Yemaya

SPECIALISSUE ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES AUGUST 2000

From the Editors

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 decision-making which influences the future of their industry and their communities;

Inside Pages

- 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.

- by Chantal Abord-Hugon, Maureen Larkin, Donna Lewis, Barbara Neis

Atlantic Canada

A gathering not to be missed

Woman fishworkers from Atlantic Canada must be represented at the next meeting of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) to be held in October 2000

by Lucie Breau

A mother of five children, Lucie Breau is a crew member, alongside her husband, on their inshore vessel in New Brunswick, and a member of the Comité des femmes côtières du Nouveau-Brunswick. Lucie has been fishing for close to 10 years. She attended the first meeting of the WFF three years ago and is now in active communication with the committee organizing the next meeting in October 2000, as well as the women's workshop prior to this.

In November 1997, over 120 men and women fishers and fishworkers representing fishworker organizations from 32 countries met in New Delhi, India, to establish the WFF. This organization is meant to be an international solidarity network for the protection of fisheries resources and the coastal communities that depend on them for their livelihood. One of the objectives stated in the WFF's preliminary charter is to "recognize, protect and enhance the role of women in the fishing economy and in the sustenance of the community."

Following this, in October 1999, the international co-

ordinating committee approved two recommendations put forward by women's organizations:

- There should be a gender balance on the co-ordinating committee, based on parity between men and women;
- Each delegation to the WFF should respect this principle of parity, and women delegates should represent fishworkers' organizations or fisheries community organizations.

In response to this objective, women from the North and from the South are preparing a working document stating their concerns and demands to be presented to the Constituent Assembly of the WFF. Prior to the WFF meeting in Brittany, a full day will be devoted to women's concerns, and a political working document will be submitted for discussion.

The *Workshop on Gender, Globalization and Fisheries* in Newfoundland provided the opportunity for women fishworkers from the four provinces in Atlantic Canada to meet. In all these provinces, many women are involved in the fisheries as fish-plant workers or as fish harvesters. Along with researchers and community workers from the North and the South, we prepared a common statement.

We stressed that it was important for one woman delegate from each Atlantic province to attend the WFF women's workshop in Brittany and to participate in the WFF founding meeting as unofficial observers. This is an important gathering which, we feel, we should not be missing. It will also be an opportunity to share the concerns raised in the *Workshop on Gender, Globalization and Fisheries*.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Low value or high value?

Changes in the fishery and in processing technology have affected the nature of the work available to processing workers in Catalina, Newfoundland

by Bernice Duffett

Bernice Duffett is from the Bonavista peninsula, on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, Canada. She has been a plant worker for 28 years. She worked for 20 years processing groundfish (primarily cod) and her plant now processes shrimp. She is president of the local union in her plant and is on the women's committee of the FFAW/CAW that represents fish harvesters and many of the processing workers in Newfoundland.

Since 1992, the fishing industry in Newfoundland has gone through a major restructuring in terms of what we fish and the amount of work generated from that fish. The fishery has gone from a lower-value, labour-intensive groundfish industry to a higher-value, technology-intensive shellfish industry.

In 1988, in Newfoundland and Labrador, cod and flatfish fisheries produced catches of 400,000 tonnes. By 1993, these groundfish catches were under 30,000 tonnes. In less than five years, 90 per cent of the Newfoundland and Labrador groundfish base had disappeared—and with it, thousands of jobs. Ten years ago, shellfish made up seven per cent of total landings and less than 30 per cent of landed value. By 1998, shellfish made up about 53 per cent of total landings and 75 per cent of total landed value. The production value of the fishery in 1998 was Can$750 million. It was expected to exceed Can$800 million in 1999, despite the continuing crisis in our groundfish fisheries.

One of the biggest problems facing our fishing society continues to be a resource shortage. However, technological change is also an issue. Technology has changed the nature of our work in processing plants throughout the province. Shellfish processing is considerably more automated than groundfish processing. The shift from a labour-intensive groundfish fishery to a technology-driven shellfish industry has resulted in less employment for plant workers, many of whom are women.

In the late 1980s, estimates suggested that about 26,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador got some employment from the processing sector of the fishery—many of these jobs provided full-time employment, and many of them were held by women. Today, few processing jobs are full-time, and only about 13,000 people (more than half of whom are women) work in the processing sector of the fishery.

My own plant is a perfect example of the changes that have taken place in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery. Fishery Products International's Port Union plant used to employ over 1,000 people to process groundfish. We worked full-time, all round the year. This plant was recently renovated for shrimp processing. This meant new ventilation systems, new equip-

ment and a complete reworking of the plant's internal structures, at considerable capital investment. It also meant retraining for the workers. Today, fewer than 200 people work in the Port Union plant processing shrimp for between 14 and 20 weeks a year. Since they tend to have lower seniority than the male workers, women now make up only a small minority of the workers who are still employed in the highly automated Port Union plant.

Some women have disappeared from the paid workforce. Others have moved into boats, working alongside their husbands, brothers or fathers. Women fish harvesters are directly affected not only by the resource shortage, but also by how the resource is shared. The future of women fish harvesters in the industry is tied to a more equal sharing of our fisheries resources.

The main challenge facing our communities is survival. Most of the women in the processing sector of the industry will tell you there is less work and that work is more uncertain. Add to that the cuts to the unemployment insurance system and what we end up with is an economic reality far removed from the policymakers in Ottawa. Therefore, the challenge is to see not just how our coastal communities can survive, but whether there is the political will to ensure that they will survive and prosper.

Newfoundland and Labrador

We, women, are out there, fishing….

More women are fishing after the crisis, though the going is not always smooth

by Mildred Skinner

Mildred Skinner is an inshore fisher from Harbour Breton, Newfoundland. She is the representative for inshore fishers at the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW/CAW) in her region.

