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Yemaya

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From the Editor

Greetings! This issue of *Yemaya* brings together articles from various parts of the world that examine some of the central issues in marine protection, particularly as it impacts women.

Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have committed to achieve by 2010, a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss. They have agreed to bring at least 10 per cent of the world's marine and coastal ecological region under protection by 2012. It is estimated that currently only 0.6 per cent of the world's oceans are under protection.

As governments, in collaboration with international bodies, gear up to meet this ambitious target, coastal communities, globally, face challenging times. What will biodiversity protection mean for the millions whose lives depend on coastal and marine resources? Are arbitrary prohibitions on access and the tyranny of official enforcement inevitable or can it mean real participation, equity and benefit sharing?

Biodiversity conservation and livelihood sustenance are intertwined issues for women in coastal communities—the loss of one leading to the loss of the other. Protection strategies that exclude women are, therefore, imperiled at the outset. Worryingly however, as the stories from India and Mexico show, such strategies continue to be willfully pursued.

Does the problem start, as the story from South Africa suggests it does, with the conservation agenda at the highest levels? Clearly, unless this agenda recognizes the indigenous attempts being made by women to protect and manage their resources, the goal of marine protection might well prove to be a mirage. If these efforts are recognized, as the stories from Zanzibar and Chile demonstrate, powerful synergies may be built.

The coming year will undoubtedly bring fresh challenges before coastal communities who will have to be even more vigilant to ensure that conservation does not entail market-friendly reforms and the curtailment of community rights, but, instead holds the promise of social and gender equity.

This issue of *Yemaya* also carries an important announcement. In response to the feedback we have received from you, we are introducing certain changes in the newsletter. Going forward, *Yemaya* will have a new look and will be theme-based. In view of the fact that the first issue of *Yemaya* next year will be released around March 8—the International Women's Day—the theme for the issue will be women's struggles in the fisheries sector. We welcome your experiences and stories on this theme. Please address your articles to *icsf@icsf.net* and send them in by 15 January 2008.

And finally, we wish you the very best for a joyful new year!

Inside Pages

Asia/ India

Restricting Lives and Livelihoods

The recent enforcement of 'no take' regulations in the Gulf of Mannar National Park compromises the livelihood security of fisherwomen and local communities

By Ramya Rajagopalan, currently researching marine protected areas for a Master of Marine Affairs degree at the University of Rhode Island, USA

The Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park and Biosphere Reserve, located in the state of Tamil Nadu in south India, consists of a group of 21 islands. The government of Tamil Nadu declared the area as a marine national park in 1986, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA), 1972. The total area under the Gulf of Mannar National Park (GOMNP) is 560 sq km. The WLPA does not allow any kind of extractive use inside the national park, thus effectively making it a 'no take' zone. The biosphere reserve, notified later in 1989, covers a larger area of 10,500 sq km and includes the GOMNP as the core zone.

The GOMNP is spread across two administrative districts of Tamil Nadu, Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin, with a coastal length of 304.5km. The fisher population is estimated at over 200,000. There are 35,000 active fishermen and 10,000 fisherwomen dependent on the resources in the Gulf of Mannar area, including on fisheries and the collection of seaweed and other marine resources. Women are actively involved in fishing-related activities such as collecting seaweeds and shells, shore seine operations and harvesting crab. Women also undertake allied activities such as marketing and processing fish, drying seaweed, repairing nets and working as casual labour.

As many as 5,000 fisherwomen depend on seaweed collection in and around the 21 islands. Besides this, the women of two fishing villages—Chinnapalayam and Thoopukadu—accompany their husbands to the fishing grounds, sometimes fishing on their own. According to the Marine Fisheries Census conducted by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute in

2005, around 5,000 women depend on various other fishing-related activities in these areas.

The fishing communities of Chinnapalayam, Thoopukadu and Nadutheru in the Pamban area of Gulf of Mannar consist of traditional small-scale fishers. They use plank-built canoes (*vathais* and *vallams)* with rows and sails for propulsion, fishing in the waters around the nearby islands of Nallathanni, Krusadai, Palli, Mannali, Mulli, Musal/Muyal and Ulli for their livelihoods. They use different kinds of fishing gear such as crab net, *singhi valai, sembara valai, meen valai, koi valai, veral valai,* and *oda valai* (bottom set gillnets, gillnets made of nylon thread and monofilament gillnets) to catch mullets, milk fish, silver biddies and crabs. The *vathais,* with four or five people in each fishing craft, are used to reach the fishing grounds adjacent to the islands—the only grounds close enough to be accessible using non-motorized fishing craft.

