

Latin America/ Peru

We don't wish to compete ...

Based on a report prepared by Ms. Cecilia Vidal Baldera and Mr. Jose Cachique Diaz. Cecilia Vidal is National Secretary of Women, FIUPAP and President of the Women's Committee of caleta Huarmey-Ancash and Jose Cachique Diaz is Executive Director of the FIUPAP newsletter El Mundo de la Pesca Artesanal and the FIUPAP Coordinator for Amazonía.

In Peru there has been gradual but firm progress—women are now included in the social organizations of artisanal fishworkers. At the Vth Congress of the Federación de Integración y Unificación de los Pescadores Artesanales del Perú (FIUPAP) held at Talara in May this year, Cecilia Vidal Baldera was elected as National Secretary of Women. The re-elected General Secretary of FIUPAP, Claudio Nizama Silva, expressed his conviction that women must actively participate in all activities, be they related to fishing, trade or organization.

At this meeting, Cecilia Vidal stressed that women in *caletas* tend to be perceived as passive objects rather than as social actors in development programmes initiated by the Government. Their participation in local and regional spaces is minimal, if not completely lacking.

She highlighted the following aspects:

- Artisanal fisheries are culturally diverse and the relationship between men and women also show the same diversity. Therefore, it is not possible to make generalizations. Gender is a cultural construct and must be approached with the specific characteristics of artisanal fishing communities in mind.
- It is important to recognize that women have had to fight harder to make their interests more visible, socially, politically and economically.
- The family is the nucleus of artisanal fishing communities. It is necessary to recognize that the men have, on occasions, used and abused their power over women. It is necessary to arrive at an analysis that permits a better understanding of gender relations.

- Women have always been a part of artisanal fisheries, but that does not necessarily mean that their role is recognized. They play multiple roles and carry out diverse activities: they collect shellfish, culture species, market the yield, process fish, besides taking care of the children and other household chores.
- Women have participated occasionally in capture activities alongside the men, spurred by economic necessity, a result of depleting fish resources.
- Within the fisheries sector, women also play managerial and decision-making roles and have a presence in public spaces.
- Women's participation in fisheries must be viewed in a wider perspective: not only in terms of their right to work but also in terms of a greater social recognition of their participation in domestic work, and their right to health and education services. It is particularly important to address the issue of children's education, especially during times of economic crisis.
- When we talk of changing certain aspects to improve gender relations, we are actually talking of a new type of society where respect is a very important value.

In conclusion, Cecilia stressed that:

We don't wish to compete with males; what we do want is to work alongside our men, supporting them, for the welfare of our families, our communities and our country as a whole.

We, as women, have the difficult task ahead of organizing ourselves. We believe that we must take on shared and complementary responsibilities. Liberty for us lies in the strong familial bond that leads us to seek the best for our children and to share our daily lives with happiness and understanding.

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