I am a crew member and a partner aboard of a 38-foot longliner. I also fish lobster with my husband from a 22-foot open boat. Talk to any woman who fishes inshore for a living, myself included, and they will tell you they are fishing out of necessity. When the fish stocks started to diminish 12 years ago, that's when we women started to fish in our area. It just made sense financially for me to go fishing with my husband. It meant we could still make a living from the fishery, but now we have two shares coming to one household.

We were always part of our husbands' enterprises, but we weren't seen. Earlier, we took care of banking, and picked up groceries and other supplies for the vessels. We were the communication link to the Canadian government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the union, fish buyers, and other government agencies. Without our work, our husbands' enterprises wouldn't have thrived as well as they did. All of this was unpaid labor.

Now we are crew members. Most of us are getting fair wages for our work or receiving the same wages as other crew members on vessels. But we still have women out there in those fishing boats who are not getting paid or are getting what their husbands see fit to give them as a share. If fishing women in my area were asked, they would tell you that if another job became available, they would grab it in a second.

Most working women are stressed. Their stresses relate to childcare, work performance, and workplace issues. But for a fishing woman, these issues take on an entirely different dimension. Our work starts at three or four in the morning and ends at seven or eight at night. For those of us who need it, it is very difficult to find adequate childcare because of the long hours involved. If there are older children, they have to take on more responsibility. One woman told me she got lucky last year because she found a good sitter. For the first time in ten years, she could fish and not have to feel guilty, for someone was taking care of her children.

Since we are seasonal workers, dealing with the Employment Insurance (EI) system has always been a nightmare. But, when you have to hire a caregiver for your children and work with this system, then you are dealing with a bigger nightmare.

I know one woman who was caring for her daughter's child this year. She is the grandmother and was doing this because the daughter is attending Memorial University. So, the time came for the grandmother to go fishing this year, and she hired another daughter to care for the child. She contacted all the right people in the government and they told her the exact deductions to take out of this daughter's cheques to

pay for her EI premiums. She did it all right. Everything was fine and when the baby sitter/daughter filed for EI, she was approved and started to receive benefits. Meanwhile, her file came up at Revenue Canada. They are now reviewing her case. The reason? They think she was paid for too many hours. This should be a nine-to-five job, they think. They said: "You are not out there fishing for twelve hours a day. That's not possible." Somebody has to convince someone at Revenue Canada that fishing is not a nine-to-five job. I am sure there are a hundred stories like this one out there.

One woman told me this year: " Mildred, I've aged. Since I started fishing, I have aged because of the stress, the stress of feeling guilty. I feel guilty when I am out fishing because of the time I spend away from my family. If I take the day off, I feel guilty because my husband has to fish alone. If I am not aboard the boat that day and my husband comes to the wharf, I feel guilty when people think I'm not fishing and could think that I don't deserve my EI next winter. The chances are that someone will call the government and report that I wasn't in the fishing boat that day."

As women fish harvesters, we find that there is a stigma attached to us. People outside the fisheries see us as using the system. Some do. But for those of us who are legitimate fish harvesters, we constantly have to prove we are more than just fishing on paper. Most men think we shouldn't be on the fishing boat, to start with. One of the women on board a boat told me that her husband feels guilty. He doesn't feel right when other men see his wife aboard the boat. Other men tell him: "You know, you are going to ruin her aboard of the boat; it's not good for her to be doing that. You shouldn't have her there to start with."

We find that women have very little voice in decision-making. Not many of us sit on an advisory board or fishermen's committee. We've no outlet, and most of us have gotten lost and feel overlooked, even within our own local union committee. Our women's committee at the FFAW is working hard to change this. I find all of the meetings that I attend are for fishermen, and there are not many women who come to those meetings.

I remember last year we had one man in our meeting, and he was giving me a rough time about paying union dues. He said: "Most people get to pay Can$150 and I have to pay Can$300 a year." I said: "Why would you have to pay $300 a year?" He replied: "I pay $150 for me and a $150 for my wife." And I said: "But isn't your wife aboard the boat fishing as well?" He said, "Yes." And I said: "But of course she pays her *own* union dues." But he could not understand that. In his mind, he was paying the dues for his wife. Even though she was aboard the boat doing as much work as he was doing, she really wasn't there in his mind.

On the south coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in other areas, vessels are being forced further offshore. A lot of these vessels are not big enough to travel such long distances. Our boat went out to the Laurentian Channel this year, 110 miles from shore. The seas are very, very rough. It scares me when I think of the potential for disaster. If there is a disaster, it won't be like it was in the past when fathers and sons drowned and mothers and wives were left. Now, mothers and wives would drown as well.

Another major problem I see is inadequate healthcare protection. Very few, if any, of us are paying into a medical plan. We know women who are developing ailments — back problems, joint problems, kidney infections…the list goes on. One thing I am really proud about is that our union is now in the process of bringing a medical programme to our membership for approval. This would be a tremendous help for us.

I am very proud to be part of our union. Somehow, we need to encourage women to get involved in issues that affect them. We are working to achieve that. We women fish harvesters are out there, and our numbers are increasing every year.

Newfoundland and Labrador

A crabby life

Workers in snow crab processing plants are prone to accidents, repetitive strain injuries and to other work-related illnesses

by Della Knee

Della Knee has been working at Beothic Fish Processors Limited in Valleyfield, Newfoundland, a snow crab processing plant, for the past 10 seasons

New-Wes-Valley, Bonavista Bay, consists of a number of adjacent, small sub-communities located on the east coast of Newfoundland. In the community of Valleyfield, you will find a fish processing business that has been around for over 30 years—Beothic Fish Processors Limited (BFPL). At Beothic, we have a multi-species plant, a very modern and growing place. Workers are a very important factor when you look at the success of this establishment. The consideration for the workers at BFPL is second to none.

The snow crab processing plant at BFPL is state-of-the-art and is a very good place to work. However, we have watched our work hours decline dramatically in the crab processing area. Once, we produced meat products only. Today, we are sending our crab out in sections. A section is where the crab is cooked, butchered and packed as two separate pieces per crab. This process has cut the labour intensity of the work and hence the number of jobs created.

