

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)

Brainstorming Session for the National Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Women Fishworkers in India for the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines

Ashir Bhawan, Ernakulam, Kerala

15-16 May, 2019

Report

Day 1 (Wednesday, 15 May)

Welcome and Introduction

MsNalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust and the meeting's convener, welcomed participants and informed them about ICSF's national workshops scheduled for 2019 in India, as part of its project to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (the SSF Guidelines) in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

Ms Nayak briefed the participants about the programme for the brainstorming session and the objectives of ICSF's 'National Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Women Fishworkers in India for the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines'. The workshop would involve participants from union and state governments; fishworker organisations, including women's organisations; civil society organisations and research/academic institutions.

Session 1: Evaluating gender issues in fisheries in India and status of women's fishworker organisations

After a brief round of introductions, Ms Nayak opened the first session by reminding the participants about the workshop on women in fisheries organised by ICSF at Chennai in 2016. The idea of forming a national platform of women fishworkers had been discussed at that meeting, but such a platform had not yet materialised. All participants agreed that ICSF's workshop could be an opportunity to establish such a platform.

Ms Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-CIFT, informed the group that a central government policy dedicated to the post-harvest and marketing sector was being prepared by ICAR-CIFT. The timing, she said, was right to raise awareness on gender issues in fisheries and to address women's problems in post-harvest sub-sectors.

The participants were invited to recount their own experiences as well as those of their organisations in working with women fishworkers. Ms Jharna Acharya, convener of the women's wing of the Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) in West Bengal, spoke about her experience in organising women fishworkers, particularly in the inland sector. Bengal has several thousand

women working in inland waterbodies such as rivers, lakes and ponds, but they are not fully captured by data. She said that the rights of fishing communities to land and to fish in inland waterbodies is a challenge, particularly in some of the forest areas in which DMF works. She said that village panchayats need to consider fishing livelihoods alongside other forest and water resource users in these areas.

Ms Jesu Rethinam, Director, SNEHA, Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, introduced the group to her organisation's ongoing study on the Blue Economy in South Asian and Southeast Asia countries. She also said that the Coastal Action Network in Tamil Nadu is not a registered body but works on advocacy for the rights of coastal communities and on litigation against Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) violations.

Ms Ujwala Patil, from the Maharashtra Machhimar Kruti Samiti (MMKS) in Mumbai, said that ICSF's first workshop on developing action points for the implementation of the National Policy on Marine Fisheries 2017 (NPMF) should discuss developing women's cooperatives, as women are under-represented in fisheries cooperatives in Maharashtra. In Mumbai, MMKS launched a women's union in 2018 with a membership of 300 members, which it wants to expand to 2000 in the future.

Ms Patil spoke about the need for women to be more in control of the management of fish markets. There are 61 municipal markets in Mumbai, and MMKS is demanding that the union be entrusted with land rights over these state-owned markets. She also spoke about the need to involve the youth of the Koli community in documenting land rights issues of their community in Mumbai, which has a long history from the colonial era.

From Kerala, Ms Sonia George and Ms Seeta Dasan spoke about the work of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) with women in the fish marketing and post-harvest sector. SEWA's trade union of women fishworkers has over 2000 members. Ms Dasan said that the influx of men from outside traditional fishing communities in post-harvest activities is a threat to the livelihoods of the women. Fish auctioneers are themselves taking over distribution and vending. Women are being edged out by the increasing number of male traders in the sector now, who have more money and bargaining powers. She added that inadequate infrastructure continues to be a big challenge. Even the newly constructed markets are not suitable for women.

On a positive note, Ms Dasan said that SEWA is now included in all trade union discussions in Kerala. The state fisheries minister recognises that SEWA is the only group speaking on women's issues. Being a central trade union, SEWA engages with labour issues at the sub-national, national and international levels.

