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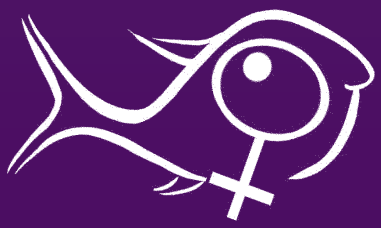
Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

25 Years in Support of Small-scale Fishworkers



From the Editor

The 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF3), held earlier this year in Shanghai, revealed worrying facts about women in the fisheries. Women are still invisible and marginal in the sector. They may have growing access to microcredit but continue to own little or no property. If a woman has a top job in a fisheries institution, her case would be the exception to the general rule that clusters jobs for women at the bottom of formal hierarchies. Clearly, despite years of struggle and advocacy, women in the fisheries continue to be denied their basic right to equality and justice.

Gender, the key theme of the GAF3 symposium, is today widely recognized as one of the most powerful tools of discrimination and exclusion in the fisheries. Less well understood are the factors responsible for creating, maintaining and reproducing gender in society. The understanding of gender is often limited to the power differential that exists between men and women. Gender, according to this view, exists as a sort of gap between the sexes. To make the leap across this gap, women, it is believed, need a set of skills and tools, accessible through gender empowerment training, mainstreaming techniques, access to microcredit, and so on. This approach has been pursued for many years in the development sector but evidence seems to suggest that for the majority of women in the fisheries, the gap is certainly not shrinking.

Gender is of course more than just a gap and certainly more than just about men and women. After years of sharing experiences, of research and documentation, we are aware that gender exists as a patriarchal power relation in every institution, private and public, collaborating in complex ways with existing sources of power, be it the power of money, religion, caste, race or sexuality. It would be impossible to challenge gender without fundamentally challenging the sources of power that strengthen it. However, paradoxically, the predominant approach continues to be to assume that gender can simply be mainstreamed into existing institutions—a view that has been particularly useful in aiding capitalist growth in the fisheries, as well as in other sectors, and recruiting the cheap labour of women in a period of rapid globalization.

Simplistic views of gender and gender mainstreaming to solve problems of systemic inequality often lead to the co-option of women into existing class, and patriarchal power privileges. We see this happening in all forms of purely identity-based struggles for equality that failed to address the fundamental bases for power and oppression. It is very important to acknowledge all forms of power and discard exclusive identity-based politics for more inclusive struggles for equity.

There is a growing realization today that gender must be understood in a fuller, more substantive sense. A significant suggestion made during the GAF3 symposium was that every source of power—social, cultural, domestic—must be thoroughly examined to make sense of the lives of women and communities in the fisheries. If we are indeed serious about addressing the discrimination women face, it is time to revisit the question of gender, to subject closely-held assumptions to fresh scrutiny, to pause, to review, take stock and plan for timely and effective intervention.

Leaky pipes and slippery ladders

A summary of the 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries

By **Meryl J Williams** (meryljwilliams@gmail.com), Chair of the Organizing Committee of GAF3 Symposium, with inputs from GAF3 presenters.
The author takes responsibility for the views expressed in this article.

Why, with few exceptions, are women so invisible and marginal to the mainstream? Why, despite access to microfinance, don't they own assets and property? Why do they continue to be discriminated against within institutions? What is the social context for gender-based discrimination?

These were some of the questions that were hotly debated in GAF3, the recently concluded 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries organized by the Asian Fisheries Society (ASF) as part of the 9th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum at China's Shanghai Ocean University. Held from 19 to 21 April 2011, this symposium—the ASF's fifth symposium on gender—involved 41 paper presentations, seven posters and many rounds of animated discussion. While some described the progress of women in the sector as a slow process of 'edging up the ladder', others drew upon the image of 'leaky pipelines' to describe how women in formal careers in aquaculture and fisheries find themselves being progressively eased out of status and opportunity.

Inaugurating the symposium, Nandini Gunewardena of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) urged for strategic initiatives that put gender more firmly on the aquaculture and fisheries agenda, especially by building the evidence base, engaging in advocacy and networking, and focusing on gender-based vulnerabilities. However, simply adding the gender lens to fisheries research is not enough; society, culture, power relations and household must also be examined, argued Marilyn Porter, who used examples from Tanzania, Canada and West Sulawesi to illustrate why researchers need to understand complex 'back stories' when helping to improve women's lives. This matrix of power was central to ICSF's 2010 workshop "Recasting the Net" whose outcome, a revitalized 'gender agenda', was summarized in a paper presented by Naina Pierri Estades from Brazil.

KAING KHIM

Gender mainstreaming workshop in Cambodia. Gender mainstreaming aimed at eventual gender equality is today part of the official policy in Cambodia

Demonstrating the ways in which gender adds value to fish supply chains, Holly Hapke, citing examples from fisheries development in the southern Indian State of Kerala, proposed a research framework that extends and links commodity chain approaches, such as multi-scaled gendered commodity chain analysis, with household-level analysis. A commercially significant supply chain, one that has experienced repeated trade upsets over product quality and production methods, can be seen in Asia's farmed giant tiger prawn, *Penaeus monodon*. From Bangladesh, Mohammad Nuruzzaman reported on a new project that included women in farmer training programmes in which the need to overcome the initial household resistance to including women and minimize the dominance of men, so that women's classroom learning may be facilitated, emerged as early lessons.