Technology is also playing a role in the number of person-hours required to process this product. Technology is often seen as something that makes our jobs a little less stressful to our bodies, but technology is two-sided in that often it comes with job losses. When considering new technology, it has to be assessed who will benefit most from it. Will a new invention help a troubled area in the plant or will it just increase productivity, putting the workers in other areas of the plant at higher risk for injuries?

When people look at our way of life, they rarely see how this type of work can place stress on a worker's health. The human body can only stand so much strain, until eventually it will let you know how it is suffering. The continuous use of the same muscle will eventually result in an injury. The number of workers who suffer with repetitive strain injuries would frighten anyone. Some injuries are accidental, but most injuries are the result of too much work in a very short time doing the same job day in and day out.

When we talk about injuries, we only touch the surface of the health problems we as crab plant workers face. For many years, the workers have experienced many symptoms, some associated with the flu. Today, we recognize this illness as work-related. It is known as Snow Crab Occupational Asthma (SCOA). The symptoms are many, and some are hard to associate with the workplace. Research has come a long way in recognizing what causes these symptoms and how to diagnose this problem as work-related. To date, only a handful of workers have been diagnosed with SCOA, but this does not mean that the problem is not widespread.

SCOA is affecting many of our workforce, and the company and workers alike are striving to improve the quality of the air we breathe when we are at work. A majority of the workers at Beothic, when filling out a survey on symptoms of SCOA, said they had experienced one or more of the symptoms on the survey. That gives us some idea of how serious this problem is. We now have to educate our rural doctors, our plant owners, and the workers alike in how to diagnose this illness, find out how to improve the quality of air in our plants, and let the workers know that they are not alone and that there are things they can do to protect themselves from this illness. The research and conclusions done in this area will benefit both the

workers and the company.

Wearing a mask of any kind with a filter is a help to the worker who experiences chest congestion and coughing. Research has shown that the main things to look for that increase the risk to the worker are cooking steam, water vapour, and crab dust that accumulates around the saws.

Recognizing that this is a work-related illness indicates that the worker with this disease should be compensated for time off work, medical costs and disability by Workers Compensation. However, this qualifying for Workers Compensation is a very long and tiresome process that is often expensive for the worker. Not only is the worker unable to work but, under the present system, she must travel to urban areas to be diagnosed and then, if diagnosed with SCOA, she will be reimbursed for costs by Workers Compensation. The reality is that people are coping with the illness and making do the best way they can until they can no longer work in the plant.

Beothic Fish is second to none in the concern they express for the health of their workforce. We all need guidance on how to improve the quality of the air we are breathing in our plants. Together with research, follow-up and interest by all employers and employees, we can minimize the effect processing crab has on the health of the work force.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Women are human too

Women workers are demanding to be judged and rewarded according to their commitment, experience and ability

by Carol Penton, Cheryl Cobb-Penton and Bonnie McCay

Carol Penton is a reporter for the Fogo Island Flyer, a monthly magazine that serves Fogo Island. Cheryl Cobb-Penton is the editor of this magazine and Bonnie McCay teaches anthropology and ecology at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA

Fogo Island is on the northeast coast of the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Since the late 1960s it has been the site of a fishing cooperative which serves six island communities, home of over 2,500 people. The Fogo Island Cooperative has been remarkably successful over the years in helping make it possible for people to continue to live on the Island, dependent on the inshore and nearshore fisheries for income and employment.

The Co-op was always seen as both an economic and a social institution, and during the 1980s it was able to expand the work opportunities for islanders by developing fish and crab plants, which came to employ up to 500 women and men. Today it runs a plant for filleting and freezing groundfish as well as capelin, lumpfish roe, herring, and other products; another for crab processing; and as of July 2000, one for shrimp processing.

Both the fishers and the fish plant workers have the opportunity to be members and hence owners of the Co-operative. The fish plant workers have resisted efforts to bring them into a union that represents almost all the fish plant workers, and fishers, in the rest of Newfoundland and Labrador. The ideology has been "we are all in the same boat." But of late unionization has come under greater scrutiny as members search for a solution to the issues that face the general plant worker.

There has been a tension between management and the fish plant workers, and even more so, between the plant workers and the large-scale 'longliner' fishers. These fishers are heavily represented on the Co-operative's board of directors and have a strong say in the co-operative's policy, including fish plant policy. This is because their large vessels, equipped for turbot, crab, and shrimp fishing, supply the plants with most of the raw product upon which fish plant jobs depend.

The long-standing local dilemma is that the Co-op depends on the raw product of the fishers, and the fishers thus claim some 'right' to ask that their own family members get special consideration at the fish and crab plants. On the other hand, workers claim the right to be judged and rewarded on the basis of their commitment and experience (i.e. seniority) and their ability, no matter who they live with and are related to. Complaints about hiring for other reasons—the so-called `fishermen's wives' preference—are long-standing.
This situation came to a head recently. The Fogo Island Co-op has been in the throes of competition for raw product with numerous other buyers, with other communities struggling with unemployment and failed fisheries, and with its own members trying to make

the best of the very bad situation of the cod moratorium of the 1990s. The Co-op has diversified, and its crab fishery and crab plant helped families get through the groundfish crisis in the early nineties. However, the crab fishery's season gets shorter by the year, reducing the chances that plant workers will qualify for unemployment benefits during the long winter off-season.

Forced to compete on a global market, the co-operative invested in a new, more efficient crab plant—with a much-reduced work force. Competition for jobs at the plant increased, and the need for clear rules about hiring and firing went up. Meanwhile, competition for the crabs caught by Fogo Island's large longliner vessels, and the inability of the Co-op to offer them financing to upgrade their vessels for the crab fishery and the new shrimp fishery, combined with more specific issues, has resulted in the loss of many boats to other buyers. Plant capacity has become far higher than the raw product available and there is less work.

