fisheries), Lauwersoog (shrimp fisheries) and Urk (flatfish and eel fisheries). The idea was to expose the Irish women to the history of these communities, their way of life and to successful initiatives taken up to keep their communities and the fishery industry alive.

The Irish women visited several fisheries museums and went on walking tours in ancient, picturesque fishing villages. They were also exposed to fishing harbours, where initiatives such as a fresh-fish market and cosy eating places promoting fish dishes, were being undertaken. They also visited a fish auction where the fishermen's catch was sold with the aid of electronic gadgets—seen as a fair system that gave better prices to the fishermen. The women had lunch on board a decommissioned shrimp trawler that was converted into a leisure ship for tourists. The skipper-owner, a former shrimp fisher, informed them about the history and problems of the Dutch shrimp fishing community. A visit to the largest shrimp trading company of Europe had to be cancelled at the last moment, in all probability because the management was afraid of negative publicity at a time when relations between the company and the Dutch shrimp fishing community were disturbed (see *Yemaya* July 2003). The Northern Irish women were very surprised to hear that Dutch shrimps were being transported all

the way, by truck, from northern Netherlands to north Africa (Morocco) for peeling!

One day of their visit was reserved for a sharing session between women of both the networks. Being only among women, there was space for heart-to-heart conversation. The women were surprised to find so many similarities in the problems they, as fishermen's wives, faced as a result of the ailing fishery industry in both countries. The problems varied from personal traumas, such as bankruptcy of the family enterprise or loss of their husbands in accidents at sea, to family and community problems, such as fast decline of incomes, out-migration of youth, deterioration of public facilities in their villages, and even increase of divorces. Women noted how the quality of their family lives had deteriorated, because now, to keep their incomes at reasonable levels, their husbands had to go for fishing voyages that lasted over one week, leaving behind all the responsibilities to the women on shore. Most of the earnings from fishing went back into the boats, and besides doing all the shore-based work for the enterprise, women now also had to take up jobs outside the sector to supplement their husband-fishermen's incomes, and to be able to feed, clad and educate their children. The women recalled how their husbands were always tired and worried these days, which was also negatively affecting marital relations and the environment for the children. The women also felt that the fishermen of their communities had become more individualistic and had lost the ability to co-operate, losing influence and control. Today, they said, it is the trading companies that are in control.

Much time was spent on discussing alternatives. A few women shared how their families had been able to turn the tide. One Irish woman described how she and her husband had decommissioned their boat and started a crab-processing plant. They had learned the skills all by themselves, and worked very hard together to finally be able to earn a stable income and manage a good standard of life again. A Dutch recounted how she and her husband had successfully diversified their economic activities by changing to part-time fishing, complemented by a decorative and building business.



Good co-operation and communication between husband and wife, on a basis of equality, was felt to be of great importance. The women felt that they could have an important role in broadening the perspectives of their husbands. Women also stressed the need for educating their children and their communities about the importance of preserving their culture and identity; otherwise, these would be lost within a decade.

The Irish women were impressed to see how the Dutch fishing villages were preserving their culture through well-maintained fisheries museums and community activities to promote their products and way of life. It was also seen as very important for women to come forward and participate in public meetings concerning fisheries policies and management, to speak out and defend the interests of their families and communities. Women felt that the fishing effort should be reduced, not through complicated rules and regulations imposed by the State, but through initiatives by the community itself. For the latter to happen, women could play a role in uniting the community, even though they knew this to be no easy job.

Following this meeting was a beautiful buffet with homemade (fish) dishes, arranged by the VinVis women. The men were also invited to the buffet. In his speech, the leader of the fishermen's organization praised the women's initiative of cross-border exchange and said that the men should learn from this example.



The exchange visit ended with a visit to the monument dedicated to those who had lost their lives at sea in Urk, the largest fishing village of the Netherlands. This was a moment of deep sadness, because there were three widows in the Irish group who had lost their husbands in accidents at sea. A deep solidarity was felt among the women, tears flowed and hands were held.