Often projects to assist women focus only on small-scale and minor industries within the fishing sector. The GAF3 Symposium heard three presentations on gender dimensions in three mainstream industries. In the first, M.C. Nandeesha, pointing out that "India is basically a carp culture country", shared the results of a study conducted across ten States in India of the workforce participation rates of women in carp culture. This varied widely from being very low in high-production States like Andhra Pradesh (in southern India) and Punjab (in the north) to being considerably high in Manipur, Assam and West Bengal (in the east and northeast) where the participation was largely in pond fertilization, nursery rearing, feeding

and harvesting and often through women's self-help groups (SHGs).

In the second presentation, Sunila Rai offered a different view on women in carp-SIS (small indigenous species)-prawn polyculture in Nepal. Carp polyculture is the main aquaculture industry in Nepal but it does not supply household food. Work on experimental aquaculture involving women fish farmers of the Tharu community of Chitwan demonstrated that despite poor water quality, the polyculture of carp, *Macrobrachium* and SIS led to higher yields without affecting the production of carp.

The third presentation highlighted gender mainstreaming in a large fisheries development programme, the FAO-Spain Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme (RFLP) for South and Southeast Asia. In this presentation, Angela Lentisco reviewed a set of tools, namely,

PROFILE

Trifina Josephat: First among Equals

Trifina Josephat manages the Malehe landing site in Kyamalange, Tanzania

By **Rosemarie Nyigulila Mwaipopo** (ny_lila@yahoo.com), Lecturer, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, and Member of ICSF

A mother of five, 42-year old Trifina Josephat is both an entrepreneur and a community leader. Although in her village, Kyamalange, in Tanzania's Kagera region, the role of women in fisheries is restricted to selling cooked food to fishers and fish traders along the beach, Trifina today owns a fishing vessel and manages a crew of four fishermen. Trifina is the Treasurer of the Beach Management Unit (BMU) in charge of managing the Malehe Landing Site in Kyamalange. A BMU is a community-based organization that is responsible for the management of local fish landing sites. This includes the collection of fish statistics and revenue, promoting environmental awareness, and mediating conflicts between local fishers and other stakeholders. The Malehe Landing Site is one of the numerous local landing sites along Lake Victoria, famous internationally for its Nile perch fisheries.

The Nile perch trade boomed in the years 2005-2007 as a result of economic liberalization and a consequent export-led demand. This period also intensified the competition among fish traders from neighbouring countries, particularly Uganda. Local fish traders began supplying fish to processing factories in Uganda, which paid about TShs500 to 600 (approx. US$0.5), more than what local traders were willing to pay. During these years, Trifina, sensing a lucrative opportunity, invested capital gained from selling coffee into building a canoe (*mtumbwi*) and buying fishing nets. She then employed four male *vibarua* (fishing labourers) on a sharing basis—50 per cent share of the catch to the crew, after adjusting for operational and maintenance costs. And so, Trifina launched her own fishing venture, one that has flourished over the years.

Trifina keeps close track of her vessel and crew. Though she does not enter the waters herself, she is known as a fisher because she controls her own production crew. One of the reasons for Trifina's success and the success of other entrepreneurs like her, was the prevalence of informal, trust-based exchange arrangements with neighboring traders—arrangements such as '*mali-kwa-mali*' (goods-by-goods) according to which fish is exchanged for an equivalent amount of material goods. A growing capital base soon allowed Trifina to buy another canoe and machine.

The intensification of the Nile perch fisheries has, however, led to illegal 'fencing'. Powerful vessel owners, who have more vessels and larger crew, fence off fishing grounds using force and violence, thus preventing entry by smaller vessels, like Trifina's. Big fishers, among them owners of 30 to 40 canoes, thus end up gaining monopoly over the fish trade. Recent times have also seen significant increase in piracy. In July 2010, Trifina's crew was attacked and one of her vessels seized by pirates. Luckily, the crew was rescued by other fishers from neighbouring fishing grounds. Trifina's efforts to follow up the case with local authorities and the police have remained unsuccessful. Trifina is, however, pleased with her growing success in the fish trade. She relates strategically to the fish market, selling the larger fish to traders or fish processing factories and disposing the smaller ones in the local market.

In the village, Trifina is regarded by some as a 'he-woman'—a woman with masculine traits. This is unfortunately the price that any strong woman who dares to swim against the tide ends up paying. But Trifina's strength also commands respect since very few women have had the courage to enter the fish trade. Today Trifina owns a modern house and ten heads of cattle, and her children study in good schools. Her strong will has also won her a leadership position in the BMU, as a result of which she stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the male fishers in the landing site—surely the first among equals.

the gender roles framework, the triple roles framework, the gender analysis matrix, the women's empowerment framework and the social relations framework that could be used for gender analysis in fisheries development projects. For small-scale fisheries projects, another set of tools for use in different phases of the project cycle was reviewed.

