

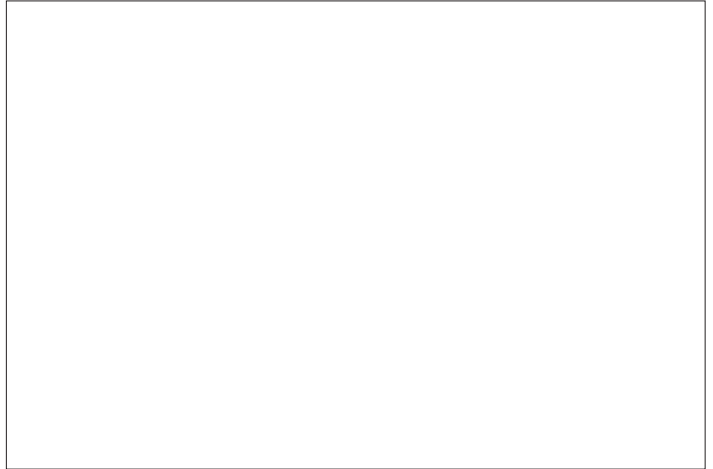
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**Women in Fisheries Series  
No. 3**

# **Women for Sustainable Fisheries**

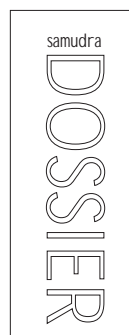
**Report of the First Phase  
of the Women in Fisheries Programme of ICSF**



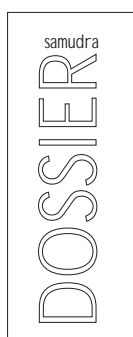
**International Collective in Support of Fishworkers  
27 College Road, Chennai 600 006, India**

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## Acknowledgements

At the end of this assignment, one has the feeling that the Women in Fisheries programme, which aims at greater gender justice for a sustainable fishery, has only just begun. This is so not because the last three years have not achieved much, but because innumerable issues have surfaced and a dormant potential has been released, making this programme, in many ways, unique.

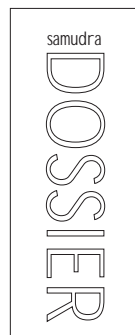
This has occurred because of the sincere involvement of many in this effort—great dreamers, as you will realize while you read the report. But these dreamers have been willing to pay the price to make their dreams come true by sticking out their necks to challenge the dominant norms in our male-dominated fishworker organizations. These men and women whom we have come to know more intimately in the process, encourage us to believe that these are not idle dreams. We thank each one for this inspiration and collaboration.

Among the fishworker organizations that gave us full access and spared much of their time for discussions and willingly tried to initiate debate on gender questions, we thank Bigkis-Lakas in the Philippines, the Federation of Southern Small-scale Fisherfolk in Thailand, the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) in India, the Collective National de Pecheurs du Senegal in Senegal (CNPS), the Comite Local de Peche in France, Rosa dos Ventos (RdV) in Spain and the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU) in Canada.

Of the NGOs that provided back-up and infrastructure support, we are indebted to the Family Centre of the Asian Social Institute in the Philippines, the Support Network for Women in Fisheries in Thailand, the Programme for Community Organization in India, CREDETIP in Senegal, Group Mer in France, Apostleship of the Sea in Spain, Oxfam-Acadi in Moncton and the Cooper Institute in Canada. These NGOs put all their infrastructural facilities at the disposal of the programme, which is the reason why much could be done on a relatively small budget.

Yet, inputs in terms of money were also a necessity. Although the ICSF was not able to convince the funding agencies of the need to support the work in the Northern hemisphere, funds were forthcoming for the work in the Southern countries. For this, we are grateful to NORAD, Bilance, Bread for the World, Entraid et Fraternity, Christian Aid, CCFD-France and Misereor, who gave in the measure possible to 'support' the programme.

Many friends have also given generously of their time to discuss details relating to the programme and to enlighten us with their experiences. Many of them appreciated the thrust and strategy of the programme, as it was basically an action-oriented effort. As far as we

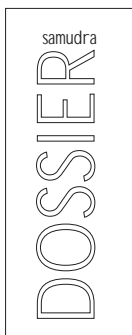


could gather, there are no similar efforts in other sectors. Gender justice is not an integral component of the alternative development paradigm that other movements advocate, nor do we find other movements that try to build bottom-up links within a sector, from the grass roots to the international level.

