



Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

“If small-scale fisheries itself is under threat of extinction, particularly as we see in Northern countries, why are we talking about protecting women’s roles in fisheries”, asked one of the participants at the recently-concluded Civil Society Workshop in Bangkok, held from 11 to 13 October, preparatory to the Global Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, Bangkok, Thailand, 13 to 17 October 2008 (www.4ssf.org). “Let us, instead, talk about saving small-scale fisheries itself, as only if the sub-sector survives, can we talk of protecting women’s roles”.

Many in the workshop, however, were clear that the struggle for recognition of women’s roles in small-scale fisheries is linked to the struggle for defending small-scale fisheries itself. They go hand-in-hand; not one or the other; not one after the other. For, in the gender division of labour that has typically existed in many small-scale fishing communities, it is the men who fish, while women add value to the fish by processing and selling it, bringing the money back to the community. The household and community function as production units, and the wealth from the fisheries comes back to the community.

However, as the nature of the fisheries has changed towards more centralized, technology-intensive and industrial models, women are fast losing their spaces within the fisheries. In several countries of the South, for example, women are losing access to fish, or have access to only low-value fish. Displaced from their earlier roles, they are finding employment in harbours and landing centers, sorting trash fish, peeling shrimp or undertaking similar low-paid jobs.

It is increasingly clear that women’s interests, and those of their communities, are best protected within a small-scale model of fisheries development, while simultaneously addressing inequitable power relations between the genders. It is also clear that protecting women’s spaces in the fisheries is akin to defending small-scale fisheries itself, and to maintaining the viability and wellbeing of fishing communities.

Thus, the consensus Statement from the Civil Society Workshop highlights the need to “protect access of women of fishing communities to fish resources for processing, trading, and food, particularly through protecting the diversified and decentralized nature of small-scale and indigenous fisheries”. The Statement further stresses the need to improve access of women to fish markets, particularly through provision of credit, appropriate technology and infrastructure at landing sites and markets, and to guarantee the rights of fishing communities to basic services. It highlights the need to adopt specific measures to address, strengthen and protect women’s rights to participate fully in all aspects of small-scale fisheries, eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and securing their safety against sexual abuse.

The Statement recognizes that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and that the development of responsible and sustainable small-scale and indigenous fisheries is possible only if their political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are addressed in an integrated manner. It further underlines that all rights and freedoms apply equally to all men and women in fishing communities.

The message from the Civil Society Workshop is powerful and direct. It must be heeded, particularly by our policymakers. **■**



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Women's future in fishing

This article reflects on the issues and challenges facing women in small-scale fisheries, in the context of the recently-held international conference in Bangkok, where women, however, continued to be under-represented

By **Danièle Le Sauce**
(daniele.le.sauce@wanadoo.fr),
Collectif Pêche et Développement,
France. Translated
from French by
Brian O'Riordan
(briano@scarlet.be),
Secretary,
ICSF Belgium Office

From 13 to 17 October 2008, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand, organized an International Conference in Bangkok, Thailand entitled: "Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: Bringing together responsible fisheries and social development". A preparatory meeting was organized from 11 to 13 October. This was convened by the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP), the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), the Federation of Southern Fisherfolk (FSF), the International NGO/CSO Planning Committee (IPC) and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF). It enabled discussions to take place to prepare the demands for artisanal fishing worldwide.



Given the importance accorded to the role of women in this sector by the FAO and the need to assure their presence and active participation in this conference, it is worth pointing out that women comprised only one quarter of the participants.

We need to reflect on the thirty years of struggles by women from around the world for their representation in organizations engaged with the issue of fishing rights. In the 1990s, ICSF organized the first meetings between women from countries in the North and South

in order to encourage their participation in decision-making processes in the fisheries sector. At Loctudy in October 2000, the two World Fisher Forums decided that in future all their delegations to meetings anywhere in the world would have equal representation of men and women. In this context, we see from the Bangkok meeting that we are clearly still a long way off from that decision of equal representation!

The first issue addressed by the preparatory workshop was "how to recognize and strengthen the role of women?" However, such a discussion is meaningless when women themselves are under-represented in the meeting. The discussion can only move forward when the role of men is challenged in not allowing women to come forward. It can only make sense when we transcend recognition, and move on to concretely discussing the leadership role of women.

There is adequate recognition in the fishing sector that women's work (whether paid or unpaid) in post-harvest activities adds value. They have a direct and equal stake in all engagements on the issue of fishing rights. Men in the sector can no longer be allowed to take all decisions on their behalf.

A theme of one of the working groups at the Conference was on how the economic, social and human rights of women as self-employed, as co-workers, and as community members could be secured.

The working group felt that although we have an ideal framework to guarantee women's rights, putting this into practice is not always possible. Women must get organized and mobilize themselves around important questions and issues. Often a crisis may be used as a springboard (as in the case of France in 1993-1994). Such organization can facilitate recognition by government; and allow women to demand participation in decisionmaking. Having a legal constitution also benefits organizations.