The fact that gender-based vulnerabilities play out in widely different ways was demonstrated in Ramachandran C Nair's presentation which revealed how even success can make women vulnerable in the contested space of Indian marine aquaculture. Across five States, mussel farming and seaweed culture were developed largely as part of women's empowerment programmes, while, from the start, open-sea cage culture was developed as a male activity. However, once mussel and seaweed farming became profitable through State support, banks began stepping in, transforming these industries into male-dominated, privatized coastal activity. The takeover of capital and coastal space rights, which the very State governments that once promoted women's empowerment now turned a blind eye to, was facilitated by the fact that mussel and seaweed farming, unlike cage culture, lacked the protection of common property rights.

Formal career paths in aquaculture and fisheries 'leak' women at a greater rate than men, leading to progressively lower salaries and loss of seniority for women even in programmes that champion equal opportunities.

Other forms of vulnerability were also examined at GAF3. Two presentations studied the liabilities created by microfinance, which, though well regarded by recipients, appear not to increase assets and productivity. Based on data from two districts of Kerala State, India, Nikita Gopal reported that microfinance schemes had helped finances and improved household financial decisionmaking in low-income families but most of the funds had gone into meeting household expenses with only minimal assets having been created. In Guimaras, Philippines, Alice J. G. Ferrer found similar results in a study of women and men from fishing and non-fishing households. Both presentations stressed the importance of thoroughly understanding the issue of credit and examining its various sources better.

The vulnerabilities faced by women sea divers, whose lives, poorly understood but for long a source of wonder, were examined in presentations from Japan and Korea. In Japan's southwest Iki Island in Nagasaki Prefecture, most sea divers (*ama*) are women, and more than half of them, in the study presented by Cristina P. Lim, were already in their fifties. Despite formal rights to harvest sedentary species such as abalone and sea urchin, these women's earnings are in decline, and their overall fishing rights and access to decisionmaking in the fisheries co-operative associations are secondary to those of the men. In contrast to Japan, where men still dive, diving in Korea is exclusively women's activity. As in Japan, Korea's divers are an aging group. Sun-Ae Ii traced the history of Korean women divers, many of whom are in the south, having originated over a hundred years ago from Jeju Island. These women, despite their knowledge and contributions, are marginalized on account of gender; their inshore fishing is restricted to species that are sedentary or of island origin and their needs are rarely addressed in fisheries policies and assistance.

Fishers and fishing communities continue to be vulnerable to poverty even in fast-modernizing economies such as Malaysia. Jariah Masud's work analyzed Malaysian national poverty eradication programmes, which, despite their considerable achievements, and despite the growth of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, have not changed the endemic poverty in fishing communities. Jariah also explored the constraints that women from fishing communities face in the field of entrepreneurship, arguing that while several women in rural Malaysia have succeeded in productive ventures, further study is needed to better understand the underlying reasons for their success, including how to best use, or even avoid, credit. The changing demography of Malaysia's fishing population was the subject of Tengku Aizan Hamid's presentation, which shows an aging trend with traditional fishers being, on average, older than commercial fishers, although in Sabah and Sarawak, the entry of foreign labour appears to be the reason for a lower average age. This presentation also discussed the unreliability of official statistics on women's employment in the fishing sector and the failure of national fisheries development policies to address human development issues.

Moving on to neighbouring Indonesia, Zuzy Anna's study of two coastal cities—Semarang, a large city, and Pekalongan, a smaller one—examined the uncertainties faced by wives of traditional fishermen and those of non-fishermen engaged in fishing-related activities. The study found that the women from Semarang experienced higher anxiety levels than did the ones from Pekalongan and that seasonal variations in uncertainty were lower for women married to non-fishers. The main reasons for uncertainty were ecological (drought, pollution and season), economic (volatility in production and income), social (family instability, unemployment and health), and institutional (dependency on credit and savings and local financiers). The women used many different strategies to cope with uncertainty, with personal and cultural attitudes also playing a part. Another study from Indonesia by Ria Fitriana,

which documented the overlaps and complementarities in the fishing activities of men and women in the country's remote Pantar Islands, found that even though the island's women are officially classified as fishers, they tend to be less regarded than men as marine resource users.

The central coastal region of Vietnam presents real challenges to women dependent on fisheries resources, according to Nguyen Dang Hao, who, as part of the FAO-Spain RFLP, studied 16 communes in the provinces of Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam. Here, women bear more children than the national average and work 12- to 14-hour days, three or four hours longer than the men; education levels are low and there is an escalating pressure on open-access fisheries under sometimes dangerous and risky weather conditions. Women, despite access to credit, know little about financial management and have almost no voice in managing the natural resources. Although women and men have high participation rates in the Women's Union and Farmer's Association, respectively, these bodies offer little more than sympathetic support and an opportunity to share experiences.