The Co-op's board of directors hit upon a solution to both problems in its 'preferential hiring' policy, based on ability and seniority but 'with preference given to family members' of fishers who delivered all of their fish and shellfish to the cooperative, rather than to other buyers. These incentives were to increase raw product to the plants, ensuring that the benefits of employment went to the members and were not shipped out to off-island buyers. Those members whose spouses shipped their catch elsewhere would therefore not be 'eligible' for employment at the plant.

As a result of this policy many senior women plant workers lost their jobs. They subsequently took the case to court. Many of the 33 women who filed complaints had long been Co-op members in good standing. A typical situation was one where their spouses had been small-scale inshore fishers who shipped their lobsters traditionally to a buyer off the Island. Another typical situation was where a woman's spouse or boyfriend worked on a nearshore longliner vessel, and the owner decided to ship his fish or crabs off the island.

At the hearings in March 2000, testimonies were given by both the employees who had lost their jobs, and representatives of the Co-op. One of the women, who had held a supervisory position at the plant for many years, spoke of how surprised and upset she was when she found out that she too had lost her seniority and job. "I was shocked at losing my job because of something my husband had done that I had no control over?.The Plant had become my second home, my second family, and that in the year 2000, this should not be happening."

Representing the position of the Co-op, the Project Co-ordinator commented, "with approximately 20 Fogo Island boats shipping their catch elsewhere, we were forced to do what was in the very best interest of the Co-op to ensure its survival". He also stated, "to accommodate members whose spouses are supporting other businesses we would be helping to subsidize another business, often at our own expense" and that "it was only fair to hire workers who were full supporters of the Co-op."

As of this writing (the end of July 2000) no decision has been reached in the matter, and most of the women are no longer working for the Co-op. They are struggling to make ends meet as low-paid home care workers, baby-sitters, or by simply trying to make do with no income of their own.

Although Fogo Island is remote, a small island in the North Atlantic, it is firmly enmeshed in a globalized system. The Fogo Island Co-op's markets are established, yet ensuring its stability in a competitive marketplace is a priority. To add to this, globalization, regional and local issues are affecting the role of women, whose sole source of income is the fishery.

Prince Edward Island

PEIwatch

Though small by world standards, PEI is a high-quality centre of excellence in fish culture technology

by Maureen Larkin

Maureen Larkin works with the Cooper Institute at Prince Edward Island. She has long been associated with ICSF's Women in Fisheries programme.

In 1999, the fisheries and aquaculture industries accounted for a landed value of over Can$133 million, from a landing of approximately 132 million pounds (60,000 tonnes) of fish and sea plants (preliminary figures). In addition, the industry creates in the vicinity of 9,200 jobs in terms of seasonal and year around employment. Fishing out of the 50 ports all around the Island, there are 1,385 core fishers and 4,000 commercial fishers classified as 'non-core', mainly representing the crew members who also require a commercial fishers licence to fish. There are 750 people involved in aquaculture and harvesting operations, and another 3,000 are employed in the processing sector. The total contribution to the Island economy is estimated to be over Can$260 million.

Lobster remains the backbone of the island fishery, accounting for close to 70 per cent of the total value. Other important species include mussels, oysters, herring, mackerel, snow crab, rock crab, scallops, finfish, quahogs, and sea plants.

Over the past two decades, the mussel industry has grown from an experimental fishery to a production of just over 30 million pounds (13,600 tonnes) in 1999. The oyster industry is also experiencing an increase, and landings of the famous Malpeque oysters reached 5 million pounds in 1999. The ground fishery is making a slight comeback, mainly as a result of a limited open cod fishery in 1999, the first since the fishing moratorium in 1992.

Although small by world standards, PEI has become a high-quality centre of excellence in fish culture technology, with expertise in production, equipment fabrication, fish health diagnostic services, fish health research, vaccines and aquaculture training.

Prince Edward Island

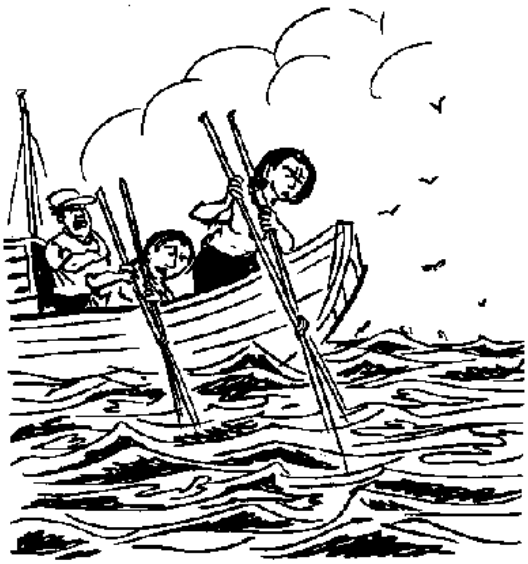
Cleaned Out

Women traditionally working as cleaners on oyster boats find themselves forced out of their jobs

by Donna Lewis

Donna Lewis is a shellfisher from Brooklyn, Prince Edward Island. She and her husband, Lloyd, work 34 acres of leased waterway on the Mill River where they fish oysters and clams. Donna is an articulate advocate and spokesperson for the rights of artisanal fishers. She is active on environmental issues, lobbying for changes in government regulations and advocating for children's rights. Donna is a regular contributor to two publications on fisheries issues.

Prince Edward Island has earned an international reputation for excellence on the world shellfish market. One species that has achieved this recognition is the Malpeque oyster.



The physical labor associated with fishing oysters is intensive. 'Tongs', which are basically two rakes, 6-14 feet in length and fastened together, are used to grapple the oysters from the ocean floor and lift them to the boat for cleaning and sorting. Every oyster must be free of spat (oyster seed), barnacles and mussels, and must be at least three inches long to be sold. This activity takes place on public fishing grounds from 1 May to 15 July and from 15 September to 1 December (weather permitting), providing a small window of opportunity for oyster fishers to make a living.

