

Yemaya

SPECIAL ISSUE

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

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From the Editor

This special issue of Yemaya on Women and Fisheries in Atlantic Canada brings together articles written by several fishworkers and researchers from Atlantic Canada on local and regional fishery issues. The special issue grew out of the *Workshop on Gender, Globalization and the Fisheries*, held in May 2000 in Newfoundland, Canada. Participating in the workshop were researchers and community development workers from 18 countries of the North and South as well as women fishworkers from all four provinces of Atlantic Canada, i.e. Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

Participants came together to identify and acknowledge the ways in which global processes seriously threaten the survival of the fisheries and the well-being of women, men and children of coastal communities throughout the world. Despite differences in experiences among the countries represented, there were many common issues: overfishing, environmental degradation, and fishworkers being squeezed out of traditional fishing grounds and processing jobs. The tragic loss of cultures, livelihoods and marine life is very much tied to globalization.

At the workshop, fishworkers from the Atlantic Canadian provinces, many of whom were participating in such a meeting for the first time, suggested a more inclusive design and

methodology for the workshop, to deal with problems such as inaccessible language. Their deliberations helped develop a process that facilitated the maximum participation of all the delegates. These meetings were very helpful in providing a space for the Atlantic delegates to diffuse frustrations and to share experiences with one another.

The Atlantic participants also used these meetings to prepare a collective presentation to the workshop delegates on the issues that affect women fishworkers and their communities in Atlantic Canada. Among the issues identified were:

- the need to facilitate entry of First Nations people (indigenous peoples) into the fisheries;
- the role of government policies and the impact of cuts in social spending on women in fisheries;
- the effects of downloading costs and responsibilities, but not rights, onto households and communities in the name of decentralization;
- the increased use of technology leading to overcapacity in harvesting and processing;
- the lack of gender equity in terms of access to fishery resources and to fair wages in the processing plants;
- the lack of representation of women within fisheries organizations, and their consequent inability to participate in the decisionmaking which influences the future of their industry and their communities;



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- the out-migration of workers, mainly from Newfoundland, after the collapse of the groundfish fishery, with potential negative impacts not only on these workers but also on processing workers in the provinces to which they travel in search of work;
- the tourism industry, which, on the one hand, may create employment opportunities and contribute to the development of coastal zones, while, on the other, may disrupt fishing activities;
- the environmental degradation of our oceans reflected in pollution and resource depletion.

The women shared information on projects in which they are involved to preserve the small-scale fishery and the families that depend on it. These projects show the way women are working together to find solutions to the problems they face.

During the workshop, the Atlantic delegation met separately to discuss ways the group could keep in contact after the conference. They decided to establish a network and committed to keep in touch for future meetings and support of women in the fishery. They realized the importance of such a network, identified dozens of topics of concern that they shared, even though species fished and methods of fishing vary greatly in some cases. They also identified resources within their communities and provinces that they could share to show solidarity when it comes to lobbying for certain changes. They also made a very important beginning in connecting with academics and researchers—something they are not often given the opportunity to do.

The Atlantic group also explored the possibility of sending women delegates to the next meeting of the World Forum of Fishworkers and Fish Harvesters (WFF), to be held in France in October 2000. The group discussed the importance of the participation of women fishworkers, and of putting issues affecting women fishworkers, their families and coastal communities on the agenda of this meeting.

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