Pacific island case studies from Melanesia (Fiji, Solomon Islands), Polynesia (Niue, Samoa) and Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia) showed, with some variations, the dominance of women in inshore, reef and lagoon fisheries and fish marketing. Young people are also major users of the coastal zone and, therefore, are affected by climate-change phenomena such as sea level rise and greater salt intrusions into coastal gardens as are women. Apart from urging for a cultural shift, Veikila Vuki concluded that women, the youth and fisheries institutions should urgently be brought into climate-change decisionmaking to represent their special needs and contribute their special insights.

At Barangay Bislig, Leyte, Philippines, a fishing-dependent village with many migrant families, Marieta Bañez Sumagaysay found that most, but not all, women fish driers attributed phenomena such as prolonged rain and unpredictable weather to climate change. Climate change increased women's labour, costs and risks in fish drying, adding to the problem of declining fish stocks. However, within their limited livelihood alternatives, the women are pursuing certain adaptive strategies.

Mangrove destruction presents a serious problem for most tropical countries, not least the Philippines where efforts to reforest coastal sites have met with mixed success. In two presentations, Farisal U. Bagsit and Alice Joan Ferrer delved into gender roles and responsibilities in mangrove reforestation programmes in the Western Visayas, Philippines. The studies examined different types of institutions involved in reforestation. In both studies, women tended to remain active longer than the men in people's organizations, and undertook a greater range of roles in the mangrove replanting and nursery activities. Although the work is difficult and pulls people away from their other responsibilities, both studies reported an appreciation of the importance of reforestation and the building of camaraderie.

Gender is an important dimension in human institutions. Rather than waiting for gradual and externally driven change, many have taken to activism and advocacy. Over the last decade, successful activism by representatives of fisher's wives, fishing women's organizations and feminist academics in Europe has led to major gains in the status and rights of women. An example is the 2010 European Union Directive 2010/41 on spouse rights. Katia Frangoudes, drawing from the experience of AKTEA, the European women's network, argued that women activists have been critical of this achievement while women parliamentary leaders could not always be relied upon to advocate for women.

Climate change increased women's labour, costs and risks in fish drying; however, women are pursuing adaptive strategies within limited livelihood alternatives.

What's New, Webby?

Videos on YouTube

Recently, UN Women opened a video channel on YouTube that houses tools and training videos that are relevant to those working to advance women's rights (www.youtube.com/unwomen). A five-part series on the Southern Cone economic rights for women has been recently uploaded, and it focuses on the economic realities women live in and the challenges they face, particularly in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABBbBy0aHUk&feature=relmfu). Women in these regions have less secure jobs, receive lower wages and generally work in the informal sector. This five-part series is produced by TV Brasil Internacional, with support from UN Women and Southern Cone.

Gender mainstreaming aimed at eventual gender equality is today part of the official policy of Cambodia, reported Heng Ponley, where, since 2006, it has been developed and added to the Fisheries Administration by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Using the metaphor of a leaky pipeline, Hillary Egna, using data from nearly 30 years of work by the USAid-funded Co-operative Research Support Programmes (CRSP) for aquaculture, reported that formal career paths in aquaculture and fisheries from education to research 'leaked' women at a greater rate than men, leading to progressively lower salaries and loss of seniority for women even in programmes that champion equal opportunities. Adding to these observations, Stella Williams argued that world development had ignored women for nearly 50 years in every field, including science, education and research. The lessons emerging from the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) programme too pointed to leaky pipelines in agricultural education and research, she added.

REFLECTIONS GENDER

Women or gender: What's the difference?

This article analyzes the implications of the shift in focus from women to gender in the 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries and the FAO Special Workshop

By **Katia Frangoudes** (frangoudes@univ-brest.fr), University of Brest, France, and **Naína Pierri Estades** (naina@cem.ufpr.br), Federal University of Parana, Brazil; Members of ICSF

Reflecting on the recently concluded 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF3) (see article above), what perhaps was most significant about the symposium was the analytical shift repeatedly being made from 'women in fisheries' to 'gender in fisheries'.

A large number of presentations described the sexual and inter-generational division of labour within fishing communities. Often, however, these presentations were non-analytical. Many of the speakers are associated with past work related to women in fisheries. Why don't they any longer talk of 'women in fisheries' but refer instead to 'gender in fisheries'? Although none of the participants addressed this important change, it can probably be explained by the demand of international institutions financing development projects to include not just women but all groups in development programmes. A comment by a participant referring to the FAO-Spain Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme (RFLP) for South and Southeast Asia, is illuminating: "In fisheries communities, men are also poor and cannot be neglected by development projects".

NAÍNA PIERRI

Speakers highlighted that women constitute the primary target group who face discrimination in employment and their work lacks recognition

When we asked symposium participants with whom they actually work within communities, they all responded: "the women". How may this response be interpreted? Clearly, women constitute the main group requiring support to improve their rights and conditions. Women's empowerment, in that case, is the key element for community development as well as for the improvement of livelihoods. It would appear that while development agencies would like to broaden their scope by bringing every section (men, the aged, the young and so on) under the term 'gender', they still consider women as the main vector of change within the fisheries sector, the family and the community.