For the most part, women, often the spouses, have done the task of cleaning and sorting. To do this, they must

possess a commercial fishing registration card, which costs Can$50.00. The fisherman who owns the boat and gear either pays them a nominal fee, or, by special agreement, they earn a share of the catch. The latter is more lucrative, and not many women are paid that way.

The practice of employing a 'cleaner' has been widely accepted in the past, even though the DFO acknowledges that under Licensing and Registration Regulations 4.1,"no person shall fish for or catch and retain fish...without...a licence."

Several years ago, the federal government saw fit to reclassify and divide fishers into two groups: 'core' licences were given for species that could bring in higher incomes such as lobster, crab, scallop, and 'non-core' licences for species with a lower potential for bringing in income, such as oyster, clam, quahog, eel, etc. The price of a 'core' licence package has risen to over Can$400,000 in recent months. This has made it difficult for those making marginal incomes to enter the more prosperous fisheries. Few 'core' licence holders are women.

To qualify as a core fisher, several criteria have to be met, including: being head of a fishing enterprise; holding a licence for a main species (lobster, crab, shrimp); being part of the fishery for a long time; and earning one's main income (more than 75 per cent) from the fishery.

The PEI Shellfish Association, an organization representing Island shellfishers, had never pressed for the enforcement of Regulation 4.1 until this past April 2000. At that time, a public meeting was called and, with approximately 200 fishers in attendance (out of a possible 2,000 license holders), a vote was held on the issue of banning 'cleaners' from the boats unless they held an oyster licence. Only oyster licence holders were permitted to vote. Those who only had commercial registrations, even though they were members of the Association, were excluded.

Jimmy A'Hearn, vice-president of the Association, fishes in one of the more popular Spring grounds in Wilmot, PEI. According to him, the number of cleaners appears to have dropped by 60 per cent since the vote took place. He also claimed that conservation was the incentive for pressing the enforcement of the existing legislation.

The dilemma facing all the women who have been displaced from the position of cleaners is that, in 1987, a moratorium was placed on new oyster licences. Speculation over the past couple of years has driven the price for a licence up to approximately Can$10,000. To further complicate the situation, the DFO has started buying back licences in response to the Marshall Decision. In this decision, the Supreme Court of Canada has acknowledged native and aboriginal treaty rights to earn a moderate livelihood within the existing fisheries. The DFO's intent has been to buy 'core' packages that would also include oyster, clam, etc. However, in recent weeks, a third party has purchased 16 individual oyster licences at an undisclosed price. This practice has increased the price of all licences, pushing the prospect of a cleaner being able to afford a licence even farther out of reach.

The media's response to women being forced out of their traditional occupation was to print excerpts from a press release issued by the Federal Government stating, "The taking of cleaners in the boats allows licence holders to increase landings significantly, as the time-consuming job of sorting and cleaning is performed by cleaners. While this practice was not considered a major issue for the oyster industry in the past, the PEI Shellfish Association has asked the DFO to increase enforcement of these regulations, authorizing only licensed fishers in the fishery operation."

In my opinion, one decision made by mankind in the name of conservation has dealt a fateful blow to those women continuing the struggle to survive and maintain access to fish resources in Island coastal communities.

Prince Edward Island

Moss loss

As the struggle to make a living from the traditional Irish moss industry gets harder, more families turn to other ways to make a living

by Lou Anne Gallant

Lou Anne Gallant is a member of an organization, Women in Support of Fishing. She lives in Miminegash, PEI and during the summer months is the manager of the Seaweed Pie Café and Irish Moss Interpretive Centre which is owned and operated by Women in Support of Fishing. Lou Anne, her husband and three children have been involved in the Irish moss industry for more than 30 years

The commercial harvesting of Irish moss began in Miminegash in the 1930s. Irish moss harvesting is a way of life in the West Prince area of PEI, and entire families are involved. Harvesting Irish moss is hard work. It can be harvested by boat or along the beach with horses and scoops. You need a licence to harvest by boat, and the season is from 21 June to 21 October. There are presently about 60 boats harvesting Irish moss.

There are only a couple of companies dealing with Irish moss, and they fix the quota according to what they need as well as the price. The harvesters have no control over the price. The price for the 2000 season is 33 cents a pound for dry moss, and nine cents a pound for wet moss. At one time, PEI exported 80 per cent of the world's supply of Irish moss. Today, it exports only two per cent. Three million pounds of dry moss were shipped out of PEI in 1999, mainly to Europe and the US.

Irish moss is valuable for the *carrageenan* product that is extracted from it. This extract is used in medicine, cosmetics, dairy products, beer, car tyres, as well as many other products. The buyers have found a cheaper source for the *carrageenan* product in places like the Philippines. They are acquiring a similar product for a fraction of what it costs them to buy in PEI. This sea plant is being farmed in southern countries as an aquaculture product.

In the early 1960s, the government set up a research station in Miminegash. It was closed down around 1980 mainly because the provincial government was not committed to putting a substantial amount of money into research related to Irish moss.

Each year the struggle to make a living from the Irish moss industry gets harder. More and more harvesters have to find work elsewhere. This is especially true for women, and many have gone to work in fish processing plants and retail stores.

New Brunswick

Bearing the brunt

Many inshore fisher people of New Brunswick believe that, going by government policies and actions, their sector of the industry is scheduled for elimination

by Chantal Abord-Hugon

Chantal Abord-Hugon has been involved with development education and community work for the last 12 years, mainly with women of coastal fishing communities. An associate member of ICSF, she has also been linked with ICSF's Women in Fisheries programme. She is now a doing her masters in environmental studies.

New Brunswick fisheries have been able to remain healthy and economically viable with slightly higher landings and an export value that has more than doubled in the last decade. Since it is a coastal, multi-species fisheries, it has been less severely affected than the fisheries in some other provinces that have suffered collapses, especially of groundfish stocks.

