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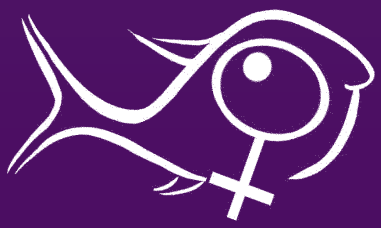
Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

ICSF

25 Years in Support of Small-scale Fishworkers



From the Editor

Fishing communities, as well as indigenous peoples and farming, pastoral and forest-dwelling communities, globally, face displacement from their lands, forests, fishing grounds and territories. Ongoing intergovernmental negotiations related to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VG-Tenure), being led by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), are, therefore, of great relevance. The Guidelines aim to improve the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests towards the goal of food security for all.

During the negotiations, civil society organizations (CSO) have consistently emphasized the importance of equitable access and tenure rights to land, fisheries, forests and other natural resources through policy measures that include restitution, redistribution and mandatory regulations to guarantee tenure, for indigenous peoples and small-scale food providers, particularly women. Reminding States of the need to uphold their human rights obligations, they have sought more support for small-scale food providers and their production models.

CSOs have also pointed out that, contrary to the proposals of some powerful governments and the private sector, economic growth, strong markets and corporate investments are not magic bullets to achieve food security. Not surprisingly then, at the October round of negotiations, the section on investments, particularly effective safeguards on investments, proved to be highly contentious.

Fishing communities depend on resources that, traditionally, have been managed in a collective manner, through systems of internal governance that have evolved over time. Such systems have rarely received legal recognition; instead, new statutory and institutional arrangements have often been imposed, at odds with, and undermining, local practices. As a woman fishworker from South Africa (see interview on page 11) says: "In the past we didn't have a permit system. As fishers, we made our own laws. We looked after the lagoon and the species in it, and we caught fish wherever we wanted to."

At the negotiations, therefore, CSOs supported an earlier proposal from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, for inclusion of the following para: "States must recognize, restore, respect and protect the natural commons, which comprise lands, forests and water bodies, which are accessible to everyone and are preserved and managed collectively. States should recognize such tenure as co-equal with statutory tenure. The governance of the natural commons should be rooted in collective rights and stewardship. States must guarantee that all user groups and communities secure access, tenure, and management of their commons, without prejudice".

Not all States agreed to this inclusion. Some Latin American countries said that the expression "natural commons" had no Spanish equivalent and was not a legal category. States were, however, willing to look at alternative formulations to protect the commons and associated systems of collective governance, where they exist.

Even as systems of collective governance need recognition, that such systems often discriminate against women, remains a disturbing reality. It is positive, therefore, that the Guidelines state: "Where constitutional or legal reforms strengthen the rights of women and place them in conflict with custom, all parties should cooperate to accommodate such changes in the customary tenure systems."

The Guidelines, incorporating provisions to protect small-scale food providers, must be finalized at the earliest. They could become a useful tool for farming, fishing and other communities to defend their legitimate tenure rights, especially from takeover by corporate and other powerful interests.

*TRY*ing for a Better Future

Women oyster sellers in The Gambia come together to improve the quality of their lives, and as they do, their produce—oysters—receives an upmarket boost

By **Adrian Croke** (adrian.croke@gmail.com), Peace Corps Volunteer, The Gambia

A 35-year old widowed mother of five. During a four-month season, she wakes up at dawn everyday and heads to the river. Her children stay at home by themselves. How nice it would be if they could go to school, but there just isn't enough money. She works briskly throughout the low tide, hacking oysters off the mangrove roots with an axe. Sometimes her hands and feet come in the way of the axe, but then she hasn't met her death yet in the water, has she? That's something to be thankful for. So many of her friends lost their lives this way. She can't swim; she has no boat, no life jacket, no gloves and no boots. The old sweater sleeves wrapped around her feet might get her through the day. Though the sun is high up in the sky, only now is the tide beginning to return. It's time to take her water logged feet out of the mud and head home. Next, to steam the catch and walk to the highway with a bucket of cooked oysters balanced on her head. Will she be able to sell enough today to feed her family tomorrow? On the highway, vehicles roar past. Occasionally, a motorist stops to buy a cup of oysters. The year is 2007. The country: Africa's smallest—The Gambia.

In the year 2007, driving along the Serrekunda highway on her way to Banjul, the capital city of The Gambia, a woman named Fatou Janha Mboob spotted an oyster seller by the roadside and drew her car to a halt. As she placed her order, Fatou began to chat with the oyster seller: "So how much do you make in a day?" "Not much. Nothing really," the woman replied. And so a conversation started. The other women selling oysters began to draw near. Soon, they were all sharing their stories and through these Fatou came to learn about the reality of oyster selling and the lives of the women dependent on it.

ERIN WILKINSON

TRY Oyster Women's Association aims to improve the livelihoods of its members, and their conditions of work

Most of the women were widows, Fatou learned—the sole breadwinners in their families. Oyster harvesting offered only a few months of work. Many of the women could not swim and owned no protective gear. Many had terrible wounds from accidental cuts. Due to the remote nature of many harvest sites, death by drowning was not entirely uncommon; neither were rape and theft.