The women separated in warm friendship, mentioning how energized and inspired they felt through the visit. This year they will meet again when NIWIF hosts the next AKTEA meeting in April 2007. The success of this exchange visit will certainly be shared with the other European WIF groups, and, hopefully, more of these initiatives will follow.

Some of the responses of the women who were part of the visit:

“We were impressed with the enthusiasm of the fishermen’s wives in Holland in trying to keep alive the fishing industry and with the support they give to their husbands.”(a NIWIF woman)

“In these times of globalization, it is so good to know that there are still people who stick together and make a fist for their communities and family enterprises.” (a VinVis woman)

“We visited a museum in Zoutkamp, which we all thoroughly enjoyed, and got lots of ideas for a museum which we hope will be set up in Kilkeel in the near future.” (a NIWIF woman)

“It was a great experience for us, the VinVis women, to organize this event all by ourselves, without any financial support, and by just using our own creativity and putting our shoulders together. It has strengthened our mutual relations and given us energy. It was also a great experience to look at our fishing communities through the eyes of our guests. We have learnt a lot.” (a VinVis woman)

“This was a great field trip and we want to thank all involved in the organization.” (a NIWIF woman).

“By going on with our network, going on with learning from, listening to, and supporting one another, we will protect what we believe in: Our way of life!” (a VinVis woman)

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## Film

### Wild Caught

*Wild Caught: The Life and Struggles of an American Fishing Town. Documentary. 2006. 98 minutes. Producer and Director: Matthew Barr*

**The following background to the film is in the words of the director, Mathew Barr (<http://www.unheardvoicesproject.org/background.html#>)**

*Wild Caught: The Life and Struggles of an American Fishing Town* is a feature-length documentary that explores the lives of small-scale commercial fishermen living in Snead’s Ferry, North Carolina.

For over 300 years the fishermen have made a precarious living catching shrimp, clams and finfish; now, the forces of globalization, imports, rising fuel prices and explosive coastal growth are threatening this hard-fought and deeply ingrained way of life. They don’t do it for the money—they fish because they have to, because they love the freedom. They are some of the last true independent spirits left in America, and their struggles to keep afloat in Snead’s Ferry is symbolic of what is going on around the country, and around the planet.

In 1999, on North Topsail Beach, I used to see shrimp boats go from the ocean to a river inlet in the Intracoastal Waterway. Curious, I drove inland to see where they docked and discovered the village of Snead’s Ferry.

The fishermen of Snead’s Ferry, North Carolina, as I first knew them in 1999, were struggling but putting groceries on the table—and were providing some of the best seafood money could buy. They were surviving in a job known as the most dangerous in the country, where death and serious injury are common. As small-scale fishermen knowledgeable in the ‘folk’ ways of fishing, their priority has always been to work in harmony with the environment and to monitor the fish stocks that provide their livelihood. Though lumped together with large-scale freezer-trawler operations under the job title ‘commercial fishermen’, they had as much in common with them as the man on the moon.

In 1999 and 2000, as I began filming, things were tough, but survivable. As I became accepted in the town, fishermen and their families shared their knowledge, techniques and sea stories. They practise a sustainable type of fishing, limited by scale and locality to being ecologically sound. Their experiential knowledge base, handed down from generation to generation, is enormous. Some have spent half of their lives at sea.

As fascinated as I was by the visceral process of fishing, the fishermen’s philosophy and sea stories became a layered underpinning to the story. Why is this way of life so powerful? Does it come from the strong sense of spirituality fishermen feel out in the ocean? What is the sense of freedom that the fishermen kept alluding to?



Ultimately, *Wild Caught* is about community, so hard to find yet so central to who we are as human beings. The people of Snead's Ferry have a deeply imbedded sense of togetherness. They really do look out for one another, even though they have little money.

Ultimately, though, the story itself changed. The fishermen of Snead's Ferry have had to deal for a long time with complex regulations and hard times. But by 2005, they had to cope with ever-expanding competition from cheap imported seafood, unparalleled coastal growth, escalating taxes and lowered prices. Now, in 2006, with most of the fish houses up for sale, the fishermen's very survival is in jeopardy.