New Brunswick has 1,400 inshore owner-operator fishers. They use mainly fixed gear, are well spread along the coast, and belong to 70 fishing communities. The inshore fishery relies mainly on lobster. This fishery is managed by effort control rather than by quota. Lobster stocks have been sustained and lobster prices have increased in recent years. Inshore fishers in New Brunswick are members of the Maritime Fishermen's

Union (MFU). This organization has been working towards reducing the inshore fleet's reliance on lobster, and towards a sustainable multi-species approach, with initiatives such as a long-term scallop enhancement programme.

Many inshore fisher people believe that, going by government policies and actions, their sector of the industry is scheduled for elimination. In the 1980s, for example, a Royal Commission recommended reducing the number of fishers by 50 per cent and, since then, government management has been working to privatize the resource through different quota allocation systems and partnership agreements. Fishing ownership has become more concentrated as a result. Globalization has opened up new markets and increased the value of landings, but a shift towards harvesting more shellfish by mid-shore vessels and reduced processing, have pushed aside small inshore fishers and reduced the number of fish-plant workers, mainly women. As a result, fewer people are sharing more wealth from what used to be a common pool resource. Women are those losing the most.

Government management decisions are still motivated by politics, and corporations are very active in lobbying to maintain their privileges and unsustainable fishing methods. Evidence for this can be found in the most recent government decision related to the way cod will be allocated in the southern gulf of St. Lawrence when cod stocks reach 10 per cent of their historical level. In New Brunswick, nine mid-shore mobile gear vessels have received twice the amount of quota that has been allocated to over 600 inshore licence holders. The mid-shore will be allowed to fish a full month using mobile gear, while the inshore fishers will each be limited to two days of fishing with a maximum of 10 nets per enterprise. Inshore fisher people are outraged to see the government reinstalling a fishing system that they believe caused the collapse of the resource, while ignoring more sustainable practices.

Women play an important role in the fishery, but they still remain invisible and absent from the fishing organizations and decision-making bodies. Some women are now fishing as crew members with their husbands in an attempt to keep the income of the fishing enterprise in the family, but this is still a marginal phenomenon in New Brunswick. Fishermen's wives are sometimes referred to as skippers of the shore crew and play an important role in supporting the enterprise through such activities as preparation of the gear, purchases and book-keeping.

Women in the fisheries have no formal organization. The *Comité des femmes côtières du Nouveau-Brunswick* was formed in 1994 as a loose network within three different regions. It has been organizing conferences and workshops for women in coastal communities in order to break their isolation and give them a voice. Having identified the question of equity as their main concern, over the past year, they have joined two provincial women's coalitions: the Women's World March 2000 and the Women's Union for Pay Equity.

New Brunswick

Closing the gap

Women from New Brunswick are concerned about equity in terms of women receiving equal pay for work of equal value, and equity in terms of access to the fisheries resource

by Docile Cormier, Kouchibouguac

Docile Cormier is a secretary in a school board. Though not directly involved in the fishery, she was born, raised and still lives in a fishing community where she is very active. She is a union activist and has been helping women from her area organize within the 'Comité des femmes côtières du Nouveau-Brunswick', a group devoted to bringing women from coastal communities together and giving them a voice. This write-up is based on a statement presented at the Newfoundland workshop.

Women are working together in order to achieve pay equity. We want to close the gap that exists between the wages of women and men, for the same work. The major reason for this gap is that, historically, work done by women has been undervalued and underpaid, in relation to work done by men.

Pay inequity is a widespread problem, but it is even more crucial for women in the fisheries sector in New Brunswick who work under difficult conditions and are paid very low wages. In fish-plants, men are paid an average of Can$2 an hour more than women doing comparable work. Very few fish-plants in New Brunswick are unionized and the seasonal nature of

the fishery gives very little bargaining power to the workers. Production is very concentrated and requires women to work long hours but for short periods of time

This is why the *Comité des femmes côtières du Nouveau-Brunswick* has joined a coalition of women organizing for the Women's World March 2000 which is dedicated to pay equity. In October 2000, before joining other women from the world in New York, the women from New Brunswick will meet their provincial premier to request a Pay Equity Act.

Women are also demanding equity of access to the resource for the inshore fishers. We all know that fishermen have high payments to assume: boats, fishing gear and now they have additional costs with mandatory dockside monitoring, observer fees, costs for harbour authorities, and so on. All these extra costs come at a time when the fishing industry is least able to absorb them. This puts a great deal of additional stress on the fishers and also their wives and children.

In our communities, there is a widespread feeling that fairer sharing of access to fisheries resources would enable more fishermen and their families to survive. For instance, we want, and should have, quotas for snow crab in inshore waters.

In New Brunswick, the lucrative snow crab is fished by a relatively small mid-shore fleet of approximately 100 vessels which are engaged in a partnership agreement with the DFO. This fleet contributes to the costs of research and monitoring and, in exchange, has been given exclusive access to the snow crab resource. For years now, the inshore fishers, through their organization, the MFU, have been asking for fair access to snow crab in inshore waters. This would allow them to develop a sustainable multi-species fishery. The snow crab would help our communities, as the fishermen would bring in more money, and other members of their families would work in the fish-plants to prepare the crab meat.

Nova Scotia

Profits for a few

The common person can never afford to become a fish harvester again

by Mary Desroches

Mary Desroches is a member and volunteer in several non-profit organizations such as Coastal Communities Network (CCN), FishNet, Western Area Women's Coalition, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Women's CED Network. CCN developed as a provincial umbrella organization with its membership representing rural and coastal organizations to provide a collective 'Large Voice for Small Communities'. Since it was founded in 1992, CCN provides a forum for these organizations to find common ground for activities and information sharing.