The second phase of the programme has taken off in Brazil and Ghana. The progress of the programme in these countries is not reflected in this report. Hopefully, other countries will also get involved, so that this will result in a genuinely international effort to reorient the direction of development in fisheries and uphold the livelihood of coastal communities.

Trivandrum, India  
August 1996

Nalini Nayak  
WIF Programme Co-ordinator



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## Introduction

**W**hen fishworkers first met in Rome in 1984 for the International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters, their meeting and the conclusions they arrived at focused on the need to empower fishing communities to enable them to attain a more just and participatory socioeconomic development status. The role of women in fishing communities was a subject of discussion at this conference and was summarized in one of the conclusions thus:

*We stress the essential role of women in fishing communities, considering their sensitivity to the deteriorating quality of life. We support them in getting organized to:*

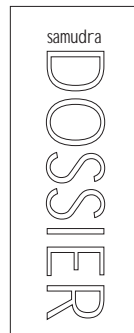
- *protect their activities in the production process;*
- *improve their working conditions;*
- *alleviate the burden of their work; and*
- *actively reduce pollution and protect the environment.*

*We call for a collective effort in changing attitudes and values towards women in order to get their full participation in decision making at all levels.*

Between Rome and the Bangkok conference in 1990 on Global Fisheries Trends and the Future of Fishworkers, significant developments had taken place in the growth of fishworker organizations in many countries. This resulted in a wide concern for artisanal fisheries the world over. Concern did not imply support, because, at Bangkok, the fishworkers reported being consistently marginalized by the impact of overfishing, pollution, development projects, tourism and militarism. These concerns crystallized in the following perspective of the ICSF:

*Sustainability of development requires that we move from exploitative to nurturing relationships with nature. Nurture and sustenance have always been the role of women in fishing communities. This role has often resulted in them being marginalized in their own communities. Only their active participation in the economy and a recognition of its centrality, will ensure that such new relationships with nature emerge.*

It was in Bangkok that it became apparent that none of the fishworker organizations present, except for those from India, had made any serious efforts to really integrate women and their concerns into the mainstream of their organizations. ICSF thus initiated its Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme. Implicit in this is the acknowledgement of the fact that the ongoing capital- and energy-intensive,



technologically aggressive and environmentally destructive development of fisheries can not be sustained, both from the resource and social points of view. Crucial to this change is the evolution of a 'nurture' and gender-just fisheries. It is generally accepted by ICSF that, for a variety of reasons, including gender relations, the otherwise creative potential of women has hardly been channelled for their own advancement and that of the community. The WIF programme was initiated to indicate ways and means by which this could be adequately understood and changed.

### **Programme Objectives**

The long- and medium-term objectives to facilitate the evolution of the programme were as follows.

#### *(i) Long-term*

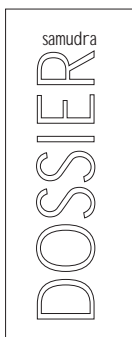
To strengthen the participation of women in fishworker organizations, and decision-making processes at various levels. Means of empowerment and creative involvement in the production and organizational processes would be worked out in order to make this possible.

#### *(ii) Medium-term*

- To study the history of women's role in fisheries (the sexual division of labour) and to record their struggles against marginalization, if any.
- To document the impact of development activities, under the aegis of the State and the private sector, on women in fisheries.
- To work with concrete development alternatives in different regions, at different levels, in income generation and resource management through organizing women to retain their spaces in production, processing and marketing; providing women with support to enter new frontiers in aquaculture and related activities; experimenting with resource management strategies with women as resource managers; and involving both women and men in the 'nurture' aspects of fisheries.
- To interact with fishworker organizations and help evolve an understanding towards gender equality and nurture-oriented fisheries; and
- To document through audiovisual media the various processes of interaction undertaken during the course of the programme.

### **Plan of Action**

The programme was envisaged as a three-phased process. The first phase involved consciousness-raising on gender questions to bring about a gender perspective. The second phase was the gradual evolution of participatory programmes to support women to retain and increase access to their spaces in fisheries.



The final phase involved the documentation of the role of women in fisheries through field observations and the preparation of a bibliography on existing publications on women in fisheries.

The strategy followed in achieving the objectives was to:

- work within fishworker organizations and create within them a core group of concerned and active women so that these women would act as catalysts within the fishworker organizations, assisted by a country co-ordinator who would be responsible to co-ordinate the programme in each country and document the process in close collaboration with the local ICSF members.