Women's organizations need to have a clear vision/mission and a good understanding of the aims and objectives of their lobbying activities. A strategic approach must be applied to influencing politicians and for using electoral processes to promote women's interests. Women's rights must be placed in a wider context of the roles that women have in communities, and of community needs. Women often require training to enable them play a greater role. In many instances, illiteracy prevents women from

taking up their rights (as in Nepal where female illiteracy stands at 70 per cent). Here NGOs can and do play an important role.

Women's groups need to establish networks, contacts and alliances with organizations in other sectors to share experiences and to identify strategies, for example, in monitoring the application of conventions. Collecting information on the roles of women and the kind of work they do, as well as on their access to, and control over, resources, could provide a way of capacity building and awareness among women to help them demand their rights (as in India). Legal recognition of the rights and role of women in labour is important. But there are few countries that have attained this goal (like in France, the status of collaborating spouse). Women and men must work together to guarantee rights and to change gender relations. Traditional and religious customs may represent serious obstacles in putting commitments into practice at policy level. Use of media may provide an effective strategy for drawing attention to the role of women.

On reading the report of this group, one can see that all the levers for obtaining the objective of affirming the role and place of women are there. However, the leverage is easier spoken about than done. In Europe, the decline of the fisheries sector has provoked a serious de-mobilization of women. Their future is totally dependent on the state of the resources, and on the dynamism of the sector. In the South, women in fishing communities live in poverty, and religion and tradition are large obstacles to their coming out and participating in deciding their future.

The current global crisis shows us how weak our financial system is. Countries have blindly fixed development targets based on economic performance without taking into account social or environmental repercussions. There is an increasing urgency for people, women and children and to look at alternative development models. Such a worldview will also move us closer to discussing forms of fisheries that are more sustainable. ❏

“Women’s rights must be placed in a wider context of the roles that women have in communities, and of community needs.”

LATIN AMERICA

CHILE

Not just the cherry on the cake

Gender mainstreaming and anti-discrimination measures form central planks in President Michelle Bachelet’s policies for Chile. This article discusses how Chilean women in fisheries are benefiting from the new measures

This article has been compiled by **Brian O’Riordan** (briano@scarlet.be), Secretary, ICSF Belgium Office, from various sources, including Conapach (www.conapach.cl), Tribuna del Bío Bío (www.tribunadelbiobio.cl) and Subpesca (www.subpesca.cl)

Elected in January 2006, Michelle Bachelet is Chile’s first woman President. Her election marked a milestone in the process of national reform, from dictatorship under the brutal Pinochet regime to democracy. Her father was tortured to death by Pinochet’s secret police. She and her mother were also imprisoned, but managed to escape rape, torture and murder, unlike thousands of less fortunate women.

On being elected, she pledged to bridge the gap between rich and poor and to give women and indigenous people a greater voice in Chile. Central policy planks of President Bachelet’s programme include gender mainstreaming and antidiscrimination. Eighteen months since she took over, and 12 months before a new round of Presidential elections, these policies are being implemented in the fisheries sector.

At a conference in Valparaiso in November 2007, an initiative was launched to establish a network of women in fisheries in Chile: the National Network of Women in Artisanal

Fisheries and Small-scale Aquaculture. The conference, the First International Meeting of Women in Artisanal Fishing and Small-scale Aquaculture, was co-organized by the Fisheries Sub-Secretariat and the Federation of Artisanal Fishing and Seafarers, FEPAMAR, from Region VIII.

Maria Torres, General Secretary of FEPAMAR, explains: “Around 12 international women fisher leaders were present at the Conference, joining some 80 women leaders from Chile. We found that, six years after our last meeting, some organizations had disappeared, while others were doing well”. Apart from providing a forum for exchange of experiences, the purpose of the meeting was, in Torres’ words, to “get the public services involved with artisanal fisheries, to become more engaged with the sector”, highlighting that “women are not behind artisanal fishermen, but at their side, helping with fisheries activities as much on land as at sea.”

According to Maria Torres: “Traditionally Latin American societies have been organized along patriarchal lines. This has come about as a consequence of male dominance in the public spaces that govern the economy, policies and society, with women being relegated to private domestic life. In the work place too, women’s



“The Fisheries Sub-Secretariat has heard the call of the President of the Republic, and has established, as a strategic priority, the inclusion and strengthening of the gender perspective as a central part of its policies and institutional tasks”.

work is often seen as mere support activity, which conceals its real importance. Women fail to be taken into account in national statistics or research, which has meant their exclusion from government plans and public policies. This has resulted in inequitable policies, and what is more, insufficient attention to issues of great priority for the artisanal fishery and their communities”.

On 5 August 2008, in Valparaíso, a co-operation agreement was signed between the Service for Women’s Affairs (SERNAM), the Fisheries Sub-Secretariat (SUBPESCA), and the Fisheries Service (SERNAPESCA). Present at the signing ceremony were women representatives from the artisanal fishing sector. These included the President of Conapach, Zoila Bustamante, María Torres, the Secretary of FEPAMAR from the VIII Region, and Gladis Alvarado from the Hualaihué Syndicate from Region VIII.

This agreement aims to disseminate information and provide training on the issue of women’s rights. It envisages direct contact between men and women stakeholders in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, with particular attention to consultations with women associated with fishery and aquaculture activities.