Women play a very significant and unique role in these fishing communities. The women of Chinnapalayam and Thoopukadu, belonging to the *Valaiyar* community, have traditionally harvested crabs, fish and seaweeds in the waters around the islands facing the bay, and also, on the seaward side. These fishing grounds now fall under the GOMNP.

During the 1980s and 90s, people from these communities used to go to the islands, set their nets overnight, and return to the village the following

morning. Until recently, women could fish near the islands without any problem, even though the area was declared a protected area way back in 1986. The recent enforcement of regulations, however, prohibits women from fishing in these traditional fishing grounds. According to the community, forest guards often confiscate their nets and catch, and large sums may have to be paid in bribe to retrieve the nets. Such incidents have been occurring more frequently in the last four years.

Until 2002, the enforcement of regulations was weak due to lack of resources as well as poor co-ordination between the forest and the fisheries departments. The regulations have been more strictly enforced since 2002, when the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GOMBRT) was set up and the United Nations Development Programme and Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF) project established, with financial outlays for enforcement and implementation.

As a result, women can no longer fish regularly in these areas. Seaweed collection would fetch the women Rs 100-150 per day and fishing, Rs 50-100 per day, depending on the species caught. The current enforcement of regulation has curtailed access to traditional fishing grounds with severe implications for livelihood security. Moreover, efforts to provide alternative livelihood to these women have not been effective. As part of the Ramnad Fishermen Union, a district level fishworker union, these fisherwomen are now demanding a partial lifting of restrictions in the park area. They argue that their non-motorized fishing craft and gillnets are significantly less harmful than the trawlers operating on the other side of the Rameshwaram islands.

To counter the top-down conservation process, villagers of Chinnapalayam and Thoopukadu have come together to put in place their own system of regulations. These prohibit the collection of protected species, the destruction of coral reefs and coral collection, the cutting of mangroves for firewood, and staying on in the islands. Seaweed collection is allowed for only 12 days a month. The women from Nadutheru have stopped collecting the species listed in Schedule I of the WLPA, following discussions between the community elders and the forest department officials. A guard from the community has been appointed by the villagers to implement these rules. These regulations are being strictly followed, especially as there are penalties for violations, including handing over the offender to forest guards.

Through their actions, the fishermen and women in these villages have demonstrated that they can take steps to manage and conserve natural resources effectively—resources critical for their livelihood. Clearly, if a management plan for this area is to be effective, it must incorporate such efforts by the men and women of the community—the worst affected by the declaration of the national park and biosphere reserve.

In this context, it is worth noting that the WLPA mandates a management plan for every protected area. However, there is no management plan in place for the GOMNP—only yearly plans of the Department of Forest and Environment related to infrastructure requirements. The UNDP-GEF project implemented in collaboration with GOMBRT, initiated a process for formulating the management plan in 2006. Community inputs to this plan were limited. The plan has, however, recently been finalized and is awaiting approval.

Can the management plan and its implementation help in correcting the top-down, non-consultative and non-participatory approach of the past, which has until now served only to alienate local communities and increase their socioeconomic vulnerability? Can the authorities work towards compiling accurate, gender-disaggregated, baseline socio-economic data, in order to track whether benefits from conservation actually percolate to fishing communities? Can these efforts meet the goals of both conservation and livelihood security? These are important questions for the future. Indeed, for the survival of the communities in this area and for effective biodiversity conservation, they are nothing short of critical.

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North America/ Mexico

Empowering Agenda?

Mexico needs to create an enabling environment for women to participate meaningfully in the protection of its vast biodiversity

By Julia Fraga, a researcher at the Department of Human Ecology in the Centre for Research and Advanced Studies at National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV-IPN)

The history of environmental policy in Mexico, in terms of conservation programmes, may be divided into two distinct periods. The first, 1994 to 2000, followed the Rio Conference when a Secretariat for Environmental, Natural Resources and Fisheries (SEMARNAP) was created. The second period, 2000 to 2006, was when the fisheries component was removed and the secretariat dedicated solely to Environmental and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT).

Conservation concerns, aimed at preserving natural and cultural resources as well as encouraging their rational use, were incorporated in the General Law on Ecological Balance introduced in 1988 and in the National Commission for the Use and Knowledge of Biodiversity (CONABIO), established in 1992.

In keeping with the fact that it is one of the ten most diverse countries of the world, Mexico has increased the number of its natural protected areas from 55 in 1999 to 150 in 2006. The General Law on Ecological Balance was modified in 1996 and changes introduced to improve the management of protected areas.

