

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust

Statement

National Workshop: SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India

10 April 2022

We, the women representatives of marine and inland fishworkers' organizations (associations, cooperatives, trade unions, and self-help groups) and fishing communities from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Goa and Kerala; and women earning their livelihood mainly from collecting shellfish and seaweed from nearshore waters, coastal and marine fishing, beach-drying and processing fish, and street, or door-to-door, vending;

Having met at the *National Workshop: the SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India*, at Asha Niwas, Chennai, Tamil Nadu on 8 to 10 April 2022—a meeting of the national women in fisheries platform—to make our role in fisheries more visible and to avail of our rights, to enhance our livelihood space along the value chain and to get our due recognition from the Government;

Taking stock of the impact of COVID-19 on our lives and livelihoods, and adequacy of pandemic relief and recovery measures;

Concerned about the negative impact of industrial pollution and extreme weather events on our fishing and fish-vending activities;

Noting that the negative impact of coastal degradation, overfishing, pandemics and natural disasters are disproportionately borne by women of fishing communities;

Further concerned about our continued invisibility in all activities along the fisheries value chain, in spite of our valuable contribution to local nutrition and food security;

Draw the attention of the Union, State and local authorities and fishworkers' organizations to redress our grievances:

1. Safeguard marine, coastal and inland living resources, and secure access to adjacent land, to protect life and livelihoods of fishing communities; in this regard, address all forms of aquatic pollution arising from oil spills, transportation, sand mining, plastics, sewage and industrial wastes;
2. Enhance preferential treatment of women in all relevant fisheries policies, legislation and schemes at the State and Union level; collate and share information on state-level schemes available to women fishers;
3. Expand scope of social protection schemes in fisheries to benefit men and women, especially female-headed households and, in this context, register and provide licences to all women fishers and fishworkers, including gleaners (hand pickers and harvesters), and develop a database;
4. Extend adequate social protection benefits to women and female-headed households, such as education benefits, old age benefits, survivor benefits, closed-season benefits, and compensating income loss from climate change/pollution impacts;
5. Ensure budget allocation under relevant fisheries and social protection schemes are proportional to the needs of women fishers and fishworkers and are disbursed in a timely manner. In this context,

improve processes and address gaps to fully recognize the right to social protection of women fishers and fishworkers;

6. Improve participation of women from fishing communities in women & child development, and social development departments, to develop specific schemes for women fishers and fishworkers;
7. Equip local governance systems to promote the participation of women in the design of social development programmes and allocation of resources;
8. Develop national guidelines for small-scale fisheries and national policy for women in fisheries, with wider consultation and participation of fishers and fishworkers at various levels;
9. Promote and protect life and livelihood interests of traditional fishing communities in any policy that applies to coastal and riparian areas, and develop it in consultation with these communities, especially women;
10. Recognize and respect customary and traditional fishing/land rights of fishing communities in all legal instruments pertaining to environment, fisheries, forest and wildlife, and local legislation dealing with habitation and housing;
11. Prevent the use of small mesh and led lights in fishing gear and operations, and regulate destructive fishing to ensure that fishery resources are available for present and future generations;
12. Reduce conflicts between marine and coastal conservation and livelihood-fishing by traditional small-scale fishing communities. In this context, implement the Forest Rights Act, 2006, to protect the interests of tribal and forest-dwelling communities;
13. Obtain prior informed consent of fishing communities while initiating any exploration, exploitation and development project in marine, coastal and riparian areas; adequate compensation should be made also to female-headed households and women fishers and fishworkers, taking into account their life and livelihood interests;
14. Strengthen public utilities at markets managed by local governments, in consultation with the representatives of women fishers and fishworkers, towards improving water, power, sanitation and hygiene and for ensuring physical safety of women from harassment; include women in the management of markets; and introduce affordable and carbon-friendly technology for fish storage/processing;
15. Protect the rights of women fish vendors to market spaces and undertake market redevelopment in consultation with their representatives;
16. Secure spaces for women street fish vendors and implement the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014;
17. Provide public transport facilities at affordable costs for women to reach markets;
18. Confirm that compensation for natural disasters, including pandemics, in fisheries is also based on consultation with women in the sector;
19. Guarantee that national capture fishery data fully reflect all fish produced by women; in this context, promote decentralized data collection, including of fish harvested by gleaning; and
20. Urge fishworkers' organizations and traditional fishing community institutions to ensure the effective participation of women fishers and fishworkers in decision-making processes.

In light of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), 2022, we, the representatives of women fishworkers and fishing communities, call for the implementation of these action points, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.