Oyster beds in The Gambia are located in the root systems of mangroves, an essential and highly threatened habitat. Mangroves are among the most productive and biologically complex ecosystems on earth but they are also in grave danger from development, deforestation, salt production, pollution and overexploitation. Irresponsible harvesting of oysters, due to ignorance or desperation, poses great risks to the health and survival of the mangroves. Careless hacking or the use of large machetes may damage the roots of a mangrove plant, leading to its death. The more mangroves destroyed, the smaller the oyster harvest and greater the level of insecurity in the lives of those dependent on oyster harvesting.

Fatou was deeply moved by the stories she heard. Born in The Gambia and trained as a social worker and agricultural extensionist, Fatou had lived abroad for a while. On returning to her homeland, she started a fashion designing business. The roadside encounter with women selling oysters by the cup and struggling to make ends meet was, however, a turning point. It was the beginning of a process that would culminate in the formation of the TRY Oyster Women's Association, an organization started by 40 women in one village. Today, TRY has expanded to include 500 women from across 15 villages. Supported by the USAID-funded Ba Nafaa project and the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center, TRY is now a force to contend with in the world of women's development and sustainable resource management.

The association aims to improve the livelihoods of its members and their families, the oyster product, the conditions of work, and the sustainability of the industry. Currently, the association is involved in a number of projects to meet these goals. First, there are 250 women enrolled in a microfinance scheme that started in January of 2011 and will continue over the next year. Each contributed GMD300 (approximately US$11) and received a loan of GMD1,000 (US$37) to start a small business enterprise. The loan period was six months. Before the loan was given, the women received training on small enterprise development and business and marketing skills. The project has had considerable success, as at least 25 women have saved over GMD5,000 (US$185) and some as much as GMD14,000 (US$518). This is particularly remarkable considering many of the women never previously dreamt of having their own savings and assets. TRY hopes that in five years, thanks to the microfinance programme, each woman will be able to build a decent house for herself and her family and successfully break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness.

TRY's first goal—improving the livelihoods of its members—is inseparable from the responsible management and protection of mangroves. Mangrove reforestation programmes and educational training help to underscore the importance of the mangrove ecosystem. Gambians depend on the mangrove habitat not only for consumable resources like fish, oysters and cockles, but also for the success of the tourism industry, which benefits greatly from the natural beauty of the country's coastal landscape. Improving women's work conditions thus leads to the protection of the environment and supports the country's main source of income, the hospitality industry.

During the week, TRY's Resource and Processing Centre hosts a skills-building class for 35 young girls, daughters of oyster harvesters, who, unable to pay their fees, have dropped out of school. These girls receive training in sewing, cooking and computer literacy. The aim is to provide training in tailoring, catering and computer skills so that they have a set of marketable abilities with which to start a business. In addition to these activities, the Centre is engaged in the continuous improvement of the oyster product. In partnership with the Ba Nafaa project, TRY is involved in water quality studies of the wetlands in which oysters are harvested so as to eventually harvest and export raw oysters to international markets.

Do women sell oysters by the roadside then anymore? They do, of course, but they now have cleaner spaces for selling, better tools for harvesting, and also a space in the public market reserved for them. Earlier, the women had no place to meet except by the side of the highway. Today, there is a Resource Centre where they can gather, receive training and process their oysters. The Centre offers a good price for the oysters, which are washed, cleaned, hygienically packaged, labelled and refrigerated for sale. Once, oysters were available only at roadside stands. Today, they are an improved, clean and safe product in high demand. Once water quality studies

Improving the livelihoods of women oyster sellers is inseparable from the responsible management and protection of the mangroves.

What's New, Webby?

Women on the Road to Rio+20

Nearly 20 years ago, the Earth Summit was held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It led to the formulation of Agenda 21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Rio Declaration. Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 had a specific focus on global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development. It urged the active involvement of women in economic and political decisionmaking for the successful implementation of Agenda 21. Now, 20 years later, another summit, Rio+20, is being organized by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) to assess progress and make future plans.

An online community space for women around the world to discuss Rio+20 has been hosted at http://women-rio20.ning.com/page/about. This site has a questionnaire designed to gather opinions on Rio+20 from a gender perspective. This, together with various regional and organizational statements, will help frame the Women's Major Group submission to the official UNCSD/Rio+20 process in early November. The website hosts region-specific pages, and allows you to post events, statements and videos, as well as participate in online discussions.

It offers links to key documents such as the Women's Major Group publications and the position papers of women's groups and facilitates networking on the 'emerging green economy'. The site also carries the proceedings of the regional preparatory meeting on Rio+20 in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

are completed, TRY aims to export raw oysters. This opportunity for international export would not only put The Gambia on the world economic map, but would also make TRY a model for financially beneficial, sustainable resource management.

