No.55 | September 2017 | ISSN 0973-1156

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

ICSF

31 Years in Support of Small-scale Fishworkers

From the Editor

The United Nations Ocean Conference held in New York on 5-9 June 2017, focussed on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), and called for the sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources. At the conference plenary, the Women's Major Group, representing 1300 member organizations and networks from across the world, presented a position paper, pointing out the interconnections among the various SDGs, in particular, between SDG 14 and SDG 5 (gender equality). The paper argued strongly for the recognition of universal human rights, particularly the human rights of indigenous and local communities, and women. It called for an end to fossil fuel extraction and for a "just transition" to low-carbon and truly sustainable economies. It therefore called for due recognition for the important role played by the small-scale fisheries and associated coastal communities in integrated management and securing food security.

The call for linking SDG 5 with SDG 14 was a timely reminder of the critical role played by women in promoting sustainable fishing and sustaining the livelihood of small fishing communities. However, despite this critical role, women are systematically discriminated against, both socially and economically, in the small-scale fisheries. We learn from the article 'Moving Pictures' in this issue of *Yemaya* that although women make up more than 55 per cent of the seafood industry, in roles including harvest, research, compliance, transport, and marketing, only five per cent occupy decision making positions. Many women in fishing communities have been raising their voices against this discrimination. The article 'Roadmap for Survival' for instance, informs us that women from the Sundarbans in India are no longer willing to accept the status quo, and are debating the need for women's fishworker organizations across occupational sectors with the exclusive or main participation of women.

Agency to women fishers, particularly for post-harvest work is vital for guaranteeing economic stability and food and nutritional security in fishing communities. It is critical that women's access to fish, fish processing and drying areas, transport facilities, markets, capital and credit, insurance, and new technologies be safeguarded and enhanced. Efforts must be directed, in particular, towards reducing post-capture losses, which are known to destroy up to half the catch. In this respect, the FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique, or the FTT, described in the article from the Ivory Coast, has met with considerable success, enhancing food safety and quality, improving working conditions, reducing post-harvest loss and increasing incomes.

The article from Sri Lanka describes the double struggle of women in fisheries for their rights as community members and as women, in today's post-war and post-tsunami Sri Lanka. While the problem of "disappeared" and "missing persons" is a common tale, many displaced families are strangers in their own land, awaiting restoration of their homes and lands, which, in many cases, are under occupation. This is a critical lesson in the context of increasing stress among fishing communities, whether from climate induced factors, or from human destructive factors such as war and conflict, and as the articles in this issue demonstrate, women are often the most directly impacted in these adverse circumstances.