According to María Torres: “As far as the integration of women within the artisanal fisheries sector is concerned, while in the North there continues to be much *machismo*, in the Central zone women are more prominent due to their presence at sea as seaweed gatherers and fishers. Towards the South, women are even more visible, sailing and handling their own vessels, setting out to sea for up to 15 days, with risky weather conditions and the inherent problems that fishing conditions present daily.”

The agreement, according to Torres, is an important landmark. “In less than a year, thanks to our persistent demands, SUBPESCA, SERNAM

and SERNAPESCA have signed an agreement through which they will attempt to fulfill the Presidential mandate of reaching out to the people, instead of forcing the people to go to them. This will help the large number of rural *caletas*, from where women travel for many hours to reach the offices of SERNAPESCA and other government agencies. Women from the islands too face problems in accessing public services. So if public services go to them, it is a great achievement.”

On 30 October 2008, in Valparaíso, an anti-discrimination initiative in the fisheries sector was launched. The General Sub-Secretariat of the Chilean Government and the Sub-Secretariat of Fisheries signed a co-operation agreement to implement a plan of action to promote respect for diversity, tolerance and nondiscrimination in both the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, as well as in technical teams and in the public sector.

One of the programmes to be implemented is the *Subpesca en Terreno* (Subpesca on the Ground), which will address the demands for information and training of stakeholders all over Chile.

The Chilean Government views gender discrimination as being the result of violence and poverty. For this reason, says Torres: “the President of the Republic has given top priority to the social agenda for making the country more humane and more inclusive”.


In her speech during the signing ceremony, Zoila Bustamante, the President of Conapach, highlighted the importance of the issues to be addressed through the agreement, and called on the Government to ensure that in future, artisanal fishers are invited in their own right and “not just as the cherry on the cake”. Said Bustamante: “What we are hoping for is that from tomorrow onwards, when we work with the government, with the Fisheries Sub-Secretariat, we do it because we want to conserve the resources in the sea, so that in future we don’t have to survive on handouts; so that we can continue fishing and working, not waiting at home to be told that they will give us our basic needs”.

In her closing remarks, the representative of the Fisheries Sub-Secretariat, María Ángela Barbieri, said: “The Fisheries Sub-Secretariat has heard the call of the President of the Republic, and has established, as a strategic priority, the inclusion and strengthening of the gender perspective as a central part of its policies and institutional tasks”. It is vital, she said, for the constitution of a country to stimulate leadership capacities and self determination, not just for men, but also for women.

For Maria Torres, these agreements are an important step towards getting the National Network of Women in Artisanal Fisheries and Small-scale Aquaculture off the ground. Says Torres: "They will help to strengthen organizations of women and to train leaders; to generate new collaboration agreements with public and private bodies, and launch other initiatives. Plans are in hand to organize regional

meetings, where women can get to know each other and through undertaking participative regional analysis, to articulate their concerns and proposals in various spheres."

The first such regional meeting took place in Arica on 20 October 2008, and it is planned that meetings will be organized in 14 of the 15 Regions of the country, culminating on 4 February 2009 in Concepción. ■



Gemma Gades is an active leader of a local fisherfolk group protecting Hinatuan Bay. Located in the province of Surigao del Sur on the eastern side of Mindanao Island in southern Philippines, Hinatuan Bay is made up of small island ecosystems abundant with marine life. Women from Mahaba Island are part of a community group called "Ladies in United Movement Onward to Development" (LUMOT), formed to address the threats facing coastal resources – their primary source of income. The threats include fishing using compressors and fine mesh nets; the use of

coalition of voluntary groups and fisherfolk federations called NGOs for Fisheries Reform (NFR) for effective policy responses on the issue of fisherfolk resettlement in Hinatuan.

Reefs in Hinatuan Bay are slowly making a comeback after years of abuse. Eight fish sanctuaries exist within the bay and are patrolled by community members. Hinatuan Bay, where efforts are on to empower women to protect their seas, is one of the few sites in the Philippines with women fish wardens. Ka Gemma patrols the sanctuaries together with the wardens. Their efforts are bearing fruit; the big fishes have returned and the coral reefs are recovering. Dynamite fishing has been stopped for nearly two years thanks to active enforcement by fisherfolk organizations, fish wardens and the maritime police.

Since its formation, LUMOT has undertaken gender mainstreaming in its activities; husbands help women establish their fish sanctuary and build the guardhouse, as well as participate in mangrove reforestation and patrolling and enforcement of the sanctuaries.

Not everyone is happy about the sanctuaries. Some fishermen argue that sanctuaries should be opened up to local fishers now that the fish is back. In October 2003, tension between supporters and opponents grew when discontented fishers from Cambatong began a petition campaign. Ka Gemma and supportive local fisherfolk continue to advocate that the sanctuaries be maintained. With the help of the non-government organization, Center for Empowerment and Resource Development (CERD), campaigns to inform the displaced fishers about the benefits of maintaining the sanctuary are being carried out to this day. ■

PROFILE

Gemma Gades

Gemma Gades is an active member and President of Ladies in United Movement Onward to Development (LUMOT), the Philippines

This information has been compiled from the following sources: www.lmmanetwork.org and www.icsf.net/SU/Mon/EN/88

destructive devices and poisons; the clearing of mangrove forests for fishpond construction; siltation of seagrass beds due to limestone quarrying; and algal overgrowth due to domestic wastes. Members of LUMOT have been trained to deepen their understanding of the coastal environment and to boost their ability to contribute to the management of coastal resources.