A number of speakers, however, did focus on women's issues, pointing out the role played by women in fisheries and aquaculture. According to them, women constitute the primary target group because they face discrimination in employment and because their work lacks recognition. Case studies from several countries highlighted women's entrepreneurial capacities and their important contribution to the fisheries. The speakers were of the view that for women's equality in fisheries, policies must pay attention to women's issues in the sector. A gender analysis

framework, based on feminist theory, is necessary for women's empowerment and must guide policymakers.

There were thus two groups in the symposium: one consisting of those working on 'women's issues', and the other of those working on 'gender issues' and using the term 'gender' to refer not just to women but also to men and other sections of society. While the first group had at least some researchers who used feminist theory, the second group consisted largely of researchers guided by theories and practices popularized by development agencies. The two groups failed to arrive at a consensus, partly because of the lack of time and partly because many could not grasp the theoretical and political implications of this difference.

Following GAF3, a special workshop on gender issues in fisheries was organized by the FAO. The objective of this workshop was to discuss with a group of key experts the various ways in which the gender dimension in aquaculture and fisheries could be included in FAO's work. Attention to gender is a recent development within the FAO, the outcome of decades of international lobbying and of the growing demand of civil society representatives for the integration of gender into FAO's policies, as expressed in the World Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, held in Bangkok in October 2008.

Prior to GAF3, as part of the preparatory work for the workshop, participants were asked to submit between three to five critical issues concerning gender in aquaculture and fisheries. These were collated and presented during the symposium. Next, during the workshop, experts were divided into two groups, each mandated to brainstorm on a few key questions. Thereafter, three action points and ideas on integrating gender issues in the FAO fisheries policy were solicited from each participant. Finally, all the suggestions were pooled together for discussion, leading to the emergence of five major themes: action, policy, research/data, training and advocacy.

The FAO workshop also reflected a difference in points of view between those who prioritized women's issues and those who favoured a broad-based definition of gender. The former group advocated the use of the word 'women' in the workshop statements, a suggestion that was not carried through because it was considered to contradict the United Nations definition of gender.

It is advisable for individuals, researchers and organizations working on issues of women in fisheries to be vigilant and to immediately critique the draft statement when it is published. Women's rights require specific attention. The differences between analyses and proposals based on feminist theory and theories used and propagated by international development institutions should be brought to light and discussed in every academic and political event where the issue of women in fisheries is analyzed.

What was most significant about the symposium was the analytical shift made from 'women in fisheries' to 'gender in fisheries'.

Milestones

By **Ramya Rajagopalan** (icsf@icsf.net), Consultant, ICSF

Gender Equality, Indigenous Rights and Human Rights in Ecuador

The new Constitution of Ecuador, approved in 2008, is far-reaching in its recognition of both gender equality and indigenous rights. It prohibits gender discrimination and includes provisions for equal employment and property rights, sexual and reproductive rights, shared responsibility in the family and social security for home-makers. Articles 57 and 58 recognize and guarantee indigenous peoples' rights, enfranchising thousands of people living in the country's poorest regions. Most importantly for indigenous women, article 171 guarantees women's participation and decision-making in indigenous governance and justice systems. The process to re-formulate the Constitution that began in 2007, saw active participation from women's groups who called for the State to guarantee collective and indigenous cultural rights, including economic and land rights, the elimination of ethnic and gender-based discrimination, and respect for and protection of ancestral languages. Through this process, indigenous women, who face triple discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and poverty, have mobilized to ensure that their rights are protected at both national and local levels.

In 2010, taking this further forward in terms of their national planning, the government of Ecuador requested assistance from the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) in integrating human rights principles and approaches into development planning. The collaboration between the Government of Ecuador and OHCHR resulted in the publication of a guide for the formulation of sectoral policies. This guide is the first in the series of efforts to ensure that human rights will contribute to the vision of *Buen Vivir*, or good living. The vision of *Buen Vivir* enshrined in the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution, is based on the principle that there is no real development without the full enjoyment of human rights by all. The Constitution further calls upon the State to design and implement public policies that ensure the full enjoyment by all of all the rights set forth in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Turning the Tide (Part 1)

This is the first part of the summary of a paper that explores the key developments and trends that can be identified in the literature on women in the fisheries in the last three decades. The next issue of *Yemaya* will carry the concluding section

By **Nilanjana Biswas** (nilanjanabiswas@yahoo.com), independent researcher and writer

Of the 43.5 million people around the world directly employed in fishing and aquaculture, ninety per cent are small-scale fishers. The majority (eighty six per cent) live in Asia; most under conditions of great poverty. For every person directly employed in fishing or fish farming, it is estimated that four others are employed in post- or pre-harvest work. Most countries however do not consider the work that these four others do—work such as fish processing and selling, transportation, net and gear making, boat building, fuel supply, engine repair—to be productive or contributing to the national economy. Thus, in 2010, the labour of about 174 million people across the world remained largely invisible in fishery statistics and was either unpaid or insufficiently paid for. Women made up the bulk of this figure. Since the numbers dependent on fishing for a livelihood is increasing every year, the numbers of women whose labour is freely exploited can be said to be proportionately soaring. This is ironic given that never before has the question of women in the fisheries been more visible than it has in the recent past.

