

# Common Concerns, Lasting Bonds

A recent workshop in Chile witnessed great debate on consolidating and securing rights for small-scale fishers in Latin America

The Latin American workshop on artisanal fisheries, “Consolidating and Securing Artisanal Fishing Access and Use Rights”, held from 4 to 8 August in Punta de Tralca, Chile, was long in the planning. Building on discussions initiated in 2005 at the Santa Clara Workshop in Argentina, the organizers of the event had been discussing and making detailed plans for the Chile workshop since April 2008. Four days of intensive discussions at the workshop provided the basis for a rich interchange of views and experiences, and some animated exchanges. Agreement was reached on many issues of common concern among the 80-odd delegates from the 12 countries representing the Latin American and Caribbean region.

In the end, the participants concluded the workshop by delegating the work of drafting a common position to a virtual editorial panel. This ‘wise panel’ will draft a joint declaration on small-scale fisheries in Latin America, with concrete proposals to be presented at the forthcoming World Conference on Small-scale Fisheries, to be organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Bangkok, Thailand, from 13 to 17 October 2008.

The Chile workshop was the third in a series of workshops organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and its partners, designed to focus discussions, and reach some common understanding, on the rights and responsibilities of

## Observations 1

An important lesson from the Chile Workshop arises from the evident heterogeneity within the artisanal fishery of Latin America. Various political and commercial agenda are being developed in parallel towards controlling the organizations that represent fishermen. These agenda appear opportunistic and short-term in nature but with far-reaching implications for artisanal fishermen, coastal communities, indigenous peoples and democratic organizations.

They seek to create a situation of dependency on, and linkage with, neoliberal policies and strategies at the government level (privatization of

rights, divisions within organizations, encouraging competition amongst artisanal fishers and with other sectors and social actors); with the fishing industry (control of access to fishery resources, low costs and seasonal labour); with the real-estate industry (to control access to coastal areas); large retailers (sourcing/supplying low-cost ecolabelled fish); and international NGOs (linked to the interests of large retailers).

Given these tendencies, consolidating, securing and protecting artisanal fishing access and use rights by coastal and inland fishing communities should be seen as the vital priority.

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coastal and artisanal fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on access to, and use of, resources in marine and inland fisheries. It followed on from earlier workshops that focused on Asia (Siem Reap, Cambodia, May 2007) and eastern and southern Africa (Dar es Salam, Tanzania, March 2006 and Zanzibar, Tanzania, June 2008).

The workshop was launched by the principal host, Confederación Nacional de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (CONAPACH, the National Confederation of Chilean Artisanal Fishermen), with a presentation in Chile's National Parliament, the Congreso Nacional in Valparaiso. CONAPACH President, Zoila Bustamente, highlighted many of the issues of common concern due to be addressed by the workshop. The fact that globally fish resources are in sustained decline is putting the future of Chile's coastal communities at risk, she observed. At the same time, she criticized the way that a regional fisheries management organization for the South Pacific was being set up, considering only the interests of the industry and excluding participation by artisanal fishers. She accused fisheries reform in Chile of being turned into a "laboratory" for fisheries and aquaculture policies, and called for the individual transferable quota (ITQ) system to be evaluated as a matter of priority. The implications of the ITQ system for resource conservation and sustainability need to be addressed, and the social and economic impacts of the system on artisanal fisheries and coastal communities must be evaluated, she insisted.

"ITQs will have far-reaching repercussions on the policies for access to, and use of, fishery resources in Latin American coastal countries," she said. Furthermore, she accused the Chilean State of facilitating the accelerated and massive expansion of industrial aquaculture, causing sanitary, environmental and social impacts on coastal communities in the south of Chile. This has radically changed the way shellfish divers and beach gatherers organize their activities, due to the pollution of natural (shellfish) beds, leading to serious social impacts. CONAPACH has demanded that the Chilean State suspend temporarily all further salmon conces-



The participants of the Chile Workshop, Consolidating and Securing Artisanal Fishing Access and Use Rights, held from 4 to 8 August in Punta de Tralca

sions, so that a re-evaluation can be made of the use of coastal spaces destined for salmon aquaculture, to ensure that the industry respects the working conditions of the labour force, and that the marine environment, public health and the rights of coastal communities are protected.