ASIA INDIA

A Sea of One's Own

Mariculture has driven women's empowerment through better incomes and greater bargaining power. This article argues for active State intervention to protect the interests of women in the sector

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(A version of this paper was presented at the 3rd Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries, as part of 9AFAF, 21 - 25 April 2011, Shanghai Ocean University, Shanghai)

Mariculture, which includes mussel farming, seaweed farming and open-sea cage culture, is the science of cultivating useful organisms in a marine environment. Globally, mariculture production has gone through a period of rapid growth in recent times, from 0.5 mn tonnes in 1950 to 10 mn tonnes in 1990 and to 36 mn tonnes by 2007. Currently, 106 nations are engaged in mariculture production. Just as agriculture makes land-based production systems a contested space, mariculture makes the marine production system also a contested space, characterized by the struggle for human livelihood. This struggle has several ecological as well as political dimensions. One such dimension is gender.

Analyzing coastal rights from a gender perspective is fraught with various problems. On the one hand, marine space is generally conceived as a common-property system with customary rights, whose institutional complexity is higher than other forms. In the case of marine customary rights, gender aspects do not get discussed because these rights are historically considered as an exclusive male domain. Further, in situations where women get increased access to common-property resources, it is not just the increase in women's command over economic resources that has a critical bearing on gender relations, but also, as social scientist Bina Agarwal has pointed out, the 'process' by which that increase occurs. The levels of analysis that are usually taken into account by gender scholars, such as household, community, market and State are inadequate to provide a complete political ecology perspective. They also tend to render static what is often an extremely dynamic process. Finally, if in the agrarian economy, the exclusion and dispossession of women from the property-rights regime is leading to political as well as intellectual struggles, such a trend is yet to emerge in the marine common property system. But absence of resistance doesn't mean absence of inequality. This is the context in which the following analysis of growth in mariculture along India's coastal regions has been undertaken.

ABHILASH/CMFRI

Seaweed farming in India represents a transition from organized 'collection' to 'culture', at Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, India

The study on which the present paper is based was conducted in different locations in India where various forms of mariculture technology were getting diffused: mussel farming in Padanna and Kollam in the State of Kerala; open-sea cage farming in the regions of Visakhapatanam (in Andhra Pradesh State), Karwar (in Karnataka State) and Balasoor (in Orissa State) and seaweed farming in Ramanathapuram District in the State of Tamil Nadu. A blend of methods was used, which included household socioeconomic surveys and case studies of different stakeholders. The key findings from the study are summarized here.

Mussel farming in Kerala has a very interesting trajectory. It is a technology originally developed for open-sea mariculture in the late 1970s by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). It gained popularity as a tool for women's empowerment in coastal Kerala since 2000. Padanna, an estuarine village in the coast of north Malabar,

where the first demonstration was successfully conducted, acted as the epicentre of mussel farming in India. The driving force behind the diffusion of this technology was a Muslim male entrepreneur in the village who took the initiative to organize commercial production through women's micro-credit or self-help groups (SHGs) in the village. As a result, total production of farmed mussel spread to five districts of Kerala, and reached an estimated 20,000 tonnes in 2010, with more than 3,000 women becoming owners of mussel farms.

What made the programme easy for women to adopt was that most of the activities like seeding in specially stitched cloth bags tied on ropes, growth monitoring, harvesting, cleaning, shacking and so on, could be easily done by women. It is almost a 'do-nothing farming' with a growth period of four to five months. Another important factor for its spread was the financial subsidy provided by the State government of Kerala through its *Kudumbashree* programme.

As a coastal enterprise, seaweed farming in India represents a transition from organized 'collection' from the sea carried out on a commercial basis since the late 1960s by fisherwomen of the Gulf of Mannar region to 'culture', again carried out mainly by women, since the year 2000. Seaweed mariculture in India received a decisive impetus with the entry of red seaweeds like *Kappaphycus alvarezii,* involving cultivation techniques standardized by the Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI) and popularized by Pepsico. Production of *Kappaphycus* in its dry form increased from 21 tonnes in 2001 to little more than 700 tonnes in 2009. The cultivation was organized mainly in the form of contract farming under Pepsico until 2008. Afterwards, it was continued by Aquagri Processing Private Limited, a company formed by former Pepsi officials to whom Pepsi transferred its seaweed business operations in India, along with a global patent. The farming also receives support from the State in terms of subsidy as well as capacity building. In the absence of leasing policies, the State exercises control in two ways: one, by making training in seaweed cultivation by a State-run training institute compulsory, and two, by restricting the cultivation to persons holding a ration card. About a thousand people, mainly women, are currently engaged in *Kappaphycus* farming.

Open-sea marine cage culture is the latest innovation in the Indian mariculture scene. The first demonstration of open-sea cage farming was carried out in Visakhapatnam in 2007-08 by CMFRI. The technology was transferred to select fishermen's groups which received financial support from the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) and technical backup from CMFRI. The innovation is on the verge of takeoff on a wider scale. Currently, about 600 fishermen are engaged in open-sea cage farming in 11 locations in the country.