CCN has just completed a Rural Revitalization Project aimed at strengthening regional and provincial networks. As I worked on this project, I was fascinated by the way each regional pilot took on a life of its own. In one region, the focus was on raising awareness about Community Based Management (CBM) of our resources. Workshops were held in four counties to both spark interest and increase participation in developing and implementing a pilot CBM plan for the Fundy region. Another region began a process of cross-cultural dialogue with First Nations, the black community, Acadian and communities of European descent. The three dialogue dinners held have provided a safe atmosphere for each culture to learn about one another and to recognize our similarities. An outcome has been the recognition of our similar values that will be the foundation of working together to bridge the gaps within the cultural diversity of rural Nova Scotia. Although the Rural Revitalization project has ended, activities to move CBM and cross-cultural dialogue

forward continues.

Many fishery organizations and some provincial organizations have developed to deal with public concerns and are very active. Consultation with government representatives continues, but, in most cases, to no avail. Over the past decade, thousands of meetings have been held with government officials, with very clear requests for fair policies that protect the rights of coastal people and the environment. However, the same policy directives continue to appear: privatization of the best wharves, while wharves in poor condition are unloaded onto small communities. The privatization of fisheries resources continues, even as our diverse forests are clear-cut, our waters become highly polluted, and there is a substantial increase in the number of families living in poverty.

Currently, I'm working with The Women for Economic Equality Society (WEE). We are working on a pilot project called Women's Community Economic Development Network (WCEDN) in three counties of Nova Scotia. One of our goals is to assist women with information and workshops to develop or strengthen home-based and small businesses. The Learning Series of self-help modules aims to strengthen existing or newly organized groups. Over 200 people in Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland have just completed a test of this model, with participants' suggestions incorporated into the final draft.

I am a woman of the fisheries. My culture and my family's way of life have always been 'the sea' as far back as one can trace. My husband, who has fished in the Fundy region for 25 years, started his fishing life at the age of 12, alongside his father in Prince Edward Island. His family also comes from a traditional culture based on earning a livelihood from the sea. Our grown children, as well as my husband and I, are in the throes of building an alternative way of life that provides the basics and a bit of security for the future. Why are my family and thousands of other fishing families facing the necessity to change our culture, our way of life? Especially when this way of life has depended on a renewable resource that could not be destroyed by sustainable methods of fishing such as hook-and-line?

The devastation of the various species of fish stocks that once were plentiful in our region began in the late 1950s with the introduction of new technology. By the early 1960s, overfishing was having a negative impact, with fishing folk having to travel further and further from home to find groundfish. The slaughter of fish stocks continues today in this region, as two of the three remaining species being fished are in trouble. Yet, the fishing industry in Nova Scotia is doing well in terms of 'profit for a few', with the overall value of the fishery not dropping once since the devastation of the Atlantic groundfish.

So, with such great landed value from our fish stocks, what is all this talk of a fishing crisis? It is evident to us: corporate takeovers, the quota system, public policies implemented by the government including support for privatization of our natural resources, continued downloading of responsibilities to communities and community organizations, continued removal of government responsibility for infrastructure vital to the survival of coastal and rural communities. The resulting issues include rising costs, deteriorating, unsafe harbours with no place to dock, stress, unhealthy communities, conflicts between individuals, cultures and communities. All these actually arise from policy directives.

In all this, the reality of people's lives remains invisible. Invisible are the truly emotional trials of adjustment that families have to confront both within the home and within the community. Fishing families, men and women, have lost not only their livelihood but also their identity. Men have been socialized to believe that they are the main 'breadwinners', the `kings of their castles.'

What happens when their livelihood is ripped away from them? Often, in this situation, men go into denial, then withdrawal. Fear for the future is an underlying, ongoing concern. There is loss of self-esteem, self-confidence, and blaming of self for failure, because we live in a society that claims that anyone can be successful if they work hard enough.

Put it all together and those with the decision-making power continue to disregard the generations of families who earned their livelihood from the sea. A culture, a way of life, is facing 'genocide' in the first degree. Women are dealing with stress, added responsibility to hold the family together in dire economic times, suicide or fear of suicide, and, in many cases, conforming to the status quo (for example, accepting ITQs) against personal values and principles in order to continue to make a living from the sea. Each year, neighbors and family helplessly watch their members succumb to the ever-increasing pressures and costs that force yet another family out of the fishing industry.

How many families have been negatively affected by the fishery crisis of the 1980s and 1990s? Fifty thousand Atlantic Canadians were displaced from the fishing industry by 1995. At that time, thousands more uncounted people fell through the cracks of the income-support programmes. Over the last five years, the displacement of small-scale fishworkers and fish harvesters and the loss of a way of life continue. What is it really like to live in the midst of this trial and tribulation? What does it take to go beyond this level of hopelessness to move into the mode of resiliency that has allowed Atlantic Maritime peoples to remain in their homeland? Where do we take account of the courage to pack up your family and to move in hopes of finding that alternative livelihood elsewhere? Where do we account for the loss of the extended family that supports each other throughout these periods of economic hardship?

The new wave of fisheries under quota systems allows for a paper fish market that is traded on stock markets. The owners of these fish resource may never see the Atlantic waters, let alone catch a fish. Invisible owners of our fish. Invisible pain and suffering of coastal women and men. What needs to be recognized and supported is the tremendous courage and determination of these Maritime families to move beyond these stages resulting from a severe loss of a way of life and living that is robbed not only from this generation but also from our children and our grandchildren.

All of my four children left Nova Scotia to find jobs in other places. All have returned home and are doing as well as they did in their travels. My family is still dependent on our natural resources to survive. We are adjusting, adapting. Those terms instilled from somewhere beyond. The common person can never afford to become a fish harvester again. It is time that the toll on families, the emotional turmoil, poverty, uncertainty, and fear be recognized and addressed. Politicians must be held accountable for their decisions that cause such havoc in the lives of our families, our communities, and our environment. For us, it is not over yet. We are trying hard to rebuild our lives. It is not easy.