Ka Gemma, an active member of LUMOT, became president of the organization in 1999. Later that year, the group NAMA HIN or the Alliance of Fisherfolk Organizations in Hinatuan was formed to address bay issues at the municipal level and to link different stakeholder groups. In 2000, Ka Gemma was elected President of NAMA HIN. NAMA HIN leaders are currently working with a national

Kerala's shrimp catchers under threat

Women shrimp catchers, who fish in a sustainable manner and provide protein to local markets, are under threat of losing their health and livelihoods

By **Karen Peters** (karenmpeters@mts.net) and **Shirley Thompson** (s_thompson@umanitoba.ca), Natural Resources Institute, Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth and Resources, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

The shrimp catchers of Vypin use the *thappiyedukkal* method of catching shrimp by sensing vibrations by hand, without fishing gear. This is also known as pulse fishing. Pulse fishing and knowledge of fishing cycles have been passed on for many generations. Most of the women report being self-taught in catching shrimp; learning by watching their mothers and grandmothers. They fish in open access canals, working in groups at a small distance from one another, and moving as a group, down the canal.

The women carry out all of the production and marketing, purchasing very few inputs. The women catch shrimp and market it immediately in the market of Vypin, a densely populated village in Kerala. This cuts out dependence on both middlemen and on ice, which in turn decreases the input cost. Women are thus able to retain almost all their daily earnings.

On an average, a woman shrimp catcher earns about US\$ 0.81 per day. The shrimp

catchers describe themselves as entrepreneurs and are very proud of their independence. Their income provides for survival but would not tolerate any major shocks to their health or ecosystem. The shrimp-catchers take care of each other despite being the most financially disadvantaged in the area. In September 2006, the full-time shrimp catchers joined a union that provides a savings plan for children's advanced education and for health emergencies. A small monthly fee is collected from the members of the union towards this. Some of the younger women participate in shrimp catching on a part-time basis while attending school.

Shrimp is caught in canals round the year. During medium or lean seasons, some of the younger members of the group work in shrimp-peeling sheds as labourers. Since the harvest seasons for both rice and shrimp coincide, some women engage in both rice as well as shrimp harvesting during this time. From April to early June is the peak season for catching shrimp in canals and in *pokkali* (a local salt-tolerant rice variety) rice fields. Many of these women, though poor, are the primary or sole income earners of their families.

Women's gains: Kerala, India

1979: The state government of Kerala abolishes market tax applicable to women fish vendors selling one head-load of fish a day.

1981: The Fishermen's Welfare Corporation of the Government of Kerala starts exclusive buses that transport women fish vendors from landing centres to different fish markets. Women need to buy a monthly travel pass. Later, these buses begin plying across the district; now, women from their home villages in Trivandrum District can purchase fish from the landing harbour in Quilon for sale in the local market. Later however, the Welfare Corporation is abolished, and in 1991, the bus services are handed over to Matsyafed, Kerala's apex fishermen's co-operative.

1981: The Government of Kerala promulgates the Fishermen's Welfare Societies Act, redefining the term 'fisherman' to include women engaged in fish vending and net making.

1984: The Government of Kerala forms the Matsya Board (Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board) and abolishes the Fishermen's Welfare Corporation. The Matsya Board's definition of the term 'fisherman' is adopted from the Fishermen's Welfare Societies Act. This allows fisherwomen also to become Matsya Board members.

1989: Fisherwomen benefit from famine-cum-relief schemes in a few states in India. In some states fisherwomen are initially included but later excluded because

the Central Government's contribution to the scheme covers only fishermen and not fisherwomen. States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala start separate famine-cum-relief scheme for fisherwomen without assistance from the central government. In Tamil Nadu, under the scheme, a woman beneficiary contributes a sum of Rs. 75/- per month for eight months, with the State Government matching this amount. A total of Rs.1,200/- is given back to her during four lean months. 1,02,993 fisherwomen benefit from the scheme in Tamil Nadu during 2006-07. In Kerala, a similar scheme is implemented through local bodies.

1990s: Several fish markets are constructed for women fish vendors in many of India's maritime states and subsidies provided by the State government to local bodies for this purpose.

1991: A special wagon is made available to women fish vendors on passenger trains in southern Kerala and a few other parts on the west coast of India.

1992: As an outcome of women's struggles, fishers fishing in backwaters are granted compensation when inland fish is struck by the Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (EUS).

