



37 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

The 8th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries held in India in November 2022 raised several important issues for gender-just and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. A running theme in the discussions was the importance of both strengthening the capacity of women fish workers to organize, and developing new models of organizing to meet the economic and environmental challenges confronting the Small-scale and artisanal fisheries. The discussions harkened back to the networking among strong fishworker organisations in the past, often facilitated by the ICSEF, that resulted in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). The discussions reiterated the continuing need for strong organising efforts and alliances to respond to the dynamic and shifting patterns in modern fisheries. Also stressed was the need for formal recognition of women's role in the fisheries sector, and the urgent requirement to formalise customary rights to prevent their erosion due to competitive challenges.

The impact of Covid-19 has been substantial on the Small-scale fisheries sector, and, in particular, on women fishers. A major contribution to the debate on post-pandemic reconstruction was the position paper brought out by over 70 group members of the Women's Major Group, titled "Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Significantly, the paper reported that out of the various social protection and labour rights measures enacted by governments across the globe, only 13 percent catered to women, and only 11 percent recognised and took into account rising unpaid care demands. Given the lack of formal recognition of women's work, and the increasing burden of care responsibilities after COVID, this paints a grim picture for women in artisanal fisheries across the globe.

The importance of organisation is brought out clearly in all the articles in this issue of Yemaya. The National Workshop on SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India, held in Chennai in April 2022 addressed just this issue. It brought together two groups of women fishworkers – vendors and gleaners – resulting in the launch of a new forum – the National Platform for Women in Small Scale Fisheries (NPWSSF), to collectively work towards strengthening the position of women in fisheries across India.

Adding to the challenges that women in fisheries in a post-pandemic world face are a host of new disasters, whether climate-induced variabilities in weather, shortages triggered by war or escalating environmental pollution. Often, as the article on marine litter suggests, the gendered impacts of these catastrophic events are not assessed or factored into mitigation efforts. However, along with challenges, these events also offer new opportunities for organizing; for instance, with migration, the exposure and experience levels of women increase their leadership and networking capacities. As Kyoko Kusakabe discusses in her article, the two most important challenges ahead of women in the sector are strengthening organization among women and working for greater formalization of women's work in the fisheries. On the occasion of March 8, the International Women's Day, let us resolve to strengthen women's economic participation, autonomy and agency in the fisheries sector.

Note: Due to unavoidable circumstances, we regret that this issue of Yemaya does not carry the Yemaya Mama cartoon strip. ❏



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