Zoila Bustamente warned: "Today, in Latin America and the Caribbean, States are in a race against time, and urgent decisions must be taken, in a participative and well-informed manner, that assure the political governance, protection and sustainable management of coastal resources and ecosystems, as well as national food security, decent work, and the strengthening of the social and economic

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dimensions of coastal communities. As a basic principle, States should establish access, use and allocation systems for marine resources in both coastal and oceanic areas, with preference afforded to artisanal fisheries, coastal communities and indigenous peoples."

In response, the Fisheries Subsecretary, José Chocair, second in the chain of command in the Chilean fisheries administration, after the Minister of the Economy, referred to the 1970s' law of Salvador Allende that established a Marine Ministry. He gave assurances that under President Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria, the current government is committed to addressing issues of

ment and Sustainable Fishery). Some historical context was provided on the process subsequent to the March 2005 Santa Clara Workshop, which had seen the establishment of an electronic discussion forum on artisanal fishing in Latin America.

The introductions were followed by formal presentations by fishworker and coastal community organizations. These highlighted the key problems facing artisanal fishermen and coastal communities in the region, and the ways in which the various organizations are addressing them.

After lunch, FAO Consultant Andres Mena Miller gave a presentation on the planned FAO World Conference on Small-scale Fisheries (4SSF). Interviewed subsequently by Patricio Igor de Centro Ecoceanos, Miller highlighted that “problems of access and use rights, and social problems of artisanal fishing are a global concern, even for developed countries”, and that “even in developed countries, artisanal fishing is underdeveloped.”

On Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, participants discussed fisheries management and globalization. Issues presented included the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) framework and fisher-

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social security for artisanal fishers. Discussions towards creating a Marine Ministry would include the rights of access to, and use of, marine resources, coastal marine zones, food sovereignty of coastal communities, and local and regional economies, he assured.

The workshop itself started on Tuesday, 5 August, with introductions from representatives of the four partner organizations staging the event—ICSF, CONAPACH, Centro Ecoceanos, and Centro Desarrollo y Pesca Sustentable (CeDePesca, Centre for Develop-

## Neoliberal Policies and Artisanal Fishing in Latin America: Some Voices

**T**he Chile Workshop shows us that fishermen in Latin America share many common problems. To a greater or lesser extent, all are affected by the application of the neoliberal capitalist model in the artisanal fishing sector. It is a disgrace that our country, Chile, heads the league table ranking on environmental degradation, the erosion of community rights, and the ever-greater concentration of property into fewer hands. All this started after the government of Ricardo Lagos initiated the regulation on catch quotas that we are now exporting throughout Latin America.

– *Cosme Caracciolo, General Secretary, CONAPACH*

This meeting is taking place at a key moment as regards the future of artisanal fishing rights, and those of coastal communities and democratic organizations. These are threatened by the imposition of neoliberal policies based on the implementation of the exclusive system of ITQs. In the case of Chile, ITQs have resulted in the progressive exclusion of artisanal fishermen from access to the main fisheries and to coastal areas, weakening their organizations, undermining food security and marine biodiversity, increasing concentration of wealth and the transnationalization of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

– *Juan Carlos Cardenas, Director, Centro Ecoceanos*

## “Rachel Doesn’t Exist”: Field Trip Notes

On Wednesday morning, participants visited the renowned artisanal fishing port and fish-landing centre in San Antonio, where they were able to observe a range of fisheries-related activities. Among those present were people unloading catches, beach-side vendors, women gatherers, and fishermen recently returned from fishing. Fishing in San Antonio has been particularly hard hit by the demise of the hake fishery, and by the upsurge in squid, a species that now dominates the catches. San Antonio has been in the forefront of advocating a ban on trawling, with local fishermen blaming the trawl gear for the demise of hake. The town has a bleak air about it, with the prevalence of black flags, paltry landings, and a partially deserted, brand new artisanal port installation. Women from Brazil were particularly impressed by the work of the men and women who prepare the longlines for fishing. Rachel, a woman *encarnadora* (hook baiter), was amazed to see the official professional