1997: The Labour Commissioner of Kerala decrees that the provisions of the Migrant Labour Act are applicable to women labourers migrating from Kerala to work in fish processing plants in Maharashtra and Gujarat. ❏

Milestones

Compiled by **Nalini Nayak** (nalininayak@asian-etindia.com), a member of Protsahan, an NGO based in Trivandrum, India, and a member of ICSEF

Sarasu, age 52, has eight members in her household. Shrimp catching is the main source of income as her husband is paralyzed and her two sons unemployed. Her two daughters-in-law are also shrimp catchers. Sarasu also works as a wage labourer to complement her income. Her day starts at 6:00 am, as she has to finish her household tasks before she goes out to catch shrimp. The fishing lasts for about three hours and is followed by a couple of hours at the market. She ends the day with household chores including firewood collection and drawing water from the well for the family.

Indira, aged 42, worked as a construction labourer until she began experiencing unbearable physical pain. Unmarried and with a mother to support, she was forced to take up shrimp catching. Her day starts at 5:00 am, and by 6:00 am, she wades into the water to catch shrimp. Indira is responsible for all the household chores.

Most women in shrimp catching have similar routines. Many women also take up seasonal work at shrimp processing plants. The income from processing plants only marginally increases these women's income as effluents from these plants pollute the canals thereby reducing the shrimp catch, their main income source.

The livelihoods of these shrimp catchers are under threat from various other activities including fishing. The dredging of canals to allow easy access to traditional fishing boats reduces shrimp catch.

According to these fishers, pollution has played havoc with the catch. The volume of the catch as well as the taste of the shrimp has been affected by fuel pollution from trawlers.

The growth of factories and industries, particularly the surge in fish and shrimp processing in the area, has polluted the canals with toxic effluents, causing shrimp and fish to die. Bio-wastes from sheds clog the canals, killing



shrimp larvae and juveniles. All these factors, together with an increase in the numbers of shrimp catchers, has led to a decline in the total shrimp catch as well as the catch per person.

The pollution in canals is also reported to cause various skin ailments, like rashes due to refrigeration effluents from the processing factories.

Women shrimp catchers, who fish in a sustainable manner and provide protein to local markets, are under threat of losing their health and livelihoods as a result of larger economic development. The health of the canals where they catch shrimp is under threat from environmental change due to pollution and over-harvesting by large operators.

This situation needs to change quickly in order to avoid a total collapse of the fisheries. Fisheries must be regulated at the local level. The rights of women working in canals must be protected. Effluent release from processing plants into the canals must be strictly monitored. Fisheries companies must be made accountable to local people. ❏

“The growth of factories and industries, particularly the surge of fish and shrimp processors in the area, has polluted the canals with toxic effluents, causing shrimp and fish to die.”

Getting its Akt together!

AKTEA, the European network of women's organizations in fisheries, grapples with several complex issues and decides to broaden its linkages with women in other sectors, in its annual general meeting

By **Katia Frangoudes** (katia.frangoudes@univ-brest.fr), Facilitator of AKTEA, the European Network of Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture

In 2005, European fisherwomen established AKTEA, a European network of women's organizations engaged in the fishing sector. AKTEA has representative organizations from 11 European member states. AKTEA has the following main objectives: to recognize women's contribution in fisheries and aquaculture; to

integrate women in decisionmaking related to fisheries and aquaculture; and to promote fisheries and aquaculture communities.

The network organizes an annual European meeting where women representatives from different countries exchange ideas and experiences. It also co-ordinates campaigns and actions at the European level. The last AKTEA general annual meeting was held in June 2008 at Arcachon in France.

At the annual general meeting, discussions centred on the participation of women in



the Regional Advisory Councils (RAC). RACs are stakeholder-led bodies set up within the framework of the 2002 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Commission. Their main task is to advise the Commission and member states on matters of fisheries management with respect to certain sea areas or fishing zones. RAC members include direct representatives from organizations of fishermen. They also include interest groups, comprising scientists and administrators, and NGOs representing environmental groups, consumer groups and other stakeholders. Some fisherwomen organizations are members of the respective regional RACs. These include: the North Sea Women's Network (NSWN), a member of the RAC of North Sea; Estrela do Mar of Portugal, a member of the South Atlantic RAC; the Scandinavian Network of the Baltic Sea RAC; and Mna na Mara of Ireland, a member of the North West Atlantic RAC. The NSWN chairs the socioeconomic commission

of its RAC, while the Portuguese network is a member of Commission in charge of traditional or small-scale fisheries.

The discussion raised two main issues: first, the lack of experience of fisherwomen's organizations in fisheries management, and hence the difficulty to participate in such debates; and second, the lack of finances, making it difficult for women's organizations to afford membership fees fixed by the RAC and meet travel costs to attend meetings. It was decided to raise funds to meet training costs for delegates from fisherwomen's organizations. The meeting also recognized the fact that men's organizations representing small-scale fisheries face the same constraint of finances.

The assembly decided to write to the DG MARE of the European Commission and claim representation for women's organization to the RAC, not on the seat of fishers' representation, but as interest groups on NGO seats. This compromise was in order to avoid conflict with fishermen's organizations represented on the RAC.

Issues related to the recognition of women's contribution in fisheries and aquaculture by all EU member states; and the communication within and between women's organizations were also discussed. AKTEA decided to establish linkages with other women's groups representing sectoral interests, as for example, women in farming.