There were two international co-ordinators during the first year of the programme called the Exploratory Phase. Their roles were:

- to provide inputs to the country co-ordinator with information, documentation, local visits and discussion;
- to organize a workshop with the country co-ordinators to exchange experience, methodologies and questions; and
- to try to arrive at a clearer understanding of the role women played, continue to play and can play, in changing the present fisheries scenario.

### **Evolution of the Programme**

It was initially decided to start in a few countries, both from the North and South. The countries chosen were the Philippines, Thailand, India, Ghana, Senegal, Spain, France and Canada. The criteria for selecting these countries are described below.

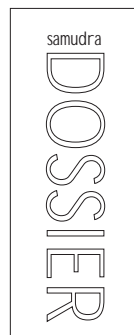
Senegal, India and Philippines were Southern countries where fishworker organizations and their supporters had a long association with ICSF and saw the need for such a programme.

Canada and France were Northern countries where fishworker organizations and their supporters also had a long association with ICSF. These supporters had realized that something had gone wrong somewhere, which had resulted in women being totally absent in fishworker organizations.

Thailand was included because NGOs had launched into interesting coastal micro-management experiments. Through ICSF supporters, it was hoped that these could ensure greater gender sensitivity and, if possible, evolve a more widespread mobilization for change.

Spain was chosen because wives of fishermen had begun to organize in response to the fisheries crisis in 1991. They were looking for support and links with the larger movement.

The first phase of the programme was considered an exploratory one. This phase commenced officially in January 1993, with the appointment of the international co-ordinators, Cornelia Quist and



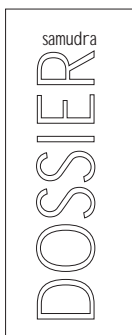


Nalini Nayak. This beginning was 'official' because there had already been discussions between the participating groups (ICSF members and NGOs) and because relationships with the participating fishworker organizations had already been established through the ICSF network earlier.

The country co-ordinators began functioning thus: **India**—January 1993—Aleyamma Vijayan, assisted by Nalini Nayak; **Thailand**—June 1993—initially, Phan-Ngam Gothamasan, later, Jawanit Kittitornkool; the **Philippines**—June 1993—initially, Annie Villaruz, later, Betty Soleza; **Senegal**—no country co-ordinator, but a study was commissioned on women's needs in fish processing (though, in early 1994, CREDETIP decided to appoint two women, Aminate Wade and Assitou Faye, who could animate the programme guided by Nalini Nayak); **Ghana**—dropped for 1993, as the preparatory work had not been done because of financial constraints (but, finally, the programme took off only in the second phase, starting in 1996); **France**—no country co-ordinator because of lack of funds, but contacts were established, discussions held and some form of support network created; **Spain**—as in France, there was no country co-ordinator but contacts have been maintained; **Canada**—thanks to the interest of the local Oxfam full-timer Chantal Abord-Hugon and Maureen Larkin of the Cooper Institute, efforts have been made to keep a process going within the MFU in Canada and links have been established with other Canadian networks.

At the end of the exploratory phase, the international co-ordinators produced a draft report with an assessment of the role and conditions of fisheries in the respective countries and possible directions for the programme. In June 1994, ICSF organized a conference in Cebu, the Philippines, on the theme, 'The Struggles of the Fishworkers: New Concerns for Support.' The conference recommended the following:

- ICSF should promote and facilitate greater awareness on coastal environment issues affecting fishworker communities as well as help to develop nurture strategies for a sustainable future;
- ICSF should continue to strengthen the participation of women in fishworker organizations, particularly at the decision-making level;
- ICSF should continue to study and raise awareness about women's working conditions in industrial and informal fish processing activities; and
- ICSF should lobby ILO to work towards international legislation in support of the working and living conditions of fishworkers, including women in fish processing plants.



At the end of this conference, the country co-ordinators of the Women in Fisheries programme, together with others involved in the programme, met to study more deeply the analytical framework on 'gender perspectives in fisheries.' This was the first time that the

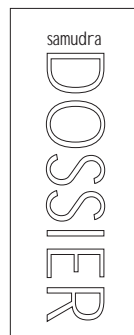
group had spent time in analyzing the development of fisheries from a gender perspective, trying to understand how the development of technology has impacts on the sexual division of labour, how patriarchy operates to exploit the labour of women, and how the depletion of resources in the North reflects on the fisheries of the South.