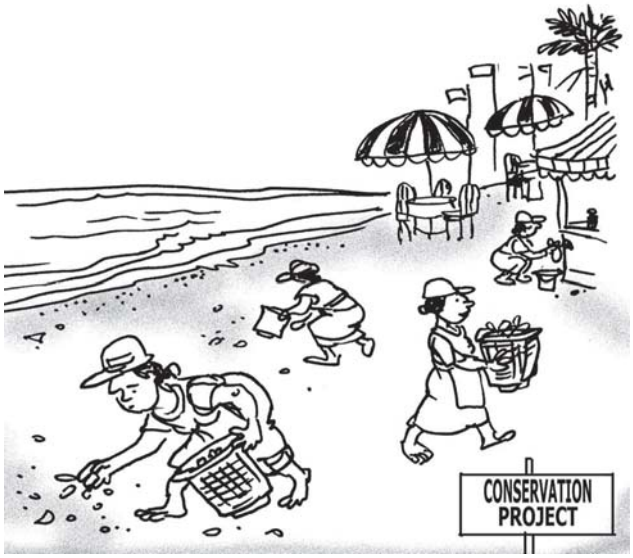
Key decisions related to protection are taken by state institutions such as CONABIO, PRONATURA and the Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation, as well as by non-government organizations and academia. These bodies jointly carry out specialist workshops to identify regions of maximum national biological significance. 156 regions have been identified so far.

How does the vast spectrum of conservation policy in Mexico address the question of women—a section that comprises half the national population? What is the link between women and conservation? What impact do conservation initiatives have on women? Are women gaining or losing access?

There are three channels through which women in Mexico intervene in conservation initiatives. The first is a bottom-up channel through the link with public policies; that is to say, women as part of rural communities, *campesino* and fisher populations, as salt extractors and as plantation workers are "invited" to participate in conservation initiatives. These initiatives include productive work such as reforestation, agro-forestry, agro-ecology, backyard agriculture, making handicrafts and clothes, ornamental fish cultivation and recycling plastic. The second intervention channel is through academia with many professional women, some associated with NGOs, engaged in basic and applied research funded by governmental and financial institutions. The third channel is through the State with women who hold government offices intervening in decisions related to conservation.

It is the first channel through which the largest numbers of women intervene in conservation efforts. Women function as a reserve pool of labour in conservation projects where the funding mandates a gender focus. Such environmental projects, however, usually lack the "empowerment" agenda that might help women confront patriarchal structures in communities and the State.

Furthermore, where facilitated through economic aid grants, such conservation projects are seen by most women as no more than an extension of their domestic responsibilities; a means of supplementing household earnings. Conservation initiatives are viewed as environmental clean-up work prior to the arrival of tourists to beaches, water bodies, forests and woods. Social security, implemented through "Seasonal Employment Programmes", often means cleaning the main access roads and beautifying the locale to ensure a pleasant experience for the tourist. A monthly salary is paid to fishermen to sweep roads and to *campesinos* to not deforest the mountains. Such conservation initiatives are, however, unable to address the question of growing resource scarcity and there are no integral schemes for women and men facing a livelihood crisis.



Women from the academic world who are engaged in conservation research are few in number; fewer still (only 2 per cent) are women in government posts in the protected areas directorate. Decision-making continues to be dominated by men. When women occupy key government posts, they are often branded as inefficient.

However, two top positions in Mexico's environmental administration have been successfully led by women. The first secretariat (SEMARNAT) has been headed by a woman who demonstrated high levels of competence in handling a portfolio that mandated sustainable economic development and reduction in the levels of poverty and environmental degradation; this, in the difficult context of accelerated neoliberalism. The other instance is that of the Environmental Secretariat for the Federal District, which is currently being managed most successfully by a woman.

In the last six years, women's contribution to conservation has become greatly visible in the public arena through academic and government institutions. However, huge efforts are needed to involve rural women and to break the system of ethnic, class and religious subordination that prevents women from taking up key posts in the administration of natural resources. Mexico needs to create an enabling environment for educated women to participate meaningfully in the protection of its vast biodiversity.

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Africa/ South Africa

Aren't We Missing Something?