Karen Sere, chairwoman of European farmers' women within the Committee of European Agriculture Professional Organizations was invited to participate at the AKTEA meeting. Karen explained the actions undertaken by farmer's women to modify existing French law recognizing women's contribution. In France, fisherwomen and women in farming have a legal status of "collaborative spouse". This status allows the spouse to claim benefits, including

Civil Society Preparatory Workshop Website

What's New, Webby?



This website, accessible at <http://sites.google.com/site/smallscalefisheries/>, was put up for the Civil Society Preparatory Workshop, organized by the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), Federation of Southern Fisherfolk (FSF), The International NGO/CSO Planning Committee (IPC) and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), held between 11-13 October, 2008 at Bangkok. The website available in

three languages (English, French and Spanish), provides important resources such as the Civil Society Statement, besides the statements from individual organizers. The site also carries "Daily Rights", the newsletter brought out by the civil society co-ordinating committee for 4SSF, in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Thai). The photo gallery offers pictures from both the civil society workshop and the 4SSF conference.

retirement pension. Initially the status was allowed to only legally married spouses, and required the authorization of the husband. However, in 2006, the farming community got the legal status modified to allow women living in couple relations outside marriage to access the same “collaborative spouse” rights. The modification also did away with the requirement of authorization by the husband, and allowed a woman to apply directly for the status. This modification has not been extended to the fishing community.

The right for spouses or partners to access “collaborative spouse” status is based on the European Council directive 86/613 voted in 1986. This directive does not apply in all EU member states. The meeting decided to work with women’s organizations in farming to push for common demands like the “collaborative spouse” status.

Communication was the last issue discussed at the meeting. All members of AKTEA

faced difficulties in maintaining a regular communication link. The internet allows speedy and low cost communication. But there are several negative aspects. Women do not often check their emails; some women do not have access to computers; others do not know how to use this technology.

Various possibilities to improve communication between members were discussed. Some women’s organizations in Greece, Portugal, and France had organized training in use of email. The Acores association, UMAR, holds monthly video conferences through Skype and facilitates the direct communication with members. At the European level, it was felt that communication could be facilitated with the designation within each organization of a contact person having charge of communication with AKTEA members. AKTEA could also publish a newsletter with information from organizations. ❏

“AKTEA decided to establish linkages with other women’s groups representing sectoral interests, as for example, women in farming.”

ASIA

CAMBODIA

What women want: Community Fisheries in Cambodia

A new study on Community Fisheries across six provinces in Cambodia finds a great deal of consistency on women’s roles, needs and aspirations in the sector

By **Chap Sopanha**
(sopanha@cbrnrmli.org)
Research Initiatives
Manager of CBNRM
Learning Institute,
Cambodia

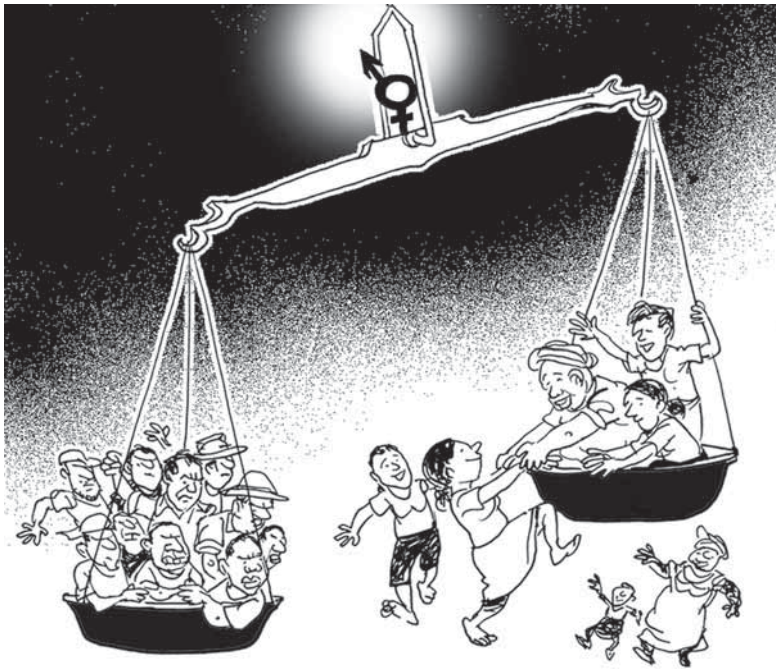
At the Fisheries Administration in Phnom Penh, the 6th of November 2008 saw the official launch of a study report titled “Women’s Roles, Needs, and Aspirations in Community Fisheries Management in Cambodia”. The event was organised under the presidency of H.E Nao Thuok, Delegate of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and Director General of Fisheries Administration. Other dignitaries included Srey Marona, Executive Director of the CBNRM Learning Institute, and Oung Heng, Vice Chairman of the Gender Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The study describes the roles of women and men in fisheries and Community Fisheries (CF) at the household and community levels as well as the needs and aspirations of women associated with CF. It also recommends practical strategies for increasing women’s participation in CF planning and implementation. The research was conducted in six provinces including Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Kampot, Kep, Stung Treng and Takeo.