It became quite clear at the Cebu workshop that both the gender and development debates were very new to a number of participants. This indicated that while everyone was aware of the problems in fisheries and the consequent marginalization of women and while all were engaged in the mobilization of fishworkers, only a very few were involved in the larger women's or environmental movements in their respective countries. This, in turn, revealed that the ICSF network is fundamentally a network of those who are engaged in the day-to-day struggles of fishworkers. While this gives credibility to this network, it can also result in some degree of isolation from mainstream events, particularly the important role of putting fisheries and fishworkers on the agendas of the global movements for change and drawing into fishworkers' movements the reflections of the global movements, which should be an important focus of a support network. This in itself indicated that the medium- and long-term objectives, as laid out in the programme, would certainly not be achievable in the forthcoming two years of the programme period. Only beginnings could be made.

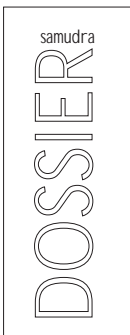
The Cebu workshop provided a framework and a starting point for the programme. Given the variations in each country in terms of culture, level of organization of the fishworkers and the experience of the organizing team, it was decided that each country programme would follow its own course of evolution, keeping the broad long-term priorities of the general programme in mind.

During this phase, which we will call the first phase following the exploratory phase, it was decided that Brazil would join the programme. Unfortunately, no women from Brazil had attended the Cebu workshop, but the programme did commence there in November 1994. The programme in Ghana continued to have problems because of poor communications between the local team and the ICSF secretariat. This is also because no fishworker movement exists in Ghana and the local team did not have the infrastructure or resources to launch into an experimental phase.

The programme has been consistent in the Philippines, India, Senegal and Canada. In Thailand, too, the programme was pursued seriously, until December 1995, when it was terminated. In the other Northern countries—France and Spain—work did move on, but not as planned. This again has to do with the difficulty of securing funds for work in the North, as development aid is oriented mainly to the South. It probably also has to do with the lack of conviction of some



of the members of the ICSF network, who find it difficult to understand why the Women in Fisheries programme (WIF) needs to have an international focus, which, in turn, makes it a big-budget programme.



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## The International Scenario

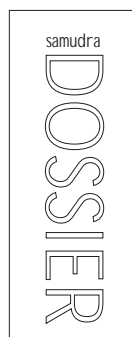
This first phase of the WIF programme coincided with significant happenings at the international level. The birth of the World Trade Organization (WTO) confirmed the functioning of the global market and, therefore, the liberalization of the national economies which had started earlier.

Despite the fact that one of the major criticisms of the Western model of development is its denial of increasing environmental destruction, the phenomenon of globalization only reinforces this model. While it is widely accepted that the multiple and complex problems of environmental degradation, resource depletion, industrial and nuclear pollution and loss of biodiversity are all facets of the global environmental and development crisis that humanity is facing today, it is misleading to propose that this crisis affects all in equally intensive ways.

Earlier, it was conceded that the increasing poverty of large parts of the population of the South meant economic growth and prosperity for the North. While this generally still holds true, the last few years indicate that global economic and political processes operate mainly in favour of an elite in the North and South, making marginalization an international phenomenon, with its extreme manifestations in the South. The environmental and social limits to the expansion of the present model of development have to be seen in the context of over-consumption by the few and marginalization of the many.

Basic to this model is the inappropriate use of resources and creation of waste. Eighty per cent of the world's resources are consumed by 20 per cent of the world's population. The transnational corporations are the major actors on the global economic scene. With the birth of the WTO, their freedom to operate is unchallenged. The effects of their operations on people and especially on women in the South, who serve as cheap labour, and their exploitative use of natural resources is camouflaged by a veneer of 'progress' and the earning of 'foreign exchange.' In the South, the crisis of development leaves large parts of the population worse off now than a few decades ago. The drive to catch up with the North has led to the creation of large debts, resulting in structural adjustment programmes and economic austerity measures.

This crisis has manifested itself in the fisheries sector worldwide. At the start of the 1990s, the birth of Rosa dos Ventos (the Wives of Fishermen Association) in Spain signalled the crisis of the Spanish fishery. With the largest fishing fleet in Europe, Spain, like other European countries, was facing the problem of keeping its fleet afloat not only for want of resources but also because of severe neglect and



technological and social backwardness. Rosa dos Ventos organized themselves to take up the struggle of their husbands, who worked on the distant-water fleet, demanding better working conditions and security of employment.