Certain issues of gendered analysis are common to all the different forms of mariculture described above. First, mariculture has proved to be a successful women's empowerment platform. This is true for all except the open marine cage culture technology. The women beneficiaries earlier depended on the collection of natural resources from the wild—a highly labour intensive activity. With mariculture, empowerment is manifested across various dimensions of women's lives: economic, as income under their own control has increased; political, as more women enter decision-making bodies; and social, as, for example, women are able to send their children to school, to collectively exert pressure to take steps against vices such as alcoholism and so on. As the disposable income available to a woman has improved, so has her status, leading, in turn, to increasing her 'bargaining power' within the family and community structure.

Second, the experience points to the critical role of the State in ensuring gender access. In the case of mussel farming, the programme got support from the State agencies like Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), implemented through the *Kudumbashree* initiative. Since these agencies had women's empowerment as their stated mission, financial support in terms of subsidies and loans were served only to women farmers. But once the profitability of the technology was established by the women SHGs, the enterprise became bankable and banks came forward with loans. However, the slogan of women's empowerment could not be kept up for long as competition within the banking sector increased after the liberalization of the economy. 'Initially they [the men farmers] had to include at least few of us [women] as members in the group to avail loans and we felt a sense of superiority. ...But now banks give loans to men-only groups also. So we are now competing with men', said a woman mussel farmer in Padanna. The women mussel farmers fear they may lose out to male muscle power soon. In the case of seaweed farming, the diffusion stage got financial support from the State through SHGs. Since 50 per cent of the members of a SHG had to be women, the room for gender imbalance was less. But, as in the case of mussel farming, the lucrative nature of seaweed farming is luring more men today.

Third, the importance of gender balance in common property rights in coastal

Though the State is a positive 'bargaining' force in the intra household domestic space, it is not as ready to play the same democratizing role in more public 'common access resource' spaces.

areas is also important for another reason. Women tend to be better economic stewards at home, and this advantage would extend to ecological stewardship also. Ensuring a rightful share for women in ownership of natural resources would ensure more equitable and responsible management of natural resources.

To conclude, the most important learning from the study is the ambivalence of the State. On the one hand, the State, by providing platforms such as SHGs is a positive 'bargaining' force in the intra household domestic space; on the other hand, however, it is not as ready to play the same democratizing role in more public 'common access resource' spaces. It is essential for gender scholars the world over to proactively support the cause of women mariculturists by arguing that State intervention should be gender-biased in protecting the interests and role of women farmers.

PROFILE

Leng Chumnap: A Brave Woman

Leng Chumnap is the only woman in a committee of nine persons in Tumpung Cheung's Community Fishery organization in Cambodia

By **John Kurien** (kurien.john@gmail.com), Member, ICSF

Going by her easy, beaming smile, no one would guess that Leng Chumnap is a very busy woman. A fish seller by profession, she is also in charge of extension work in the village of Tumpung Cheung, located in the Battambang province of Cambodia, close to the Thai border. Mother of three children, Leng Chumnap is the only woman in a committee of nine persons in Tumpung Cheung's Community Fishery organization.

The Community Fishery organization has helped Leng Chumnap to reach out to her fellow villagers in many important ways and bring about positive changes in their lives. In turn, the organization has significantly changed her life as well. Chumnap's husband was once an illegal fisher but as a result of her involvement in the newly created Community Fishery organization, he went through a process of reform and now uses only legal small-scale fishing gear.

The fishery resources of the great Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia were once completely controlled by a lobby of rich and influential fishing lot owners. However, in the year 2000, a new sub-decree announced by the Cambodian Prime Minister seized most of the fishing-lots and transferred them to river based communities. However, not all the village households were convinced about the genuineness of that action. Also, working together as a community was not the norm. Yet Leng Chumnap welcomed this bold and unprecedented initiative and was confident that it would contribute to improving the lives of the village community by giving them access to fishery resources. In the days that followed, in her role as extension worker, she went from house to house, explaining to the villagers how the community's new access to Tonle Sap's fishery resources could be used to great advantage to enhance employment and incomes throughout the year. They would not have to fish in fear anymore.

Visitors to Tumpung Cheung can surely expect to be taken enthusiastically around the village by Chumnap and shown the many positive changes that are taking place there, especially in the waters of Tonle Sap, which teem with fish during the fishing season.

At the ICSF Siem Reap meeting in 2007, Chumnap spoke with conviction about these changes. That meeting helped her learn a lot, particularly because, knowing Thai, she was also able to listen in to the Thai translations and have heartfelt discussions with the Thai participants.

In the four years since the Siem Reap meeting, further significant and heartening changes have taken place in Tumpung Cheung village. The flooded forest—the nursery for fish—has increased significantly. The amount of fish caught over the last four or five years has been more than adequate for the consumption needs of all. On many days, families have even had a surplus to be taken to the market. The Community Fishery area is now demarcated with signposts—the result of a collaborative effort with the government in marking out the boundary of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve, which adjoins the village. All but a handful of members have stopped using illegal electric fishing operations.

The Chairperson of the Community Fishery organization graciously acknowledges the important role that Chumnap has played in making the organization truly participatory. Recognizing her abilities, the Commune Council, which is the lowest level of administrative governance in Cambodia, has employed her as an extension worker of the whole commune. In this new role, Chumnap is popularizing social welfare programmes throughout the commune's many villages. Unfortunately, this means that she spends less time in the Community Fishery organization.