In the last few decades, research on women in the fisheries has uncovered the astounding amounts of work that women in the sector perform. The growing research focus on women's lives and livelihoods in the fisheries has been matched by a growing demand for the inclusion of gender in fisheries policy, leading to even more research on gender. In 2010, ICSF commissioned a study to analyze the key points of this research. The aim of the study was to draw out from this body of work certain trends and lessons for discussion so that stronger and more sustainable forms of intervention might be developed. A summary of the paper is being carried in *Yemaya* in two parts: the first part in this issue and the second in the next. The full version of the paper is available for download at: icsf.net/icsf2006/uploads/publications/occpaper/pdf/english/issue_112/ALL.pdf

ICSF

Women vendors waiting for the catch on the shore in Gambia. Women's work in fish processing and selling are often not considered to be work

An analysis of the key research on women in the fisheries done in the past three decades reveals a set of five developments. First, if thirty years ago the analysis of women's labour was the focus of research, today it is not so much labour but survival and livelihood, embedded in a framework not of labour analysis but of ecology that is the object of research analysis. Second, the idea of women's empowerment has gained superiority over the idea of women's exploitation and oppression. Third, rights-based approaches are becoming increasingly common. Fourth, community-based forms of management of natural resources are being advocated. Finally, both for fishery activities as well as for research and action in the fishing sector, there is a growing dependence on multi-donor aid—aid which brings with it the ideology of liberalization and free market as a single prescription for all. Before we turn to each of these key developments, a few words of clarification by way of context are necessary. Although these appear to be distinct developments, they have in fact evolved not in isolation but in deeply related ways, and must, therefore, be read and analyzed together.

Of particular significance is the last point, the growing dominance of development aid, which has played a key role in manufacturing a global, consensual and uniform discourse on development, and strongly shaped the rest of the developments outlined above. The period of the last three decades in which this set of developments occurred was marked by two significant milestones in the history of development aid. The late 1980s saw the

crafting of the Washington Consensus while in 2005, the Paris Declaration was drafted. Shaped by the most developed countries of the world, led by the United State of America (USA), these, very simply, set the agenda for global economic development. The main agenda of the Washington Consensus thirty years ago was economic growth, to be achieved through neoliberal economic reforms. In the more recent Paris Declaration, the priority was no longer growth but 'good governance'.

Since the late 1980s, international money-lending institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) attached the recommendations of the Washington Consensus as core-loan conditionalities for every poverty-stricken country of the developing world seeking aid. The financial and policy impacts of this forced economic restructuring were felt across every sector. In the case of the fisheries, this intensified an export-led growth boom and led to the deregulation of international trade and cross-border investment. As the new millennium dawned, the economic restructuring of the global South, accelerated by the Washington Consensus, was more or less complete. Capitalist reforms were largely in place in all poor countries. It now became critical for industry to reshuffle its priorities in order to consolidate its hold over newly emerging market economies. In the last ten years or so, industry has, therefore, pushed for two things: one, in order that norms related to environment, labour and so on are harmonized with the interests of industry, it has pushed for the privatization of regulation, and two, in order that people ruined by the reforms don't actually die of starvation and disease, it has pushed for the specific targeting of aid to the most impoverished. The success of both these programmes—privatization and targeted aid—depends on efficient management and delivery systems. For these reasons, the capitalist agenda has now shifted to 'good governance', and, so, 'harmonization' of aid with national goals are the focus of the Paris Declaration of 2005. With this context in mind, we turn to the key developments that mark the literature on women in the fisheries.

The first noticeable development is the move away from the political economy (or analysis based on political and economic understanding) of women's labour. This was the focus of much of the early literature on women in the fisheries, the result of a critique of the Left which had consistently disregarded the economic value of the work women did. Although clearly the fishing economy would collapse if the fish that is caught is not processed and sold, if families are not fed and clothed, or if fishermen are not freed from the pressures of household work to go to sea, only one type of labour (the act of fishing) is economically valued while the other (everything else) is either under-valued (and under-paid) or not valued at all (and unpaid). To explain why this is the case, the early studies turned to ways in which patriarchal power relations were institutionalized in society. This included the sexual division of labour, which was found to provide biological justifications for patriarchal practices in fishing economies. It also included the split both between the public (outside the household) and the private (in the household) sphere and between the spheres of production and reproduction. In the private sphere of the fishing economy, that is, in the domestic or household domain, poor women, who formed the bulk of the small-scale fisheries, put in unimaginable number of hours, working until they were ready to collapse. This work (for example, cleaning and drying fish, mending nets, cooking for the family) was considered to be economically valueless and remained unwaged. Productive or waged work (for example, the selling of fish) took place, it was thought, in the public, productive sphere.