The study found that women are engaged in a variety of fisheries-related livelihood activities—small-scale capture fisheries, gathering of aquatic plants and animals, aquaculture—and they also play a supportive role in the fishing activities of men. But the main responsibility of women in fisheries-related livelihood is in the post-harvest sector, including processing and trading fish. Women are viewed as more competent than men in marketing fish and take greater responsibility in the post-harvest stage.

Women run the savings groups because of the traditional norm of household financial management being their responsibility. There is also a general acknowledgment that women are more competent than men at managing financial matters.

In information dissemination, women support the CF in a variety of ways: through formal meetings supported by NGOs, but more commonly through informal conversations at community events or while working in the rice fields. Women participate only rarely in patrolling illegal fishing. A typical role for women is that of an accountant or a disseminator of CF information. However, women leaders feel that they are only token members and do not have a significant role in the CF committee.



Some do not stay on for meetings because of the demands of household work.

The study found that the needs expressed by women were consistent across all the case studies. Typically, they expressed the need for capacity-building on existing CF activities, for example, to understand the Fisheries Law, agricultural production techniques and gender concepts. Women also said they needed better understanding, and respect for their opinions, from their husbands. Women wanted better livelihoods through the CF as well as external assistance for capacity building and alternative jobs. Better education, both literacy and knowledge, was another felt need in all regions. Furthermore, women advocated gender balance. Many said they needed encouragement to be leaders like men.

“There should be a clear quota, between 30 to 50 per cent, as part of the national policy, for the representation of women in community fisheries’ committees.”

The case studies indicate that there are three main reasons why, despite many constraints, women participate in CF activities. One, these activities bring economic and social benefits through providing support for livelihoods improvement, capacity building, access to savings groups and so on. Two, they empower women through improving their skills, knowledge and confidence. And finally, women believe that CF activities can improve fisheries resources and that future generations will benefit from this. The main constraints to women’s participation are the prevailing social norms, a low level of literacy and lack of confidence.

The study recommended that future strategies to increase women’s participation in CF activities should take the following factors into consideration: (i) lack of support from husbands, and other men in the family, which is a major obstacle to women’s participation. There is need therefore, for gender sensitization for all men and women in the CF; (ii) avenues for alternative livelihoods which would directly benefit women. These could include introducing new technologies for fish culture and processing products; (iii) there should be a clear quota, between 30 to 50 per cent, as part of the national policy, for the representation of women in community fisheries’ committees; (iv) collaboration and networking with the other agencies and donors should be promoted to raise financial and technical support for the CF; and (v) encouraging leadership roles for women in CF to build their confidence.

Speaking at the launch event, H.E Nao Thuok recommended that institutions engaged in gender issues in the fisheries sector should work towards greater collaboration with the Fisheries Administration Gender Working Group and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to promote leadership roles for women in fisheries. ❏

EUROPE

SPAIN

“Through struggle we achieve our objectives!”

This article is based on an interview with Natalia Laiño Lojo, General Secretary of the Galician Association of Women and Men Shellfishers (AGAMAR) conducted by Patricio Igor Melillanca (patricio@ecoceanos.cl), Ecoceanos, Chile

Translated from Spanish by **Brian O’Riordan** (briano@scarlet.be), Secretary, ICSF Belgium Office

“Shellfish gathering in Galicia generates work for around 5,000 women and 4,000 men gatherers. What is produced must pass through the *lonja* (auction). Only the specific quantities of particular species approved through agreements established between *cofradia* (see interview) and the regional administration under the *junta* can be extracted. Through this, we avoid saturating the market and are able to conserve resources, select for quality and control prices.”

Talking about shellfish gathering in Galicia is Natalia Laiño, General Secretary of the Galician Association of Women and Men Shellfishers (AGAMAR). Shellfish gathering is a traditional activity in Galicia. Says Natalia: “What we did in recent years was to get social recognition for them as workers.”

Shellfish gathering used to be a supplementary activity involving the family unit. When women and their children had some spare time, they would go to the sea to gather small amounts of shellfish for sale in the small regular markets or to a small trader in the area at that time.

Natalia represented Galicia’s shellfish workers in the recently-concluded Global

Conference on Small-scale Fisheries in Bangkok (4SSF). According to her, there is a great deal of difference in the way that rights are dealt within Galicia and what was discussed at the Conference. "In Galicia, there is a need for basic rights including the right to livelihood, right to obtain work and health insurance and the right to information for consumers." However, some issues, for example, the fight against pollution, are common.

Galician beaches are threatened by pollution from housing. Says Natalia: "At one time the Galician *junta* paid women workers to clean up the beaches, during which time they did not extract shellfish. But we want to eliminate

pollution, because the mainstay for women shellfishers is not subsidies for cleaning up the beaches, but the produce of the sea."

What other issues affect shellfish gatherers? Says Natalia: "We are also interested to have a debate on trade issues, about how extraction can be regulated and managed in ways that allow us to guarantee conservation of resources in the water, and also allows for the possibility of regulating the market. And we are committed to informing people that in Galicia the products extracted are artisanal and healthy. Our message is that there are different struggles, and we can say that through struggle, we achieve our objectives." ❏

Q&A

Interview with Natalia Laiño Lojo, General Secretary of the Galician Association of Women and Men Shellfishers (AGAMAR)

By **Nalini Nayak** (nalininayak@asianetindia.com), a member of Protsahan, an NGO based in Trivandrum, India, and a member of ICSF

How and why did women shellfish collectors begin to organize in Galicia?