Turning the Tide (Part 2)

This is the second part of the summary of a paper that explores the key developments and trends that can be identified in the literature on women in fisheries in the last three decades

By **Nilanjana Biswas** (nilanjanabiswas@yahoo.com), Independent Researcher and Writer

Part 1 of this article (icsf.net/SU/Yem/EN/37/art06.pdf) covered two major developments that appeared in the last three decades in the literature on women in fisheries. The first was a shift in research focus from women's *labour* to women's *survival* and *livelihood*. The second was spread of the idea of women's *empowerment* as the notions of women's *exploitation* and *oppression* began to be discredited.

The third development of note in the literature on women in fisheries is the rise of rights-based arguments. Two main types of rights-based arguments have appeared—one from fisheries managers, which promotes private property rights, and the other, the assertion by small-scale fishing communities of their human rights.

In response to the crisis brought on by industrial overfishing, privatized quota regimes and professionalization were introduced in many developed countries of the North. Many studies have documented how this led to quota concentration in the hands of fishing companies and pushed women out of core fishing. In fact, the very crisis caused by industrial overfishing was used to drive away small fish producers, and strengthen the hold of large players on the sector. Since the late 1980s, this model of privatization of the fisheries and the shift of responsibility for regulation from State to the market, is being transferred from the North to the less developed and underdeveloped countries of the South with countries like South Africa adopting quota-based fisheries. New fisheries management proposals, such as the World Bank's wealth-based fisheries management approach, continue to push for privatizing fisheries. These use the idea of individual rights to build the case for privatization.

SEBASTIAN MATHEW

Large-scale trawlers anchored in fishing harbour, Madagascar. The very crisis caused by industrial overfishing was used to drive away small fish producers

At the same time, there is also a case being made for adopting a different kind of rights-based framework—a human-rights approach to fisheries development. This argues that fishing communities are entitled to the full realization of their human-rights. Human rights, according to this view, encompass economic, social, cultural and political rights and are the entitlements of not just individuals but of communities as well. It is argued that since the human-rights approach is backed by an international apparatus of universally held norms, it provides a stronger basis for holding States accountable.

How effective is the human-rights argument and does it safeguard women's rights within traditional fisheries? Before these questions can be answered, the point to note is that community rights are usually based on the idea of customary use, and not ownership. Thus, the rights of small-scale fishing communities usually derive from customary and generational use of the coasts; very rarely do poor fishers own individual land titles. The idea of human rights, on the other hand, is a fairly new idea, emerging out of the industrial age. At its heart is the sanctity of an individual's right to property. Human rights are deeply linked to the ideas of democracy, private property and free markets, the citizen-individual being at the centre of all three concepts.

Multiple questions arise. If by human-rights in fisheries is meant the *collective ownership* of fishing lands and resources, then how would conflict be resolved when the community right to property clashes with private property rights? This is not just an academic question, since, in the present era of market-led growth, the coasts are intensely contested properties. If, on the other hand, by human rights is meant the preferential access of fishing communities to lands and resources, how does the human-rights argument ensure that

such access is not only for the elites within fishing communities but also for poor women and others at the bottom of community hierarchies? Further, can access rights provide long-lasting security? Access rights are unlikely to be strongly opposed by the capitalist class, which is well aware that industry and development usually make such rights meaningless over time. There is also the related question of the human rights of the non-fishing poor. With food prices soaring and in the absence of social security, fishing is drawing increasing numbers of the traditionally non-fishing rural poor as a way out of poverty and starvation. If the human-rights discourse is formulated around the rights of the traditional fishing community, how then would the human rights of the non-fishing poor, such as occasional fishers, be addressed?

Donor aid, as the handmaiden of capitalism, has played a key role in manufacturing a global and uniform discourse on development, that is to say, in establishing 'hegemony'.

A major problem with the human-rights discourse is that human rights are usually articulated in relation to the public domain and rarely linked to the domestic or private sphere. Human rights are devised in ways that typically ignore the crucial fact that the public sphere exists precisely because women's hidden labour in the private sphere (household) enables it to do so. Women rarely enjoy equal and autonomous status as full citizens. Women's sexuality and fertility are hardly in their control but exist to serve the needs of marriage, family, community, State and capital. In addition, women are burdened with so much non-valued work related to household production and reproduction that rarely can they cross the boundary of the private sphere into the public to play any sort of empowered public role.

For the human-rights approach in fisheries to be effective, it must engage with several questions. First, how does it regard private property in any way that is fundamentally different from privatized rights regimes? Second, is the human-rights argument not likely to, in fact, facilitate community elites to gain for themselves ownership over what were earlier common/shared property resources? Third, how would it protect against the exploitation of women and other marginalized sections within fishing communities, and related to this, how would it accommodate the human rights of the poor outside the traditional fishing community, such as occasional fishers? Finally, how would the human rights approach address the specific nature of gender-based oppression and exploitation when it excludes the private sphere, the primary site of these crimes?