fisherwomen’s registration cards from Brazil. The workshop participants asked Rachel if women in Chile were recognized in the artisanal fishery. Rachel told them that as far as the fishing unions, the State and the services providing social security were concerned, she did not exist. Rachel then showed her hands to the visitors and invited them to look at her fingers, and to note that she had no fingerprints. These had vanished under the scars and wounds inflicted by the hooks. The *encarnadora’s* work involves cleaning hooks, and then arranging them and making them ready for baiting one by one, on a line that contains around 1,000 hooks. For this, they get paid roughly US\$4 or 5. “Rachel doesn’t exist” is a phrase that highlights but one of the many struggles facing the small-scale fishing sector as it strives to survive with autonomy, retaining its own culture, and displaying a long-standing commitment to defending its rights.

ies management regimes for international waters, which are of particular significance in the Latin American and Caribbean region, given the low level of ratification of relevant international treaties. Likewise, the region is highly affected by globalization, and the policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO), with a significant number of bilateral and regional free trade agreements signed with the world’s major economic powers.

On the third day of the workshop, some fishworker representatives asserted that insufficient opportunity had been given for them to voice their concerns and exchange views. CONAPACH President Zoila Bustamante addressed the issue and proposed that the afternoon be given over to a roundtable discussion among fishworker representatives, with the other participants observing, facilitating and recording the proceedings. This resulted in a rich and spirited exchange that lasted for about three hours.

Many issues of concern were voiced, which fed into the discussion groups that were subsequently formed. Among

the topics discussed were the following: the fishmeal reduction industry; the relationship between fishworker organizations and other social actors; the impact of intensive shrimp and salmon aquaculture; conflicts with, and displacement of fishers by, other sectors, like aquaculture, tourism, industry, sport fishing, and real estate; privatization of coastal areas; creation of marine protected areas that prohibit fishing; encroachment into exclusive artisanal fishing zones; and illegal activities,

**In Chile, operators who qualify as ‘artisanal fishing vessel owners’ use powerful vessels and industrial fishing techniques to catch small pelagic resources that are sold to the reduction sector.**

including piracy, drug smuggling and illegal fishing.

Particular points of contention arose over fishmeal. In Chile, operators who qualify as ‘artisanal fishing vessel owners’ use powerful vessels and industrial fishing techniques to catch

small pelagic resources that are sold to the reduction sector. Vessels up to 50 gross registered tonnage (GRT) and 18 m in length qualify as 'artisanal'. Such vessels operate in significant numbers in Chile's northern and central southern regions. There was also heated debate among the workshop participants on the role of other social actors in the artisanal fishery, notably non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and indigenous peoples, and linked to this was the issue of establishing a pan-Latin America artisanal fishermen's organization, which could exclude other social actors.

While it may have been disappointing that conclusions were ultimately deferred, the Chile workshop did offer grounds for optimism. The virtual committee or 'wise panel' formed at the end of the workshop has a wealth of texts to draw on. With time, tensions will hopefully be forgotten, and the high spots reached during the four days of discussion, and the friendships and bonds formed will be remembered. 🐟

**For more**

[http://icsf.net/icsf2006/jspFiles/cedepesca/background/english/background\\_2008.jsp](http://icsf.net/icsf2006/jspFiles/cedepesca/background/english/background_2008.jsp)

**ICSF workshop: Consolidating and Securing Artisanal Fishing Access and Use Rights, held from 4 to 8 August 2008 in Punta de Tralca, Chile**

<http://www.ecoceanos.cl>

**Ecoceanos**

<http://www.cedepesca.org.ar/>

**Centro Desarrollo y Pesca Sustentable**

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**Confederacion Nacional De Pescadores Artesanales De Chile**