And that is the story of *Wild Caught*.

## Publications

### Gender Focus

***The web dossier, Gender Focus: A collection of articles from Yemaya, includes a selection of articles from Yemaya, classified by region***

Women of fishing communities across the world play vital roles in fisheries, and in sustaining their households, communities, social networks and cultures. While these roles are central to maintaining livelihoods and the very activity of fisheries, they often remain unacknowledged and undervalued.

*Yemaya*, the gender and fisheries newsletter from ICSF was initiated in 1999 to draw attention to women's roles and work in the fisheries and in fishing communities, as well as to initiatives being taken by them to organize and defend their interests and the interests of their communities. It was also to provide a meaningful forum for sharing of experiences, views and strategies.

This web dossier compiles selected articles from *Yemaya* by region—Asia, Africa, Latin America,

Europe, Pacific Islands and North America. The articles, taken together, provide a broad overview of the key issues facing women in the fisheries sector in each region, as well as the local, national and regional initiatives being taken by women's groups to organize around their concerns.

The web dossier can be downloaded from [http://www.icsf.net/jsp/english/pubPages/dossiers/dos\\_yem.jsp](http://www.icsf.net/jsp/english/pubPages/dossiers/dos_yem.jsp). The dossier is also available in French and Spanish.

## Publications

### Gender and Disaster

***Guidelines for Gender-sensitive Disaster Management: Practical Steps to Ensure Women's Needs are Met and Women's Human Rights are Respected and Protected. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD). 2006. 84 pages.***

These guidelines have been formulated to assist governments, the non-State sector and civil society in dealing with women who have been affected by natural disasters. They are meant to be practical, easy-to-follow steps that need to be taken in responding to women's concerns in post-disaster situations. They have been categorized into immediate, mid-term and long-term responses. However, there could be overlaps in the responses, and this factor needs to be taken into consideration in implementing the guidelines.

These guidelines are the result of the documentation project Survey of Women's Human Rights Violations in the Aftermath of the Tsunami in India, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka and the October 8, 2005 Earthquake in Pakistan, co-ordinated by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), a women's human rights network of over 140 members in 23 countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

This publication can be accessed at [http://www.apwld.org/pdf/Gender\\_Sensitive.pdf](http://www.apwld.org/pdf/Gender_Sensitive.pdf)

## Announcement



**AKTEA Conference:  
Women in Fisheries  
and Aquaculture:  
C o n n e c t i n g  
Communities for  
Building the Future,  
Annalong, Northern  
Ireland, 27 and 28 April  
2007**

The Second Conference and the Second General Body meeting of AKTEA: European Network of Women's Organizations in Fisheries and Aquaculture will be held in Northern Ireland in April 2007. Both events are being hosted by the Northern Ireland Women in Fisheries (NIWIF) network, which groups fisherwomen. The conference has been planned in two parts. The first part will focus on action needed vis-à-vis European institutions. The major issues that will be discussed are: the European Fisheries Policy and women's organizations; the European Fisheries Fund (2007-2013) and women's organizations; and assigning legal status to collaborative spouses (EU Directive 86/613) by all European Union Member States.

The second part of the conference will discuss the AKTEA network programme for the next two years. The main issues to be discussed are: (i) networking, communication and exchange; (ii) solidarity linkages: how to build and sustain the network at the transnational level; (iii) visibility and strengthening of the role of women and women's organizations in sustaining local communities through workshops, training programmes, exchange programmes and research; and (iv) promoting safety at sea through activities such as workshops, training programmes, exchange programmes and research.

On Sunday, 29 April, there will be a special workshop to discuss global issues in fisheries, in particular, the impact of global developments on fishing communities worldwide. This workshop will also discuss how to build solidarity linkages between women of fishing communities in the North and South.

For further details on the conference, please contact Katia Frangouides at [Katia.Frangouides@univ-brest.fr](mailto:Katia.Frangouides@univ-brest.fr)

### YEMAYA

ICSF's Newsletter on Gender  
and Fisheries

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Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We would also like names of other people who could be interested in being part of this initiative. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.

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