The public-private separation ensured that a certain type of labour, typically the labour of women but also that of children, migrants and so on, would provide hidden benefits and subsidies to the dominant economy. The extraction of subsidy occurred at three levels. One, women, in accordance with the sexual division of labour, routinely put in unpaid labour into essential tasks without which active fishing could not be sustained. They thus heavily subsidized the small-scale fisheries and helped maintain the "resilience of small-scale fishing communities". Two, in poor countries, women's labour also subsidized the State by absorbing the costs of reproducing the fishing family (day-care for children, cooking for the household, care of the sick and elderly, etc.) into the private sphere of the family and the community, thus allowing the State to abandon its social responsibilities towards the working poor. Three, the cheaply available labour of women directly subsidized industrial or capitalist fisheries by keeping wage levels in factories and production sites low. For instance, the fish processing industry in the global South with its insistence on 'labour market flexibility', relies largely on a female workforce, which means poor wages, poor working conditions, non-permanent work and zero unionization.

The political economy framework of analysis is significant today in the context of the global South where industry is strengthening itself through exploiting highly vulnerable forms of feminized labour. However, the framework had its blind spots and

For the bulk of the women in the small-scale fisheries, whose labour power is possibly their sole asset, giving up the political and economic understanding of women's labour represented an immense and unjustifiable loss of focus.

DHARMESH SHAH/ICSF

Women at the dryfish market at Nakkappalli, Andhra Pradesh, India. Prevailing structures of power in the fishing community tend to impose patriarchy

shortcomings. It lacked an ecological dimension at a time when fish resources were clearly dwindling. Further, it did not see the problems of technology which it often viewed as a liberating force. Over the years, the livelihood struggles of poor women in the South against deforestation, coastal commercialization, industrial agriculture and commercial seeds brought questions of ecological sustainability to the forefront, forcing new frameworks of analysis to emerge. These rightly focused attention on the declining natural resource base and questioned production and consumption relations from the point of view of sustainability. However, as the focus shifted from labour to environment, the newly emerging ecological frameworks such as eco-feminism were often marked by a growing "biological essentialism" with respect to gender, which equated women with nature and sustenance and men with culture and aggression. If political economy frameworks failed to address the ecological dimension adequately, political ecology frameworks failed in equal measure to address the question of labour, particularly women's labour, within the household and local markets as well as in the factories and fish processing plants. For the bulk of the women in the small-scale fisheries, whose labour power is possibly their sole asset, this represented an immense and unjustifiable loss of focus.

The second development is that over the last few decades, the ideas of women's oppression and exploitation have given way to the notion of women's empowerment. The idea of women's oppression was tied to the understanding of patriarchy, a term used by women's movements in many poor countries to refer to a system of power relations that controlled women's labour, fertility and sexuality in different ways to serve institutions both in the private domain (such as the family or the community) and in the public domain (such as the workplace or the media). The notion of women's exploitation was tied to an understanding of the specific ways in which women's labour was stolen by capital. An analysis of patriarchy made it clear that keeping women out of decision-making was no accidental oversight but rather a strategy that, say, the *cofradía*, the caste *panchayat* or the modern trade union used to control power and perpetuate the status quo. Because the prevailing structures of power in the traditional fishing community and family gain material benefits from women's unpaid and under-paid labour, they all tend to impose patriarchal boundaries on women's lives, using violence, if needed, to guard these boundaries. The hidden and devalued nature of women's domestic labour serves to devalue women in the marketplace when they seek employment. The early studies demonstrated how the industrial fisheries exploited patriarchal practices to acquire cheap labour.

For many reasons, however, the idea of women's exploitation and oppression soon began to be discredited globally. One reason was that it too strongly accused the capitalist class, together with patriarchy and other structures of power, for the subordination of women, and had, therefore, to be silenced. Another reason was that in the period of the Washington Consensus, capitalist opportunities inherent in integrating women into development began to be recognized. To get women into development, that is to say, to mobilize cheap labour for capitalist growth became the main concern. By 1979, the United Nations had adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which promised equal opportunities for women. While this promise of equality was good news for women of the upper classes who had access to education or some investment capital, for the vast majority of women who were poor, to expect equality within capitalism, a system that thrived on subsidies gained from women's exploitation, was no more than a cruel joke. But this was a period of Bank/Fund-led structural adjustment policies, which forced borrowing countries to privatize basic services like water, health, education and electricity, to open up their markets, to dilute, if not remove, any existing labour, environmental and coastal regulation that stood in the way of industry, and to follow export-led models of economic growth. As traditional livelihoods soon began to get wiped out, poor women, frantic for a means of survival, joined waged work in unprecedented numbers.

It was not just by coincidence that the term "gender empowerment" gained currency in this period. Empowerment after all was an ideological permit for the assimilation of women as cheap labour into capitalism. Another term that was quickly and widely embraced was "gender mainstreaming". Popularized by the 1995 Beijing Conference, the political implications of this term were clear: capitalism, race, caste, religion and other structures of power were not the problem for women and did not need to be challenged so long as gender could somehow be "mainstreamed" into them, that is, as long as women could also become beneficiaries of these divisions in society. Since, in this period, ecological viewpoints also gained wide acceptance, "earth mother myths" about women's instinctive closeness to nature became very popular. This kind of thinking provided a convenient justification for enlisting the unpaid or underpaid labour of women into state-run forestry and coastal conservation programmes. The issue of "gender" (a term that lacks any sort of consistent definition in the fisheries literature) soon became all about providing "opportunities" such as empowerment training, skills training, microcredit, and so on, taking attention away from the need to hack at the structural and political roots of the problem. The spread of this particular interpretation of gender (as a matter of consensus and assimilation rather than of struggle and resistance) was institutionalized by state policy and propped up by donor aid. A class of professional "gender experts" sprang up across the world, embedded in a wide array of state, non-state and global bodies—the World Bank, the United Nations and its affiliates, national development agencies, governments, business firms, multinational companies and non-governmental organizations. This emerging collaboration was critical for the global expansion of capital in the last three decades.