Session 2: Emerging issues in the context of gender in fisheries

The session on emerging issues in the context of gender in fisheries began with a presentation by Mr A.J. Vijayan, Programme Coordinator, Protsahan, Kerala, on the 'Coastal Regulation Zone

Notification 2018'. Mr Vijayan highlighted some of the dilutions in regulations on coastal development since previous CRZ notifications. He also pointed out how the management plans, which form the basis for new development and are stipulated by law, had not been prepared in most coastal areas. With implications for the community's access to housing, landing centres and other traditional uses, and the unregulated expansion of tourism and coastal development, the new notification needs wider discussion and awareness raising, said Mr Vijayan.

In the next presentation, Dr Nikita Gopal briefed the participants about new trends in the fisheries sector. Using the example of the expansion of ring seiner since the late 1990s, she explained how fishing capacity is increasing, with a rise in the number, size and power of fishing craft and gear; and about a consequent reduction in per unit production which threatens to make fishing uneconomical. Ms Gopal also pointed out how the share in fish production of small-scale fishers is reducing. The presentation also discussed migration of workers to and from fisheries – particularly the increasing presence of inexperienced workers from inland areas, such as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and the Northeastern states, in marine capture fishing. Migration's implications for both fisheries management and decent work needed to be addressed.

Next, Mr N. Venugopalan, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust, did a presentation on NPMF 2017, particularly those sections with relevance to women's roles in fisheries management, post-harvest and trade, and social development and welfare of fishing communities. In discussions, participants noted the importance of gender equality in all sections of the policy. There was also some discussion on how women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) need to be used once again for women to benefit from government fisheries schemes.

Ms Jesu Rethinam, Director, SNEHA, presented her organisation's ongoing study on the Blue Economy in the coastal states of India and other Asian countries, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Highlighting the competition for coastal and marine resources between the various components of the Blue Economy – fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, renewable energy and extractive industries – Ms Rethinam said that there is a need for coastal communities to be vigilant and protect their habitats and livelihoods, and to be consulted on integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning.

Ms Sonia George, Secretary, SEWA–Kerala, described SEWA's engagement with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and its forthcoming international instrument on 'Violence and Harassment in the World of Work'. Ms George explained the ILO's tripartite structure (governments, employers' associations and workers' unions) and its legislative process – from discussions to the adoption of instruments and, finally, to the ratification of conventions. She said that the discussion on violence and harassment in the world of work went beyond sexual harassment at the workplace, to include men and women, formal and informal workers, physical and psychological abuse and other forms of unacceptable behavior.

Day 2

Objectives of the ICSF's 'National Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Women Fishworkers in India for the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines':

- Capacity building of women for a gender inclusive implementation of the SSF Guidelines in India
- Review women's empowerment in decision making processes at the government and Fishworker Organization (FWO) level, and participation at the local body level
- Review of progress in participation of women in policies and schemes at state and union level
- Develop short- and long-term action points for gender inclusiveness in implementing SSF Guidelines in India

Participants agreed on the need for a platform for exchange of ideas, strategies and experiences at the national and state levels. Such a platform can also inform the post-harvest sector about new developments on the coast – and their impact on livelihoods.

Climate change impact on livelihoods, especially on women, is not fully understood. Cyclones in recent years, and the lack of clarity on early warnings systems for disasters had a negative impact on livelihoods. Social welfare for fishing communities has to account for such losses. It was suggested that savings and relief schemes be extended for periods of disasters and inclement weather.

There was a consensus on the need to study budget allocations that benefit women fishworkers. It was decided that the ICSF Secretariat would compile national and state schemes with the help of the fishworker organisations and conduct a gender analysis.

Participants decided that the workshop would focus on states with strong women's leadership and networks:

West Bengal (street vendors' union, inland platform)

Tamil Nadu

Kerala

Goa

Maharashtra

(ICSF would discuss with Mr Sailesh about groups in Gujarat, and with Ms Baby Salian about Karnataka.)