The fourth major development in fisheries literature has been the emergence of the term 'community'. Fishing communities have existed for generations along the coasts. Their political struggles against displacement and dispossession by industrial fisheries are well documented in the literature. Since the late 1980s, however, the concept of community has entered global policy as an outcome of an institutionalized response to these struggles. This distinction between the community as a political entity and as an institutional entity is very important, but one that is increasingly blurred in real life. The role of aid is central to the blurring of this difference.

Since the 1980s, in the years following the Washington Consensus, the State (government and its agencies) in poor countries was forced to withdraw from regulation. Discussions on development began to revolve around the privatization of all regulation, including that of natural resource management. Since the decade of the 1990s, models of co-management, and later, of community-based coastal resource management, began to spread in fisheries. The few positive experiments in community-based coastal resource management have been donor-aided pilot projects. As the State withdrew, industry had to deal with a new reality of increased private participation in the social sector. Roles that were earlier performed by government—for example, drafting regulatory norms or providing disaster relief—were now being taken over by private bodies. Increasingly, this included the NGO sector. Market-oriented policies received national legitimacy as well as the rubber stamp of civil-society representation with the participation of NGOs. As a result, NGOs came under pressure to surrender their oppositional role and align with the dominant ideology. Wittingly or unwittingly, they became instrumental for pushing neoliberalism into local administrative institutions. In the context of South America, one author writes: "As the neoliberal regimes at the top devastated communities by inundating the country with cheap imports, extracting external debt payment, abolishing labour legislation and creating a growing mass of low-paid and unemployed workers, the NGOs were funded to provide 'self-help' projects, 'popular education,' and job training, to temporarily absorb small groups of poor, to co-opt local leaders, and to undermine anti-system struggles."

The growing capitalist class in the fishing sector provoked an assertion of community identity. In some countries, representational politics became very important and a hardening of community boundaries along lines of identity began to take place. While this was sometimes a vibrant mobilizational force, it greatly impacted the women's question. In fishery-related advocacy, women's rights began to be increasingly articulated as community rights. The World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), for example, asserted that it was important to "ensure that our sector is not

weakened by dividing it, putting men on one side and women on the other, in a context where, increasingly, small-scale fishers from the North and South are having to abandon their way of life due to the impact of government policies which favour industrial fisheries interests." The suggestion that the fishing sector would be weakened if women were to organize around their own issues brought back memories of the strong opposition of Left parties several decades ago to the idea of women organizing autonomously, on the grounds that this would divide working-class struggles. A loss of focus on women's rights is today evident in civil society statements from the fishery sector which fail to directly address the basis of women's oppression within the family and community. In the absence of any fundamental questioning of oppressive community structures, the call to "protect the cultural identities, dignity and traditional rights of fishing communities and indigenous peoples", as contained, for example, in the Bangkok Statement, could, in fact, have negative consequences for vulnerable groups, such as women or the poor or sexuality minorities, who have, historically been denied their rights in the community.

In poor countries, women from fishing communities are increasingly moving into wage labour and thus finding an access to independent economic means. At the same time, governments are being forced to recognize the idea of women's rights. This is strengthened by NGO interventions. It is, therefore, becoming inevitable for communities to respond to women both not just as part of community structures but also as individuals. In this context, it remains to be seen how women's rights that derive from gender and citizenship are reconciled with practices that result from deeply entrenched community power structures such as religion or caste.

Fifth and finally, the fisheries literature reflects the growing dominance of donor aid. It may be argued that the developments covered so far—the loss of focus on labour; the loss of focus on women's oppression and exploitation; the loss of focus on the rights of the oppressed and the emergence of human rights; and finally, the institutionalization of community struggles—could not have happened as they did in the last few decades without the key role of aid in manufacturing a global and uniform discourse on development, that is to say, in establishing 'hegemony'.

Donor aid has played a significant role in the spread of globalization and the 'free market'. If the free market is regarded as capital's iron fist, then aid is the velvet glove that sheaths it. Structural conditionalities tied to aid and pushed by the Big Three—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO)—significantly shaped the development of fisheries. These three institutions worked as a single global economic institution whose three parts specialized in stabilization (IMF), structural adjustment (World Bank) and trade liberalization (WTO) to serve a single theme—free trade. Donor aid in fisheries was tied to conditionalities promoting modernization and

Milestones

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

Nobel Committee Recognizes Three Women

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize jointly to three women—Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman—for their extraordinary contribution to the non violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is Africa's first democratically elected female president. Since she came to power in 2006, she has consistently contributed to securing peace in Liberia, to promoting economic and social development, and to strengthening the position of women. Leymah Gbowee, 39 year-old, also from Liberia, mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war and to ensure women's participation in elections in her country. She has since worked to enhance the influence of women in west Africa during and after the war. Tawakkul Karman has played a leading role both in the struggle for women's rights as well as in the pro-democracy and peace movements in Yemen. Karman is the chair of the network 'Women Journalists Without Chains', and the first Arab woman to be awarded the Nobel peace prize.