In the early 1990s, some trade union workers noticed the plight of women shellfish collectors. The women were members of the *cofradías* but had no rights as workers. During discussions with them, one woman, Carmen Gallego, realized how disadvantaged they were. She took the initiative to organize the women. The General Workers Union provided the framework and the educational inputs on the need to be recognized as professional workers and then a demand was made. In 1993, they were recognized as workers by the State and this gave them a right to social security and pension. In this way, women from different regions joined the union and AGAMAR was created, and the small fishermen also joined.

What are the *cofradías*?

These are very old traditional institutions all along the coast of Spain. They function within a certain territory where they also have the rights to use coastal resources. They are composed of the representatives of the different groups in the community who make up the general assembly. From this group, a small group is selected to become the Cabildo or Board at the head of which is the Patron Major. Many decisions regarding the community are made in this general body—a form of local government.

Do women have a decision-making role in the *cofradías*?

If women represent any particular working group in the area of the *cofradía* then they become members of the general assembly. There have been *cofradías* where women have been Patrons but this is rare.

What benefits have women shellfish collectors got after creating their union?

Initially, despite the fact that they were recognized as workers, it was hard to get their pensions. They had to make contributions for at least 15 years before retirement. So the older women could not benefit. But when Carmen Gallego entered politics and got elected, she was able to secure a fund which was paid into the pension account and this subsidized the contributions of the women. So this was a big gain. Education has also helped empower the women and they fight for their rights now and also intervene more actively in the *cofradías*. ❏

YEMAYA MAMA



A REVIEW

Women and Fish-for-Sex: Transactional Sex, HIV/AIDS and Gender in African Fisheries

Christophe Béné and Sonja Merten; *World Development*, Vol 36, No 5, 2008, pp 875–899

This review is by **Harini Kumar** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Associate, ICSF

This is one of the few papers that provides information on the practice of fish-for-sex (FFS). Although FFS has been observed in several countries across the world, reports are mainly from African inland fisheries. This, according to the authors, is possibly because FFS is dealt with mainly in the context of HIV/AIDS, and Southern and Eastern Africa report the highest prevalence of the AIDS pandemic.

The paper emphasizes the strong link that exists between FFS and HIV/AIDS issues and importantly, articulates how a gender bias marks the existing literature on the subject. The authors seek to explore the complexity of the issue through an exhaustive methodology which includes a review of literature, a case study from Zambia, focus group interviews and various surveys conducted over a period of time.

Existing literature tends to highlight the 'miserabilism' narrative where FFS is viewed in terms of a victim's "strategy for survival", due to economic impoverishment. The authors suggest that this confusion is disputable, though the increasing vulnerability of female traders is a reality that undoubtedly reduces their negotiation/transaction power. They draw on the new institutional economic approach, according to which the reduction in transaction costs due to the practice of FFS, apart from the lack of cash, is an important factor. However, given the high prevalence of FFS in Africa as compared to

Asia, it is evident that poverty and transaction costs are not the only determinants of FFS in fishing communities. There are also socio-institutional factors relating to prevalent sexual norms and behavior.

The authors conclude that HIV/AIDS and FFS are conjoint consequences of the particular socio-institutional element of sexual behavior observed in sub-Saharan African societies. They go on to explain how the gendered division of labour is inherent in this supposedly male-dominated sector and how a simplistic view of "fishermen at sea and women at home" fails to address the larger reality of unequal power structures. Hence, due to the somewhat parochial approach that existing literature on HIV/AIDS takes, women are presented or addressed merely as sexual partners or wives and not as individuals in their own right. They are also stigmatized and socially excluded from the community for engaging in FFS.

The authors make the point that "women fish traders—whatever way they 'purchase' the fish, i.e., with cash or through sexual arrangement—are economically productive agents within the fisheries sector" who are fully integrated in the fish value chain. The links between FFS and sex work are, therefore, questioned. They draw attention to the many interviews where women state explicitly that they do not consider themselves as sex workers.

They stress the need to ensure that gender-bias is not reproduced in HIV/AIDS or in FFS literature, and subsequently in policy recommendations. Public health interventions should start by recognizing the deep gender bias that characterizes the sector. Prevention, awareness-raising, and empowerment interventions are needed to help women counter, individually and collectively, such power disparities. Interventions should be combined with actions that target male fishers and attempt to change their behaviours in relation to risk perception and sexual norms. Importantly, the socio-cultural factors need to be addressed in a contextual and sensitive manner. ■



PUBLISHED BY
Chandrika Sharma for
International Collective
in Support of Fishworkers
27 College Road
Chennai 600 006
India
Tel: (91) 44 2827 5303
Fax: (91) 44 2825 4457
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net
Web site: www.icsf.net

EDITED BY
Nilanjana Biswas
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Sandesh
(sandeshcartoonist@gmail.com)

DESIGNED BY
P. Sivasakthivel

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Writers and potential contributors to *YEMAYA*, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable

fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.