In Cape Town, an Anglophone Africa Sub-Regional Workshop was held in August 2007 to discuss the Programme of Work on Protected Areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The workshop, however, completely ignored gender concerns

By Jackie Sunde, a researcher with Masifundise Development Trust, an NGO working with fisher and coastal communities in South Africa

Langebaan Lagoon on the west coast of South Africa has been recognized as a uniquely important site for the protection of marine biodiversity. The Lagoon is also a declared RAMSAR site and the surrounding West Coast National Park forms an integral part of South Africa's Marine Protected Area system.

The lagoon has played a unique and historically important role in the livelihoods of the local fisher community. For over a century this community has depended on net fish catches of 'harders' to sustain their families. Says Solene Smith, a local fisherwoman activist: "Catching fish is in our blood. Our daughters and our women have always been part of fishing and so we know how to protect marine life and resources."

Traditionally, men and women worked together: men catching the fish, women preparing the nets; cleaning, processing and cooking the fish, and children assisting with fish drying. Several households depended on one fishing permit for their livelihood and the net fish provided for most of the local community.

After the area was declared a National Park in 1982, the number of permits issued has dwindled from 27 to only 7. At the same time, community access to the lagoon waters has been steadily restricted through the declaration of 'no take' zones. The negative impact of these developments on local food security and poverty levels is evident. Women, in particular, are forced to bear the brunt. High levels of alcoholism, drug abuse, gender violence and crime are reported.

At no stage, in either the declaration of the Park or in the establishment of restricted zones, were

consultations held with the local fisher community. While a new tourism project in the Park uses the labour of local women, no effort has been made to ensure that the women employed are drawn from the fisher families most affected by the loss of traditional livelihoods.

This year, from 13 to16 August, not far from this site of callous neglect, the city of Cape Town played host to a workshop on biological diversity. The continent-wide Anglophone African government meeting was organized by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and facilitated by leading international non-governmental organizations.

It is hard to imagine, in the current context of heightened activism and awareness of the role of women in environmental protection, that such a high-level workshop might fail to address the role of women in protecting and promoting biodiversity or to ignore the gendered nature of governance, participation, equity and benefit sharing in protected area management. The failure of the workshop to address these questions is even more worrisome given that the Ad hoc Working Group meeting in Paris held prior to the workshop, emphasized the need to ensure that national biodiversity strategies included gender as a key component. At the Paris meeting, Martha Chouchena-Rojas**,** Head of IUCN Global Policy Unit, said: "Gender is vital for the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, but this issue has not yet received sufficient attention in the work of the Convention."

In keeping with this troubling tradition, during the four-day Cape Town workshop, not one speaker touched upon the gender question. Discussions that followed various presentations on ecological gap analysis, management effectiveness and sustainable financing, all ignored the gendered nature of these processes. The final recommendations from the workshop, to be tabled at the next Protected Areas meeting, included no reference to women's participation. The only reference that came was at the end of the workshop, in the Indigenous People and Local Communities representatives' statement which called upon their "respective countries, in consultation with indigenous peoples, local communities, traditional fisher folk and other stakeholders, to develop guidelines that ensure real and effective engagement and participation, which also take into account the marginalized groups in society, such as women and the youth." (Statement by Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Fisher Folk, Cape Town, 2007)

Perhaps this gender blindness is a result of a more intrinsic problem. The text of the 1992 Convention contains only a single, brief reference to women, not in the body of the text, but in its preamble, as follows: "Recognizing also the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for biological diversity conservation..."

Since the CBD came into being, a number of international instruments have highlighted the central importance of women's participation in interventions for environmental sustainability as well as for securing women's human rights. Parties to the CBD have subsequently recognized this, as reflected in Decision VI/10 on Article 8(j) and related provisions: "emphasizing the need for dialogue with representatives of indigenous and local communities, particularly women, for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity within the framework of the Convention". Prior to the Convention of Parties meeting in Curitiba, Brazil, in 2006, a Women's Focal Point was also established.

However, key stakeholders like Solene Smith continue to be left out of the decision-making. Says Solene:

"We had never heard of this Convention. We did not know that we had the right to participate in these decisions that have affected our whole community. We are now ready to meet with the Parks Board to discuss this…"

To ensure that the commitment to make gender a key component in protected areas management is taken seriously, it is critical that representatives from indigenous groups, local fisher and coastal communities, as well as other civil society organizations working with such communities, who participate in the Convention, are vigilant in monitoring the content of its programme of work and decisions taken. The challenge lies in ensuring that women like Solene Smith are aware of the Convention and their rights in this regard.