Through this year's award, the Nobel Committee has tried to send out the message that democracy and lasting peace cannot be gained in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society. In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, which, for the first time, made violence against women in armed conflict an international security issue. It underlined the need for women to become participants on an equal footing with men in peace work. The Committee hopes that the prize would "help to bring an end to the suppression of women that still occurs in many countries, and to realize the great potential for democracy and peace that women can represent".

industrialization, making a destructive model of development in the marine and culture fisheries widespread in the global South.

Early aid in fisheries was routed through national governments. Thus, in the 1950s, capital was poured into offshore bottom trawlers and distant-water fleets in industrialized countries, while, in the South, inter-governmental aid assisted the modernization of craft and gear. Following the fisheries crisis, Southern markets had to be speedily opened up but the route used by the capitalist class until now—inter-governmental aid—was slow. The Washington Consensus of the 1980s served to remove governmental controls on capital flows. From 'growth with distribution', the mantra became 'market-only growth'. For this, aid was the best route. Structural adjustment conditionalities were tied to aid. Poor loan-seeking countries of the global South were forced to adopt export-led models of capitalist growth in the fisheries. The World Bank-IMF-WTO trinity used donor aid in carrot-and-stick arrangements to coerce governments to liberalize trade and capital flows, to deregulate, to privatize and to specialize in exports. A boom in global fish trade followed, fuelled also by increases in ecologically unsustainable forms of industrial aquaculture. In the years that followed, income disparities between the rich and poor skyrocketed and the global economy was ravaged by food shortages, oil and food price hikes.

By the turn of the millennium, it became clear that the objectives of the Washington Consensus were more or less achieved. Over the period 1996 to 2004, while all other forms of development aid tended to flatten out, aid for governance and the rule of law increased steadily from 10 per cent in 1996 to 45 per cent in 2004. This indicated that economic restructuring was largely in place in the global South, with only minor hurdles remaining in the path of complete deregulation and free trade. It now became critical for capital to consolidate its hold over the newly emerging markets in the South. In the last ten years or so, capital has, therefore, pushed for two things. One, it has pushed for the transfer of regulation away from the State to private bodies to ensure that regulatory norms for the environment, the coasts, for labour and so on are made industry-friendly. Two, in order that the people whose lives and livelihoods have been destroyed by economic reforms don't actually die of starvation and disease, capital has pushed for the specific targeting of aid to the most impoverished. The success of both programmes—privatization and targeted aid—depends, however, on efficient management and delivery systems. For these reasons, the capitalist agenda has now shifted to 'good governance', and, so, the alignment of aid with national priorities is the focus of the Paris Declaration of 2005, widely endorsed by donor agencies and State governments.

An extraordinary consensus emerged in the social sector during this period, blunting any effective opposition to the Washington Consensus. Gender empowerment and mainstreaming—the project of integrating women into capitalism—became a necessary component of every project plan. The 'greening of investments' became paramount. Policy elites in Southern countries drafted national environmental plans in consultation with banks. Environmental NGOs drafted the project documentation associated with loans for aquaculture, coastal management, forestry, mining and agriculture. At the same time, the privatization of all regulation, including that of natural resource management, was vigorously pursued. In fisheries, the notions of co-management, and later, community-based coastal resource management gained currency. Aid flowed into capacity building and skills training for community-based organizations and networks that worked directly with indigenous groups and natural resource-based communities. Regulation, which might restrict industrial growth, was increasingly replaced by management-based models involving consensus among so-called civil society stakeholders in matters of coastal zone, marine and biodiversity protection.

The huge expansion of industry in the last few decades completely restructured economic relations in the fishing sector. Today, fish is produced in poor countries and consumed in the developed world or by ruling elites in producing countries. This economic restructuring has, no doubt, created work opportunities for poor women but in poorly paid and exploitative conditions. Although a much-needed critique of the industrialization model of economic development has emerged, the shift in focus from labour to environment during this time has meant that the poor and the marginalized are seen less as an exploited labour force than as the natural custodians of the environment.

A climate of political consensus, of 'positive' rather than 'oppositional' agendas, is in vogue. The women's question is framed in terms of 'gender empowerment' rather than opposition to patriarchy and capital. This is at a time when women's labour is being mobilized at an unprecedented scale and concentrated in the most exploitative jobs to fuel economic growth in fisheries, with escalating violence against women. Community-based identity politics have gained in this period but the family and community, as structures that sanction women's oppression, increasingly escape criticism. Resistance tries to combine human rights and community rights but without focus on women's rights. NGOs are surrendering

their oppositional role, keeping themselves confined mainly to issues of livelihood and survival. The need for a politically powerful labour power which is able to negotiate for justice and equality is all but forgotten.

In a context where capitalist fisheries is built upon the unvalued or undervalued labour of poor women, new analyses and news forms of organizing are needed to fundamentally challenge this exploitation. Industry cannot be left unregulated to do as it pleases but must be forced, through stringent regulation, to look beyond profitability alone. Community-based forms of mobilization face many challenges. Can communities form their own market mechanisms that are not modelled after capitalist forms, and evolve non-cash-based economies? Can communities demand for the regulation of capital and its relations with both people and the environment? Can they collectivize the ownership of property and the means of production, ensuring the rights of those who labour while delegitimizing the profits of the profiteers? Can they address the rights of the non-fishing poor? Can housework be collectivized? Will the full labour of women be recognized and valued? Can women's fertility and sexuality be freed from the institutions of family and private property? Can the analytical and political clarity required for such agendas come solely from identity-based politics? Similarly, would identity-based politics ever tolerate the struggle against patriarchy? Would it not necessarily require bringing back an emphasis on class along with other contradictions based on gender, race, caste, sexuality, and so on? Is not the radical re-envisioning of women's politics an urgent need of our times?