Dates for National Workshop:18-20 August 2019

Venue: Asha Nivas, Chennai

Programme Core Group:MsNikita Gopal, Ms JesuRethinam, Mr N. Venugopalan and MsNalini Nayak

Priority areas for discussion in the 'National Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Women Fishworkers in India for the Implementation of the SSF Guidelines':

- **Habitat and work areas of coastal communities**

- *Vulnerability of habitat areas to natural disasters:* Post-tsunami, there was some discussion on moving communities from the coast to preserve natural ecosystems and to protect people's lives. At the time, there was no willingness to halt development projects on the coast.
- *No community consultation on land-use planning on the coasts:*In Mumbai, for example.
In Midinipore, a marine drive is being planned which will reduce the 44 fish landing centres on the route to 22.
- *Ports and harbours:* Example of Vizhinjam port, where a fisherfolk struggle died down after a rehabilitation package was offered (500 jobs were promised to the local community, Rs 25 lakh to shore seines owners, and Rs five lakh each to fishworkers). Eventually, the ration card and Welfare Board cards were changed to say that the affected families were not fisherfolk. Another case was that of land acquisition for Shankumugham airport, which threatened fishing villages.
- *Inland waterbodies:* The DMF is working on securing community tenure rights over rivers, ponds and tanks inland for fishing communities in West Bengal. In Tamil Nadu, tourism projects in Pichavaram and Muthupettai lagoons are being opposed by local panchayats.

- **Market access and infrastructure**

- *Structured markets:*In Mumbai, the MMKS union is demanding that women fish vendors be accorded land rights for 61 markets managed by the municipal corporation. Committees can be formed with representatives of women fishworkers. Several builders have approached the BMC to develop the markets. Discussions among participants produced suggestions such as the construction of markets on multiple levels, such as in some Northeastern states, to accommodate all types of vendors in the same place.

Andhra Pradesh's agricultural wholesale markets are another example that can be emulated for large fish markets in coastal districts.

- *Unstructured markets:* Mumbai street markets need to be mapped so that vendors cannot be evicted. (ICSF had supported a MMKS survey of such markets in the city.) Ms Nayak pointed out that, recently, women's committees had been formed for Mumbai's urban development planning. Women fishworkers need to be part of this committee.

Participants also discussed whether street fish vendors could be issued licences and whether this would protect them from eviction. As per a 2013 law for street vendors, municipalities have to frame rules and form committees to govern street markets. Fish vendors need to be a part of these committees.

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PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 15 May 2019: Day 1	
10:00 – 10:30	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Why this meeting: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</p>
10:30 – 11:00	TEA-COFFEE BREAK
11:00 – 12:00	<p>Session 1: Evaluating gender issues in fisheries in India and the status of women’s fishworker organisations (Group discussion coordinated by Nalini Nayak)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues faced and addressed - Decisions from ICSF’s 2016 gender workshop - Follow-up after 2016 meeting
12:00 – 13:00	<p>Session 2: Emerging issues relevant to gender in fisheries (Presentation followed by group discussion)</p> <p><i>Coastal Regulation Zone(CRZ)Notification2018 and tenure rights of fishing communities: AJ Vijayan, Programme Coordinator, Protsahan</i></p>
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH
3.00-6.00	<p>Session 2 (contd.) (Presentations followed by group discussion)</p> <p><i>Broad trends in the fisheries sector: Dr Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, CMFRI</i></p> <p><i>Mainstreaming gender in the National Policy on Marine Fisheries: N.</i></p>

	<p>Venugopalan, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust</p> <p><i>Blue Economy and competition over marine and coastal resources: Jesu Rathinam, Director, SNEHA</i></p> <p><i>ILO Standard Setting Instrument on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work: Sonia George, Secretary, SEWA-Kerala</i></p>
Thursday, 16 May 2019: Day 2	
9:30 – 10:30	Session 3: Objectives of the National Workshop (Group discussion coordinated by Nalini Nayak)
10:30 – 11:00	TEA-COFFEE BREAK
11:00 – 13:00	<p>Session 4: Planning for the National Workshop (Coordinated by Nalini Nayak and N. Venugopalan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop structure and discussion points - Policy notes / papers required - List of participants - Tentative date and venue

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