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Africa/ Zanzibar

Winning Strategies

A mixed bag of innovative strategies helps to empower women and improve biodiversity in Zanzibar

By Elin Torrell, a coastal resources specialist with the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center

It is spring tide in the Fumba Peninsula in Zanzibar. Amina Mustapha is crouched over knee-high waters, looking for bivalves until the tide returns. Most of the time, the meat helps to feed her family, but on a good day, Amina will be able to sell some of it as well, at the local market.

Since the soil is salty and mixed with coral rag, agriculture in the peninsula is virtually impossible, forcing women like Amina to depend on oyster- and other bivalve-collection for a living. Zanzibari women collect over 21 species of bivalves, out of which four are more prevalent and favored over others: cockles (*Anadara antiquata*), giant murexes (*Chicoreus ramosus*), conchs (*Pleuroploca trapezium*), and oysters (*Pinctada margaritifer*a). The oysters are the most valuable, fetching up to US $1 for about 20 specimens.

The Fumba Peninsula is situated within the Menai Bay Conservation Area (MBCA)—the biggest marine conservation area in Zanzibar located in the south-west of Unguja Island. Unguja Island is a site of regional importance within the Eastern Africa Marine Ecoregion. Its surrounding waters hold traditional fishing grounds, encompassing extensive areas of coral reefs, sea grass beds and mangrove stands. Together, these interconnected ecosystems form the resource base for local fisheries.

The government of Zanzibar officially declared Menai Bay a conservation area in August 1997. The main goal of the MBCA is to conserve the natural resources of the area for sustainable use, with active community participation. Although there are no 'no take' zones, the Bay has stricter fishing regulations than do other parts of Zanzibar. Stringent patrolling against illegal fishing is carried out in collaboration with the government's anti-smuggling unit. Local fishermen help patrol their areas using hand-held radios provided by the World Wildlife Fund and use a 7-meter fibreglass patrol boat to respond to emergencies and incidents of illegal fishing. This patrol system has significantly reduced dynamite fishing in the area and those caught using illegal nets are increasingly being prosecuted in court.

When the USAID-funded Sustainable Coastal Communities and Ecosystems Program (SUCCESS) began working in Fumba with their regional counterpart—the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)— conservation in the MBCA had focused exclusively on off-shore fisheries. Meanwhile, the intertidal resources, which women gleaned during low tide, remained unmanaged. As a result, bivalve stocks were declining and gleaners had to walk into deeper and deeper waters to collect stock. SUCCESS used this opportunity to work with the women gleaners to evolve intertidal zoning methods for better bivalve management and also to find new ways of increasing earnings. Here was a perfect example of linking women's empowerment, economic growth and biodiversity conservation.

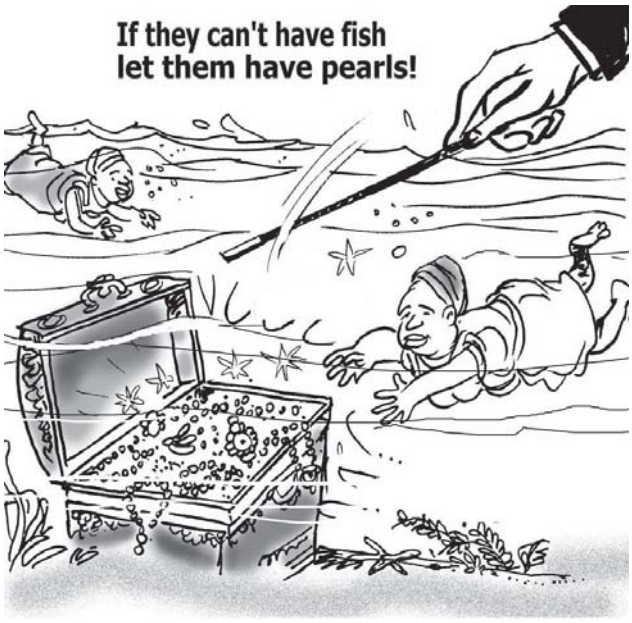
SUCCESS began by working with local women to produce jewelry from discarded seashells and to cultivate *mabe* pearls. *Mabe* pearls are half-spherical pearls, formed when a plastic half-dome is glued to the inside of a pearl oyster shell, and later, covered with nacre. The premise was that tangible benefits would win constituencies and help improve biodiversity conservation. Further, this alternative livelihood had the potential to generate a much higher income than bivalve harvesting. Recently, the *mabe* grown on Mafia Island and set in silver, sold for US $40 a piece in Tanzania.