The literature on women in fisheries reminds us that rights and democracy, like charity, always begin at home. But unlike charity, these will never be handed to us by some gracious benefactor. At every level—be it the family, the community or the larger world—these rights must be systematically fought for.

Q & A

Interview with Solene Smith, chairperson of the South African network, Coastal Links, and also a fisherwoman from Langebaan, a traditional fishing village on the west coast of South Africa located on the country's only true lagoon, the Langebaan Lagoon.

By **Jackie Sunde** (jsunde@telkomsa.net), Member ICSF, and Researcher at the Environmental Evaluation Unit, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Solene, do you have rights to the sea in Langebaan?

No, not anymore but before the permit system was put in place, we all had rights and, as fisherwomen, we used to work alongside our male partners.

Do you have rights to the marine resources?

No.

Do you have rights to the land upon which you live?

Yes, I do have rights to my own house. Once we all lived next to the beautiful lagoon but we were forced out by the apartheid laws. But now I have my own house.

Please tell us about the rights you have now as against the system that used to exist previously.

In the past we didn't have a permit system. As fishers, we made our own laws. We looked after the lagoon and the species in it, and we caught fish whereever we wanted to. There was no one watching over us and there were no laws. We looked after the resources ourselves. We brought our children up to do the same because our forefathers and our parents taught us to respect the sea and its resources.

And the new system?

In the 1970s and 1980s, the government brought in new laws and the permit system, and only certain people could get permits under the system. This forced many of our fishers to go and look for other work. The permit system also meant that certain other laws and institutions came in, such as the MPA and the Parks Board, and each one made their own laws. This beautiful lagoon that we so loved was divided into different parts and our fishers could now only fish in certain sections. Where we previously could play on the beach, anchor our boats, do everything on the beach, clean our fish, now we had lost all that. We were forced out and we had to find another place to stay. All of us used to live along this beautiful lagoon but all of us where forced out during the apartheid years and different developments came along this lagoon. At the time our people were not informed about what they could do to claim their land back.

What is your vision for tenure here in the lagoon?

My work as chairperson of Coastal Links means that I will fight with the fishers for a peaceful system, as I want to have a peaceful time like we had before, for our children as well, so that we can fish where we did before with the same respect we had before.

YEMAYA MAMA

"This takes the cake!"

REVIEW

An Ocean of Women:

A Documentary about Sea Women (in two parts)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm_0NQTuT7g (14 mins)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ICeBgeGTas (12 mins)
In Spanish (subtitles in English), Produced by GAC Vigo, a project funded by the European Union, Xunta de Galicia, Gobierno De Espana and Ministerio De Medio Ambiente Y Medio Rural Y Marino

By **Ghousiya Sultana** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Associate, ICSF

An Ocean of Women is a Spanish documentary produced by GAC (Groupo De Accion Costeira), a European fishery-funded organization that aims to stimulate the economy of coastal villages dependent on fisheries. It represents all the aspects of fisheries such as environment, cultural heritage, fishing industry and production. 'Equality of Men and Women' is one of GAC's projects. Under this, opportunities for both men and women to participate equally are identified in order to improve the working conditions of women.

The video records the experiences of various women from Galicia in Spain, who contribute to fisheries production. These women are engaged in various activities such as: setting octopus traps (which requires great physical effort, considering that, an empty net weighs about five kg), as shellfish gatherers, collecting clams and cockles on the beach; and as sea anemone extractors. Some are net manufacturers and goose barnacle gatherers.

In the video the women speak about their lives and livelihoods. We learn how for them, the sea, with all its risks, is a part of their lives, and how living off the sea requires great physical effort as well as mental concentration. Most people are not aware of women's active participation in the fishing industry. This video spotlights their work and contribution in the sector.

The lives of these women are full of challenges. A primary challenge is to find the right balance between working at sea and attending to responsibilities at home—something that is usually resolved by adopting flexible working hours. The women take pride in the work they do, claiming that it is myth that women are scared to go out to sea or are unable to handle tough work.

One woman, Begona Gonzalez, proudly claims that she has been going out to sea for 20 years now and has no fear of the sea or of anything else in the natural environment. Sylvia Rodriguez, a sea urchin extractor, acknowledges that there are more men than women, out at sea. This, she feels, could be because men consider themselves stronger or simply because of tradition but it is important to note that the number of women going out to sea has been steadily increasing over the years. All the women feel that with the right training and opportunities, women can easily equal men. They say that they have encouraged their sons and daughters to learn more about fishing but express concern over the fact that the younger generation does not seem keen to take up fishing as an occupation.

ICSF

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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.