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The former issue of Yemaya published the full report of the Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF), 2022. I was initially surprised to see this but then realised it was a special issue of Yemaya. The report is well written and gives a good picture of what is going on with women in aquaculture and fisheries world over, and, specifically, in India.

In 25 years, GAF has built a storehouse of knowledge, widening its outreach among fisheries institutions and researchers and this is indeed commendable.

I have also carefully read the recommendations, reflections and the proposition for the way forward. I am glad to see that the need for the better use of political economy insights still finds a place here. I recall Meryl Williams' inputs at the Bangkok Conference, where she gave an input on this too. Cornelie Quist and I had also given a presentation on this from our work experience in ICSF. Yes, I think it is easier said than done but there is always the need to remind ourselves that all these developments take place in a political context, drawing workers, particularly women, into an economy that certainly has an impact on the environment and life and livelihoods on a broader level.

I think we have to begin to reflect on the use of the term and concept of 'mainstreaming gender'. This term appears several times in the deliberations. Mainstreaming in a patriarchal system is actually 'male-streaming'. Is this what we want? The need to dis-aggregate data is now widely accepted and happily also the concept of intersectionality is now more accepted. Bringing these dimensions into our research certainly enriches it, but does it feminise it? Does our research feminise our practice?

All the papers continue to speak of the increased burden of work that women do and the rather poor returns because of the discrepancy of wages, women's loss of tenure rights, their poor health conditions and limits

of child care. These are all areas highlighted in the SSF Guidelines on which little is done to engage governments in their commitments. While there is an increasing awareness of the rights-based approach, the awareness/acceptance of women as fishworkers is still not a reality. In several countries, and in India too, they are considered in the realm of allied workers. Fishers, as a whole, are not considered by themselves or the state as workers in the way the self-employed (such as small and medium farmers) are. They are not covered by labour law. This is an area that needs further probing. Developing synergy between departments – fisheries, forestry, revenue, labour, health, education – also requires consideration.

Initially, most of the fora that focussed on gender issues were related to the women's movements in the country. Hence there was a dynamic relation between activism and academia, each nourishing the other. But increasingly, the fora have begun to get more academic, detaching themselves from the movements. While some of this is understandable, it does not build robust gendered knowledge in the long run. Where does the academic work feed into? Does academic work, even if applied in the field, remain experimental/anecdotal? Scientific experiments are conducted in controlled conditions and therefore could have adverse effects when practised in uncontrolled conditions. If there is a need to upscale, it can be done only through wider intervention. When this is done without proper ground preparation and constant monitoring, the adverse effects on women are negative as all the papers show – poor wages and poor working conditions. If one delves into the health impact on women, I guess the impact will be found to be far more devastating. This takes time but this is the kind of involvement that is required to actually evolve a praxis and integration of gender in fisheries.

This is just my thinking out loud, knowing that we still have miles to go. ❏