Pearl culture however involved more than just teaching how to implant and set the oysters. To tend to the oysters, which thrive in deep waters, the women had to swim—an activity considered inappropriate for the Muslim women of Zanzibar. After discussions with the community, however, it was agreed that *mabe* farming was promising enough to justify breaking this cultural taboo. After receiving swimming lessons organized by SUCCESS, the women are now working the oyster lines. The first three cultured half-pearls were produced in May 2007, and a larger harvest is expected in November 2007.

The women also learned business management and jewelry-making skills. "Before we started, we were afraid our products might appear inferior to the jewelry and pearls imported from Asia. But fortunately we found that our local products were unique and different," says Dr. Jiddawi, from the Institute of Marine Science. Interest in the jewelry has been high and there are several marketing and sales outlets, including local curio shops, festivals and trade fairs.

Amina is upbeat. "We find jewelry-making to be another great opportunity to improve our livelihoods, in addition to seaweed farming and other land-based activities" she says.

The success of these livelihood activities has won community co-operation and support for bivalve management. The SUCCESS program worked with MBCA and the villages of Bweleo, Fumba, and Nyamanzi to adopt four 'no take' zones, an associated co-management plan and village bylaws. The MBCA authorities and Department of Fisheries



and Marine Products have enthusiastically embraced the initiative by adopting the bylaws. Once approved by the District Commissioner where the three villages are located, these bylaws will be legally binding. Thereafter, the 'no take' areas will be closed to all fishing and collection for an initial period of three years.

Although the bylaws still await final approval, Amina and the other women already conform to the rules. After developing a baseline count of the bivalves inside and outside the 'no take' zones, trained women from the village are eagerly monitoring the numbers and sizes of the cockles to determine improvements in stocks. The women feel empowered to take on local stewardship of the intertidal resources through community-based management. They are also encouraged by the first harvest of *mabe* pearl and the initial response to the jewelry sales. They are now looking to collaborate with women and men in other parts of the Menai Bay to replicate their success throughout the conservation area.

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Latin America/ Chile

No Equity without Gender Equity

The Chilean government calls for a gender equity meeting for women in artisanal fisheries

This article has been compiled by Brian O'Riordan using information from the following websites: SERNAPESCA *(www.sernapesca.cl)* and the Latin American Artisanal Fishing Forum *(http://www.cedepesca.org.ar/foroclara/)*

The Chilean Fisheries Subsecretariat is organizing a gender equity meeting on November 27 and 28, 2007. Over 80 women, engaged in artisanal fishing from Chile's Vth Region, are expected to participate.

According to official SERNAPESCA (Chilean Fisheries Service) data, 5,500 women work in the country's fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Between the years 1990 and 2006, Chile's Directorate of Port Works (DPW) invested 76,551 million pesos (106 million euro or US $151 million) in fisheries infrastructure. This benefited 29,515 men and 2,568 women, together comprising 54 per cent of the total workforce.

According to the DPW Director, Sergio Arévalo, since 2003, when a gender focus was formally incorporated into his Directorate's policies, women's work, including fish processing, baiting hooks and net repairs, has become more visible. It has led to the improvement of working conditions of women: sun-shades and sheds have been constructed; access facilities improved; and hygienic services introduced for the exclusive use of women working in *caletas*.

A report released in October 2007 by SERNAPESCA highlights these issues. Says Dr Inés Montalva, the SERNAPESCA Director: "As part of the programme for modernizing the state, the Government has directed that the gender perspective be incorporated to improve management—the contribution of a "grain of sand" towards increasing equity and equality".

The end-November meeting will bring together artisanal fishing women from all over Chile as well as some international representatives. It will provide a platform for an exchange of experiences to strengthen equal opportunities and rights.

Since 2002, the Fisheries Subsecretariat has implemented gender equity in the formulation of sectoral policies in alignment with the principles of the Central Government's Equal Opportunities Programme. The induction of women in the national work force, under conditions of equity and equality, constitutes a central plank of government policy.

The programme includes a code of non-discriminatory working practices, co-ordinated since March 2006 by the National Service for Women's affairs. The code has four objectives: the State should implement the gender equity programme; the public sector should follow non-discriminatory and equal access work practices; working conditions should provide for a balance between work and personal life, and finally, the quality of work life should be improved.

The code addresses concerns thrown up by the fundamental changes that have taken place in Chile, restructuring gender relations, the family, the workplace and society. Women have joined the workforce in large numbers and increasing numbers of women today head single-parent families. The workplace thus faces the challenge of responding to these changes and accommodating a more flexible, humane and socially inclusive culture.

