

National Platform for Women in Fisheries, India

Proceedings

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At the Workshop that was organized by the ICSF on the 8th 9th 10th April 2022, the participants from the five states decided to take the Women's Platform ahead and selected their representatives that would function as the Committee of the platform. After the close of the Workshop, the Committee met.

Members: Ujwala Patil and Jyoti Meher from Maharashtra, Amudha, Indumathi and Jesu Rethinam from Tamil Nadu, Shilpa Nandy and Jharna Acharya from West Bengal, Seeta Dasan, Sonia George and Nalini from Kerala, and Ashwini Jog who has accepted to continue to be an interpreter. Sashikala and Sujal from Goa, who are also on the committee were not present as they had to catch their flight.

Nalini welcomed all the members to the first meeting of the group and requested every person to share their feedback on the three-day workshop.

Jharna said she was glad that after a gap of two years (due to covid) she was able to be physically present for the workshop, she suggested that the platform be given a name, and a convener be named. Jharna added that there should be a program calendar/ schedule in place.

Ujwala expressed that she was happy about the platform moving ahead, she added that the women are energized especially after the lull during the past two years. She found the session on Labour laws very enlightening, and suggested that they should get a better picture of it in due course of time so that they can suggest amendments to benefit the women fish workers.

Jyoti also felt that there could have been a more detailed session on labour laws. She then went on to talk about strengthening the National platform, she suggested that there are state level platforms/forums made with representatives from each coastal district of the state.

Indumathi mentioned that the session on budgets was very useful, she found the fact that women have a separate budget allocation very interesting. She also said that she got to know about the e-Shram card for the unorganized sector through the workshop. She added that such workshops and platforms will aid groups/organisations with similar interests to come together and take action.

Amudha said this workshop provided space for women to voice their thoughts, concerns and needs. She hopes that the platform would help lessen the hardships of the women in fisheries.

Jesu Rethinam started by saying that women working with men is tiring, it takes a lot of efforts to make men realize our problems, and sometimes even after persistent efforts it all falls on deaf ears. However it is very important to work with men from the community, and she believes that a platform such as this one would help facilitate this joint working. She added that there is always strength when women

come together. Jesu also said that there might be difference in thoughts between various organisations and ICSF, but it is important to have dialogues in understanding each one's position.

Nalini clarified that this is not an ICSF forum, but a forum of different groups with similar needs and everyone works together. Each one represents their own organization in the platform. She herself represents SEWA in this platform. ICSF's role would be to support the platform. Hence it is left to us to take the platform forward.

Seeta Dasan from Kerala spoke on how during the post covid phase the coast is being taken up by various corporates and government projects; the women in fisheries found the situation to be hopeless, however this workshop has given the hope and strength to get back on their feet. Seeta added that by creating state platforms other trade unions can join in and give strength to the movement. Just like Jharna, Seeta also felt that there should be a strict timeline followed to achieve the set goals

Sonia George from Kerala spoke on how there was a similar meeting in 2019 which discussed some of the issues, but unfortunately due to the pandemic nothing much changed on ground. She went on to say that now is the time to regain our strength and work collectively. She felt that this platform should focus on the rights of the women fish workers. In due course of time the platform can emerge as a political forum of women in fisheries. The platform would also be a place for women to discuss and understand the corporatization and government policies.

After the feedback session, the Name of the platform was decided. It would be called **National Platform for Women in Small Scale Fisheries** or **NPWSSF** in short. The Convener for the platform would be on rotational basis, for the first two years Nalini would be the Convenor. For now, no letterhead or address will be used for NPWSSF. However, a WhatsApp group will be created where the happenings related to the platform will be shared and discussed. The translators of Maharashtra will be included in this group as she has accepted to translate messages between Marathi and English and Shilpa, Jesu and Sonia will assist with Bengli, Tamil and Malayalam respectively. It was also decided that without any discussion in the platform, nothing will be taken to the government in the name of the Platform.

For the first few months it was decided that all states would focus on the following:

1. Local awareness raising on the issues discussed at this workshop. - Maharashtra in 9 districts, Kerala in 5 districts, Tamil Nadu in 7 districts, and Bengal in 4 districts – including inland. In this process, attempts will be made to include other organizations that work in fisheries and add to the membership of the platform. (Find the details below)
2. It was decided that all states would make attempts to identify other women fish harvesters and make them members of the local organization. Please find the data collection format.

| District | Village | Type of work | Average number of women involved |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <i>Example:</i> Kanyakumari | Chinnathurai | Women gathering shell fish Women going out in boats to fish with husbands Women going out in boats by themselves | |

3. All committee members will look at the statement of the Workshop and send responses to ICSF by April 25th.

It was decided that the next meeting would be held virtually in the month of August 2022

Action Points for NPWSSF - April 2022

1. Recognition of all women fish harvesters and generation of data on their work and contribution to the economy and nutrition security
2. Create a Platform of WSSF at state level and build alliances with likeminded groups
3. Work towards developing a State Level Policy for Women in fisheries which will include among other things:
 - a. Budget allocations specifically for women's needs
 - b. Equal compensation for women and men in times of disaster
 - c. Protection of customary work spaces of women – on the shore, in landing centres, markets
4. Provision of Child Care through better functioning of the Anganwadis working for 8 hours a day.
- 5 Provision of potable water in all fishing villages and proper sanitation and disposal of waste
6. Initiation of dialogue to spread awareness on efficient coastal resource management towards sustainable fisheries – both at local and state levels
7. Ensure visible and active participation of women in decision making bodies so that the feminist perspective in fisheries gains ground.