



33 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

Women in fisheries and aquaculture are witnessing a curious paradox today. While on the one hand, women's lack of visibility, capacity and resource access is being discussed increasingly and in ever-widening spaces, there is arguably little evidence that the response of national and international policy is in any way proportionate to the task of what needs to be done. This is worrying because precious time is being lost even as challenges, in terms of overfishing, tenure loss and climate impacts, continue to multiply. As a result, women in the sector run the risk of being pushed back into greater positions of exclusion and defensiveness. This exclusion in turn intensifies negative impacts on the sector.

The exclusion of women in all but tokenistic ways from fisheries policy and programme is largely due to the lack of data on women's presence in the sector, in terms of actual numbers, work and value add. Milika Sobey's article highlights this problem and draws attention to yet another paradox. A report commissioned by the Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji found a dearth of accessible baseline data on women in the sector; at the same time, it also found that, in reality, a wealth of data exists but it exists in silos, distributed across different Ministries and in different formats. Therefore, by way of first steps, there is a need to collate and analyse such data in order to fill existing data gaps.

The Fijian conundrum of no data in the midst of plenty might well apply to most countries. The need for fisheries data, in particular sex-disaggregated data, was repeated in many sessions in the 7th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries (GAF7) held in Bangkok in October 2018. Nikita Gopal's article highlights the key takeaways from this conference in which two of ICSF's associates, Nalini Nayak and Cornelie Quist, made a joint presentation, highlighting the intersectionalities of power relations in the fisheries sector.

The importance of spaces like GAF 7 cannot be overstated since the context of data scarcity, women associated with the fisheries are always keen to share their experiences and learn from each other. Recently, a round table discussion brought five women leaders from India's marine and inland fisheries sector together and led to a rich exchange of views and experiences related to organizing women and communities. The dialogue highlighted the challenges that women face when they begin to organize – confrontations with traditional decision making structures; invisibility in State decision making bodies; lack of official recognition of women's work; loss of livelihood due to modernization and coastal development projects. At the same time, the dialogue highlighted the tremendous gains that women make when they collectively raise their voices in demand of their rights.

The current issue also celebrates the recent edition of Slow Fish held in Genoa, Italy, earlier this year, which is a forum that promotes small-scale fishing and responsible fish consumption, and provides a unique space, particularly for women, in the small-scale fisheries sector to narrate their stories and share experiences.

We regret that this issue does not carry the much-loved cartoon strip "Yemaya Mama" as Surendra, our cartoonist, is unwell. Please join us in wishing him a speedy recovery! 🙏



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