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South America/ Ecuador

Banning the Beach Seine

A group of women has decided to abandon the ecologically-hazardous practice of beach seine fishery, opting instead for small enterprise activities supported by fishery authorities

This article has been compiled by Brian O'Riordan using information from several sources

In Ecuador, *chumumo* or Regan's anchovy (*anchoa argentivittata*) is a fish found in nearshore waters. Sold for artisanal fishmeal processing, it provides a vital source of income for many fisherwomen. The

beach seine fishery for *chumumo* in turn supplies raw material to *pamperas* (artisanal fishmeal businesses), many of which operate clandestinely. In Manta, Montecristi and Jaramijó, there are reportedly 17 such *pamperas* —small plots of wasteland used for drying the ingredients used in artisanal fishmeal production. This occupation is thus a source of traditional livelihood to many people from the fishing community.

However, beach seine fishery also has its dangers. There are violent conflicts with the tuna pole-and-line vessels that use these shoals as bait. This occupation is also bad for the marine ecology, as overfishing of *chumumo* damages the biomass of a species that supports other fish populations out at sea. *Chumumo* fishing is, therefore, a banned activity in Ecuador. However, economic needs force many fishers to break the law.

Recently, as part of a Government programme to phase out illegal small-meshed nets used in *chumumo* fishing, an incentive scheme was introduced to buy out the owners of these gears.

"C*hinchorro de playa* (beach seining) is an environmentally destructive fishing practice and we hope to eliminate its use in coastal areas by making agreements with the users", says Jimmy Martinez, the local Director of Fisheries. According to Martinez, the problem has social dimensions as each beach seine provides incomes for between eight and 15 people.

Solanda Bermello, who for nearly a decade has been catching fish from the beaches of Los Esteros, Jaramijo and San Mateo, says that she and her companions are abandoning their nets in exchange for money that the Fisheries Resources Subsecretary is providing for undertaking alternative businesses. According to the Fisheries Resources Subsecretary, Guillermo Moran, every illegal gear handed in will be met with US $1000 in compensation, to help manufacture new equipment approved by Subsecretariat technicians. The Government also undertakes to provide fishers with training that will improve their understanding of business management and to obtain low interest credit through Banco de Fomento—a development bank.

On 5 May 2007, Solanda Bermello on behalf of ten artisanal fishers from Jaramijó, and Hermenegildo Santana and Gloria Vera Marín on behalf of eleven fishers from Manta, signed the agreement. Gabriela Cruz, President of Ecuador's National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives (FENACOPEC), was the witness of honour.

However, not all from the fishing community are supportive of the Government programme. Says Luz María Delgado, aged 60, from Jaramijó, "This is our daily bread; the fishery belongs to the women; it is what sustains us; it's all we have; it is how our parents taught us to survive".

The women also feel that the compensation is barely enough to cover the costs of starting a new business activity. They feel, therefore, that the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries must provide ongoing assistance so that the activities they take up prosper.

Ecuador has a notorious reputation for failing to enforce environmental protection regulations. Examples of Ecuador's poor environmental record include providing concessions to transnational mining companies in the south of the country, the felling of forests and mangrove areas with impunity, external debt trade offs for carbon emissions, the privatization of water rights in urban areas and the ruthless exploitation of petrol in the Amazon basin. But, as a recent bill to regulate the capture of sharks and the illegal trade of shark fins shows, President Correa is now threatening to get tough.

Whether attempts to curb destructive fishing practices are successful remains to be seen. But, it is certainly important that such conservation initiatives involve the

stakeholders—in this case, the women of the community—and that alternative livelihood is guaranteed.

Sources: *http://www.expreso.ec/html/economia6.asp* - Compensación por los artes de pesca: Pescadores Recibirán 1.000 dólares; La Hora: *http://www.lahora.com.ec/frontEnd/main.php?idSeccion=570758*: Pescadores de orilla firman acta para regular captura; El Diario - *http://www.eldiario.com.ec/noticias-manabi-ecuador/55913:* Mujeres cambian redes por negocios alternativos

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North America/ United States

Walking in Both Sets of Shoes

Some reflections on the challenges that women face in the male-dominated world of commercial fishing