Nova Scotia

The invisible ones

No union or association can speak for those who can no longer fish

by Ishbel Munro

Ishbel Munro is Co-ordinator of the Coastal Communities Network (CCN) in Nova Scotia. The CCN is a volunteer association of organizations whose mission is to provide a forum to encourage dialogue, share information, and create strategies and actions that promote the survival and development of Nova Scotia's coastal and rural communities.

We are the invisible ones. In our snug homes by the sea, no one hears our silent cries hanging like fog over our villages, coves and towns.

Our families have fished for generations. It is not what we do. It is what we are. One by one, we have been squeezed out of the fishery. The small, independent fishing family hanging on, hanging on... while costs rise—fees to tie up at the wharf, fees to be monitored, rising insurance costs, gas and bait, even as the amount of fish we are allowed to catch gets smaller and smaller. One more regulation breaks our hope. There is nowhere else to borrow from, to hang on and hope for another year. We are the invisible, silent ones. No union or association speaks for us, as we can no longer fish.

When we lose our spouse to death, the community supports us, extends a helping hand. We can grieve and slowly heal. When we lose our way of life, we are alone. We are invisible. The pain is internal, turned in on the family. The man's pain is like bone cancer, gnawing at his confidence, his self-esteem, his image, the reality of who he is. The woman's pain is a knot of silent tears circling, squeezing tighter and tighter around her heart. It takes the strength and goodness out of her body, until her legs ache as she carries another load of laundry up the stairs, while bills and needs re-play and re-play in her mind. For the children, it is seeing the strain grow in your parents' eyes. You never know when they will snap. The child forgets money is tight and asks for new shoes for school and then feels so bad to see the pain in his mother's eyes grow. The pain often eats at the bond that holds the family together. The woman tries to bury the pain deep inside her and wills her body and mind to carry on, searching for hope, for solutions, for a way to make things right again.

Morning comes grey and still. The man thinks of friends on the wharf. Their voices carried over the still waters - laughter, smiles and then the boats slip out of the harbour.

For some, still hanging on, it will be a good day. Their incomes are down by 60 per cent from 10 years ago. But the sun is shining. There's a slight breeze and - hey- they are fishing lobster. Out on the water, the rhythm of their lives, matching the world around them.

For those left behind on the shore, the rhythm of their lives is gone.

Nova Scotia

Under stress

Woman of Nova Scotian fishing communities are being affected by the individual, family and community break-downs which surround them

by Linda Christiansen-Ruffman and Stella Lord

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman and Stella Lord are both long-time members of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW), Nova Scotia. They were among the co-founders of Nova Scotia Women's FishNet. Linda is professor of sociology at Saint Mary's University. Stella Lord taught sociology and women's studies at Saint Mary's University for a number of years and now works for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Both have a strong interest in change-oriented research.

"I was surprised how stressed women are.... Some of the interviews broke my heart." This community-based researcher had heard from young women depressed by their futures and from women exhausted by work, family and community responsibilities—with only memories of days when their husbands were proud and independent fishermen. She was one of 10 community-based researchers who worked along with our research team on a participatory action research project, conducted in six Nova Scotian coastal communities in 1999-2000.

We heard feelings of despair, anger, grief and hopelessness as well as great courage and strength. Some women talked about the unfairness of fisheries and compensation policies that favour the 'professionalization' of the fishery, large fishing corporations, and environmentally destructive practices, at the expense of a small, sustainable inshore fishery and viable fishing communities. Some women voiced concern about policies that discriminate against women and against rural ways of life. In fact, there are policy proposals where women are expected simply 'to cope'.

Almost all research participants, numbering more than 60 women in all, are being affected by the individual, family and community break-downs which surround them. Some women are having a particularly difficult time because they are dealing with domestic abuse and violence, made worse by the use of alcohol and stress on the family.

Women express feelings of loss of control. Women, who have been the experts in the onshore management of family fishing businesses, are being 'deskilled' by frequent changes in rules governing everything from fishing to taxes. Local women's jobs have evaporated with fish-plant closures, and women are having to take low-paid jobs in towns so they can become family breadwinners. Women's roles in creating strong and viable communities are being eroded by changes in government policies as well as by their overwork and uncertainty about the future. These changes reveal the past importance of women's work in family fishing and in fostering strong, vibrant coastal communities.

The changes also indicate the invisibility or insignifi-

cance to urban-based policymakers of social capital and community infrastructure, created by women, and of the women themselves who helped to create it. Although Nova Scotia 'markets' its fishing communities as tourist attractions, authorities seem oblivious to the erosion and growing fragility of the material bases and complex social roots of these communities under current socioeconomic conditions.

Most women said that changes in fishing regulations and social policies (e.g. employment insurance) have not helped but have made the situation worse. These policies have negatively affected the health of women in fishing families, their families and their communities. In effect, we found that current government policies are making people and communities sick.

It is clear how and why so many of these women have a mistrustful 'us and them' attitude toward government decision-makers; they have, for the most part, not been involved in the key decisions which affect their lives. The critical attitude and cynicism expressed toward all aspects of government also show that democracy has failed these communities; women feel they, their families and their communities have been let down, unheard and unfairly treated by the government.

Nevertheless, women in communities have a range of views on solutions and actions. Two communities have already set up volunteer-operated women's centres, and embarked on another project to include local women in community economic development efforts. FishNet has started another project to bring this research to the attention of policymakers.

Historic injustices and discrimination against women persist. Women's hard work in fishing businesses and in building community infrastructure needs to be recognized so that current policies do not destroy the foundations of Nova Scotian communities and the health of its peoples.

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Published by
International Collective in
Support of Fishworkers
27 College Road, Chennai 600 006
India
Tel: (91) 44 827 5303
Fax: (91) 44 825 4457
Email: icsf@vsnl.com
Web site: http://www.icsf.net

Edited by
Chantal Abord-Hugon, Maureen Larkin, Donna Lewis, Barbara Neis and Chandrika Sharma

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We would also like names of other people who could be interested in being part of this initiative. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.

Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.