(The second and concluding part of this article will be carried in the next issue of *Yemaya*)

Q & A

Interview with "Gracinha", Maria das Graças Alencar de Aquino, Morro Branco, Brazil

Maria is the President of the Fisher Association of Morro Branco, a primary school teacher and community organizer in Morro Branco, a traditional fishing village on the east coast in the municipality of Beberibe, Ceará, Brazil

By **René Schärer,** (fishnet@uol.com.br), Member of ICSF

Did fishers always have the right to fish in Morro Branco?

Yes, in the past, the fishery was very good; there was plenty of fish and shrimp and lobsters, and everybody had access. There was no industrial fleet, the sea had many different species and coastal populations were small—all these were factors that favoured the artisanal fisheries.

Did the fishers have to struggle to get the right to fish?

No, until 1970, there was free access. Then, the government began to issue licences for the lobster fishery, but everybody continued to fish since there was no control and enforcement.

And what is status of the right to fish lobsters now?

In 2004, the government created the lobster management committee and it became mandatory to get licences to continue fishing, but not all the boatowners were able to get a licence—some got compensation; others were locked out. The government simply forgot about them.

What about the shrimp fishery?

In the past, everybody fished for shrimp using either small trawlers or trammel nets. Ten years ago, motorized trawlers in the five-mile zone were prohibited, making this a zone for artisanal fishers. But there is no enforcement of the law—everybody keeps fishing and that is the problem.

Does this problem create conflicts between fishers?

Yes, it does. Although our fishers fish with sail boats that have less impact, the motorized fleet destroys the sea floor. The conflict is intense because there is very little enforcement. Two years ago, when there were 40 trawlers in our fishing area, we informed the sea police, but by the time the enforcement boat arrived, everybody had left. One of the fishing company owners started to threaten members of our association. We feel pretty helpless.

How did your forefathers gain the right to live on the beach property?

Fishers who were the first inhabitants of Morro Branco had no problem building their houses on the beach. The owner of the land normally granted permission to the fishers to build their houses. But when he died, things changed and speculation took over.

Is your community organized and prepared to fight for fisher's rights?

Yes, today we have a fishers association and we are working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other communities to create a Marine Protected Area on the east coast of Ceará to help the cause of fishers' rights.

YEMAYA MAMA

...in a questioning mood !

BOOK

Gender and Green Governance:
The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry

Agarwal, Bina. 2010. Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry. Oxford University Press, New York. 488p.

This review is by **Harini Kumar** (harini747@gmail.com), independent researcher

From an author who has pioneered work in the area of gender inequality in property, land and environmental issues, is a book which inverts the focus on the gender question. Moving away from existing literature that focuses on why women are absent from forestry governance institutions, Bina Agarwal asks, "what difference would it make if women were *present* in these institutions?" and "how much presence do women need for making a difference?" Accordingly, the book is divided into three parts: 'The Potential of Presence', 'The Impact of Presence' and 'Beyond Presence'.

Agarwal analyzes the impact of women's presence in institutions of governance and policy implementation through extensive empirical investigation using primary data on community forestry institutions in India and Nepal. Importantly, through research spanning over a decade, she also addresses questions of equitable access, whether women's interest in forests is different from men's and whether numbers—the proportion of women present in governing bodies—make a difference.

The first part of her book covers an extensive range of questions and issues, and looks at the implications of women's presence in governance. Agarwal points out that women have historically been excluded from public institutions and decision-making bodies even though they are the primary users of forests. Women also have to face oppressive cultural norms and biased opinions on their capabilities. Women's invisibility in governing institutions—what Agarwal calls 'participatory exclusions'—is discussed in detail as she traces the history of South Asian women's absence in traditional institutions and the way in which women have negotiated their presence in modern institutions of governance. The second part of the book consists of an empirical analysis of primary data collected over a decade and the third part looks at forging what she calls 'a web of strategic alliances', between institutions of civil society and institutions of 'green governance', thereby highlighting the importance of engaging with different levels of government. Some significant questions are raised. What kind of institutions can help address inefficiencies in existing mechanisms for identifying the needs of poor women? Given the socio-economic heterogeneity of the population, how can the gap between rural and urban women be bridged?

Agarwal emphasizes that all segments of the population, particularly women, need to be represented in democratic institutions of governance. She argues that local institutions of green governance require participatory inclusion more than do other government institutions because these can actually lead to the achievement of two important goals, namely conservation and providing local subsistence. Her research demonstrates the multiple benefits of women's presence in community forest institutions. It also addresses the complex question of the government's accountability to women's needs and their access to common resources.

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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.

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.