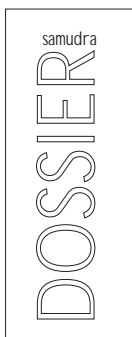
By mid-1993, the fishermen of France were on the warpath. When the entry of large quantities of fresh fish from outside the European Union (EU) brought fish prices down by 50 per cent, fishermen and women spontaneously organized mass protests and succeeded in attracting public attention. This led to the creation of the Fishery Survival Committee, made up of fishermen and their wives, which demanded changes in the EEC fishery policy.

This was closely followed by the cod moratorium in Canada, which not only led to extreme hardship for many fishing communities in Canada but also to severe conflict and competition for diminishing resources in high-seas fishing.

It did not take long for the British fishermen to react as well. With boundaries and barriers being lifted for trade, local fishing regulations were also flouted, as governments were rendered powerless by new agreements. It was left to the fishermen to take the law into their own hands—and so they did. There was a period of violent protests with the slogan, ‘Save Britain’s Fish.’

Seeing the havoc that globalization was causing and the way it intruded into the local lifestyle and traditional management regulations of the fishing communities, the fishworkers of Norway played a major role in their country opting against entry into the EU.

Simultaneously, in the South, Indian fishworkers fought a major battle against the entry of foreign fishing vessels into their waters, while the Senegalese fishworkers fought for a share of the income from the fisheries agreements with the EU.



While the early 1990s also claimed to be the period of increased production in shrimp aquaculture, because of the rising demand for seafood in the context of falling marine landings, this same period saw the aquaculture industry not only badly hit by the spread of disease in Asia, but also the uprisings of coastal communities in many Asian countries against the devastating effects of aquaculture on their lives —contamination of potable water, salination of land, etc. This had led not only to a public hearing on the subject but also towards a movement demanding a consumer boycott of cultured shrimp.

Globalization has, therefore, not only threatened the basic survival of coastal and all artisanal communities, but also the very food security of the poor at large.

Reacting rather late to the existing state of confusion and discord and breakdown of management regimes, international bodies like the UN and the FAO also initiated debate on aspects of the crisis. The FAO came up with a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The UN tried to arrive at an understanding of management of straddling stocks. Significantly, the early 1990s have also been a period in which fishermen themselves have discovered the fallacy of existing management regulations in the developed world, while experiments in coastal resource management began among local communities in the South. The Philippine government has even made this an official programme of their Fisheries Sector Programme.

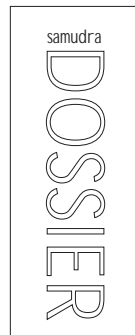
Structural adjustments have meant that costs of imported inputs have increased phenomenally for fishermen in the South, while subsidies have been greatly reduced in the North. In the latter, this has had serious implications, as the coastal communities in countries like Canada depend on social programmes for many months of survival. The move from social welfare to corporate welfare is basically against the survival of rural communities. On the contrary, structural adjustment has also resulted in rising fish prices and increased fish for export, leaving women who depend on fish for vending and processing, with no means of survival. With the processing industry moving to the South to make use of cheap female labour, unprotected by labour legislation, women workers in the processing plants in the North have been made redundant.

Many coastal communities worldwide are being lured into accepting 'tourism' as a means of making a livelihood by providing 'ethnic living experiences' for tourists rather than continuing fishing as a way of life, livelihood and culture. The idea seems to be to preserve the artisanal way of life as a museum piece. Ecotourism is being proposed as a response to the crisis. To the extent that ecotourism is again managed by the corporate sector, it is sapped of its basic essence.

### **The Gender Debate**

This period also witnessed, and has been influenced by, the Women's Conference in Beijing. While, on the one hand, some women have been actively engaged in seeing that governments commit themselves to a concrete 'platform for action', making more concrete the 'forward-looking strategies', local women all over the world have become more outspoken and have mobilized against the increasing discrimination they face. Women have become more aware of the endemic nature of the discriminatory practices and policies on women.

