

Q&A

Interview with Maria do Livramento Santos (Mentinha), a leader of National Articulation of Fisherwomen (AMP) in Brazil

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What did you feel about the workshop “Defining a Gender Agenda for Sustaining Life and Livelihoods in Fishing Communities” which you attended in Chennai, India in July 2010?

Although for me it was the first meeting outside Brazil, and there were many communication difficulties because of many different languages and cultures, the workshop was quite fruitful. We were able to share our experiences with each other. I realized what amazing similarities we share across countries as women, as fisherwomen, as humble people, and above all, as fighters for our rights.

Tell us about the fishworkers situation in your community, Curral Velho, in Ceará, Brazil.

We are suffering from the threat of losing our lands to prawn farms and wind energy enterprises. But we are strongly organized to defend our lands, our rights, and our freedom.

We struggle for our food sovereignty which is under threat as mangroves are being illegally cut. We even face the threat of physical violence. But it is our responsibility to defend our mangroves because we depend on them.

What is the current state of development of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen in Brazil?

There are many difficulties but we fight to overcome them and achieve our goals. The movement is growing increasingly stronger because women are united and working together for autonomy, dignity and respect. But we need to improve our communication, which is still a big difficulty, in order to organize our actions and meetings better.

What are the prospects of the national struggle of fishermen and fisherwomen in Brazil?

We plan to strengthen our struggle and to find ways not to be intimidated. That would mean, for example, to strengthen the participation of fishermen and women in the decision-making process in which we are often ignored today. Our rights are denied not because we lack interest but because we are excluded and our voices are not sufficiently heard. ✎