**International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust**

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP:**

**SSF GUIDELINES   
AND WOMEN IN FISHERIES, INDIA   
Asha Nivas, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India**

**8 to 10 April 2022**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**I. Introduction**

The negotiated Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) were endorsed by the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) at its Thirty-first Session in June 2014. The implementation of the SSF Guidelines is identified as a significant step for enhancing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to nutrition and food security. Gender mainstreaming is integral to the implementation process of the SSF Guidelines. Gender equality and equity are held as one of the seven pillars of the United Nations International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (IYAFA). As part of the implementation process, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust is organizing a national workshop on building a platform of women in fisheries to promote gender equality and equity, to recognize livelihood space and to improve the participation of women in decision-making processes. The Workshop—supported by FAO—will be held at Asha Nivas, Chennai, from 8 to 10 April, 2022. Key women fishworker representatives from the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are expected to attend.

**II. Background**

Marine and inland fisheries in India employ millions of women along the value chain, particularly in pre- and post-harvest activities. An estimated 70 percent of those engaged in fisheries post-harvest activities are women. They play important roles in fish marketing, net mending, fish drying, processing and other value addition activities, and the collection of molluscs, crustaceans and other aquatic species. Their contributions are crucial to the sector, supporting local food security and the sustainable development of fishing communities.

India’s 2017 National Policy on Marine Fisheries (NPMF) and 2020 National Fisheries Policy (NFP) (draft) recognize the important role of women in the sector, and provide guidance for mainstreaming gender equity all along the value chain.

In 2016, ICSF conducted a workshop (<https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/930.ICSF158.pdf>) to mainstream gender in fisheries policies, legislation and management. The workshop generated interest among participants to strengthen women’s engagement in decision-making on tenure rights, protection of the environment and adaptation to climate change, and on occupational health, safety and social protection for fishers and fishworkers. Towards this, the workshop recommended the creation of a platform of women representatives from diverse national and sub-national organizations to enhance the livelihoods and rights of women in fisheries.

Following this, ICSF’s 2019 workshop (<https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/930.ICSF214.docx>) employed a gender analysis to examine fisheries policies, schemes and budget allocations that benefit women in the sector, to raise awareness among women representatives of their rights and the sustainable development of fishing communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with a rising trend in natural disasters along the Indian coastline, severely impacted the lives and livelihoods of fishing communities. Women were particularly affected by disruptions in fish trade and reductions in household incomes, combined by an increase in care work in their homes. The inadequacy of social protection measures was experienced by all categories of informal workers in India, including women fishworkers.

The Workshop will provide a space for fishworker organizations from the coastal states to follow-up on key issues relevant to the lives and livelihoods of women in the sector, with an emphasis on equitable access to resources and markets. The participants will also discuss developments in international and national law related to decent work for informal workers, including women fishworkers. Considering that women are often underrepresented in discussions on gender in fisheries, the Workshop will highlight the experiences of women in harvest activities. Their traditional knowledge, practices and rights to livelihoods are central to the valorization of the small-scale fisheries during the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), 2022 (https://www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/home/en/).

**III. SSF Guidelines**

The SSF Guidelines promote a human rights-based approach and are guided, among others, by the principle of gender equality and equity. Small-scale fishers and fishworkers, through their organizations, are the main drivers of change and play a major role in bottom-up processes to implement the SSF Guidelines. Actions to implement the SSF Guidelines are to empower these organizations and foster collective action to render small-scale fisheries more visible in national and sub-national policies and to realize the rights of small-scale fishers, fishworkers and their communities, including women.

**IV. Objectives of the Workshop**

* Conduct a gender analysis of fisheries budget allocations, schemes and recent policies and legislation at various levels;
* Highlight livelihood activities of women in fisheries, their traditional knowledge, and access and use rights;
* Analyse the application and implications of new labour instruments for women in fisheries in light of international labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO);
* Propose action for mainstreaming gender in light of the SSF Guidelines at the national and sub-national levels; and
* Enhance the capacity of women fishworkers to form a Women in Fisheries Platform in India.

**V. Expected Outcome**

The Workshop is expected to develop a working agenda for the Women in Fisheries Platform in India to further the visibility of women in small-scale fisheries, to secure their rights and to improve their participation in decision-making processes.