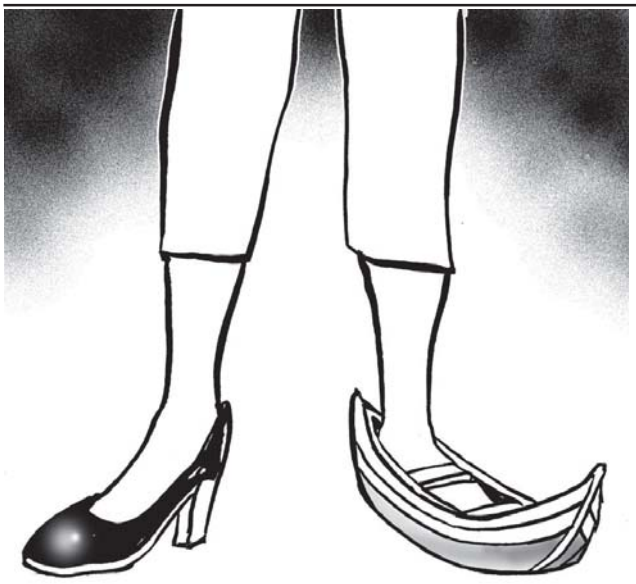
By Azure Dee Westwood, currently a student at the University of Rhode Island, USA. Azure has fished commercially on pelagic longline vessels in American Samoa, Hawaii, and Australia, on benthic longliners and fishing weirs in Cape Cod, on an Alaskan king crab vessel and on charter vessels in San Diego, California

I would certainly not call myself a fisher. As a young girl riding horses in California, I would have never imagined setting foot on a commercial fishing vessel. But here I was, on a hot morning in the far northwest of Australia, getting ready to depart on a boat to seek and catch one the fastest of the sea's creatures: tuna. Having spent the previous years in a more formal marine educational environment—the University— I was ready to learn about fisheries in a more direct fashion.

As a woman, finding a site on a commercial vessel can go one of two ways: very good or very bad. Women tend to draw men's attention. In fishing, this attention can come either in the form of respect borne of the fact that you are interested in a physically-demanding and mentally-taxing trade that is largely male dominated. Or the attention can be more perverse: you are seen to be interested not so much in the fishing, but in the fishers, that is, the men, themselves. Luckily, my first fishing trip drew attention of the former nature and I was successful in making good friends with my fellow fishermen. More lasting and compelling though, was the bond I made with the sea; one, not unlike most love affairs, forged in joy and pain, longing and fulfillment, pride and disappointment. This budding romance grew; eventually, it brought me to fish in the great waters of the Bering Sea, the South Pacific and the Northwest Atlantic.

Through my years of commercial fishing, two major lessons struck home. Whether on a 98-foot king crab vessel out of Dutch Harbor, Alaska or on a 35-foot jig boat off of Cape Cod, these lessons stood me in good stead in every expedition. I learnt that women possess great versatility and can easily hone the talents inherent in both men and women. For example, through observation and patience, women can quickly learn the mostly male-centric skills of the fishing trade, such as hauling pelagic longline gear or mending nets. Women also have the restraint to think through a difficult situation—such as losing 30 miles of longline gear in the middle of the night— and face it not with anger or brute force, but with thoughtful deduction, seeking reasonable alternatives. This is not to say that all men face problems with brute force or impatience. It is, however, to say that women, especially in large fishing operations, often tend to draw upon their inner strength and talents to solve a problem or accomplish a task.

I have learned much more than I can describe from the captains and crews with whom I have had the pleasure to work. Above all, I have learned the importance of discovering my own strengths, as a fisher and as a woman, and how to use those strengths with grace, wisdom and humility. I work to enhance this lesson each day. I recall the days spent on deck, trying to push myself physically to the very limits to keep up with the men; to prove myself to my peers



by drinking and adopting an image that I thought embodied being a "fisher". But I have come to see that women can walk both worlds. We can step lightly and with dignity in a beautiful dress through a gallery in the evening, but also work hard in the hull of a boat shoveling squid, covered in black ink, during the day. This is the balance we can strike, and it is a blessing and gift to be able to walk in both sets of shoes.

I guess more than anything, fishing has taught me to be strong, not just in body but in spirit. All of us who have fished have prayed through a storm, hoping the storm windows in the wheelhouse would hold. We have all stared expectantly at the dark waters over the rail, hoping that the next set of hooks or net haul would be full of fish so we could go home early. I think every time we pray and each difficult moment we pull through makes us stronger and wiser. I have learned to draw upon energy reserves stored deep within, to make it through a rough night or moments of great weakness, and overcome feelings of being alone on a vast sea, so many miles away from loved ones. These moments are the character-builders, the ones that shape our spirits, our world view and our attitudes towards life in general. Fishing has given me a sense of the raw materials that life is made of—the blood, sweat and tears. It has made me appreciate deeply the full value of life as well as its delicate brevity.

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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.