In fact, there seems to be a resurgence of patriarchy and its impact on women in the growing forces of globalization, religious conservatism and militarism—a resurgence of rightwing politics and economics, in the light of the 'collapse' of the Eastern Bloc. "There



has been a shrinking of civil and secular space and the promise of an illusory 'democratization' and 'liberalization' that the free market is said to encourage. In fact, rightwing politics and economics often work against women's democratic and secular rights and their access to resources and mobility. In countries like India and probably all over south Asia, this has led also to a rise in atrocities against women—violence of all kinds, sexual violence, sex trafficking, direct communalism and ethnic violence, together with displacement and dispossession,' according to Shripa Bose.

The focus of the women's movement of the South in the early 1990s for an alternative development paradigm stressed the need for women's empowerment as a prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods. Women like Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva concluded that to recover the systems of subsistence agriculture globally is the solution. The Western development model commodifies nature as well as women and non-Western people's labour. This had resulted in capital accumulation in the affluent 'developed' countries and poverty in the 'developing' countries. Mies sees the solution in Northern women cutting down on unnecessary consumption. Shiva highlights the prominent role of women in conserving the environment. She claims that this 'feminine principle', together with the traditional knowledge systems of people, must be reclaimed in the search for sustainable models of development and environmental protection.

But this position has been criticized on the grounds that the interest of women and that of the environment, to a certain extent, are regarded as identical. The sexual division of labour usually forms part of the argument, as women are more dependent on nature for survival, and environmental degradation increases their workload. Further, Vandana Shiva has been challenged in her position depicting women as environmental managers because of their intimate knowledge of natural processes. To equate women with nature thereby reinforces women's continued subordination to men. The conservation of nature is as much a responsibility of men as it is of women. In fact, the focus on women and nature obscures the connection between technology and the environment and how these connections affect both men and women over time. Further, the Dalit movement in India and social scientists like Gabriele Dietrich challenge the notion of 'traditional culture and technology', as their sustainability has been ensured through the exploitation of the Dalits, Dalit women in particular.

Bina Agarwal elaborates a position that the women/nature link has been culturally and socially constructed because of the gender and class organization of production and reproduction and distribution. She argues that "women are both victims of the environmental crisis in gender-specific ways as well as important actors in resolving it." She asserts the need to contextualize the fact that poor rural women

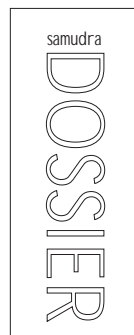
have emerged as the main actors in the environment movements because they have had to maintain a reciprocal link with nature due to their marginality. She suggests that feminists should challenge and transform the representations of the relationship between nature and people, as well as the actual methods of appropriating natural resources for the benefit of the few.

### **The Paradoxes**

As a result of the Global Forum in Rio and UNCED1992, the language of 'sustainable development', 'interdependency between North and South, between development and environmental activists and feminists' has been widely adopted by mainstream political, economic and development organizations. With the environment beginning to be a factor to reckon with, Rosa Braidothi and others speak of the "newly arising eco-cratic rationality". The proponents of this rationality propose to implement sustainable development within the existing political and economic power structures. Moreover, the old experts in new wineskins claim the right to prescribe measures to redress the global process of environmental destruction from epistemologically superior positions.

Underlying this paradox is the question of power and how the processes of reorganization will work towards new relations of equity. This leads us to reflect on the actors in the process. While governments are the main legitimizing agents of the global processes, it is clear that finance capital calls the shots. Over the years, the NGOs have also begun to occupy substantial space in influencing decision making at all levels. The importance of the organized working class begins to be played down because the workers in the formal sector seem to be losing their bargaining power, for lack of perspective and a clear position on the role of technology. Interestingly enough, with the concept of 'civil society' gaining new meaning and being introduced into the debate on democratic participation, the corporate sector, NGOs, people's organizations, trade unions and other social movements are all considered equal players opposite the government and public sector. Attempts to underplay the role of class differentiation has led to co-optation and further ambiguity of the social movements for change.


It is the movements in the informal sector today that are raising demands for radical change, making the right to life and livelihood a basic demand. Squeezed to the limits as they are, they begin to assert themselves. In these movements for change, women are in the forefront. While these movements have a politics of their own, they totally mistrust the existing political parties. They seem to be clear about what they do not want, whereas what they do want is not spelt out in very clear terms. They are asserting their rights over the resources and their rights to self-determination. Many of them have evolved ingenious ways of struggle against the intrusion of modern development projects. Quite a few of them have proposed alternative

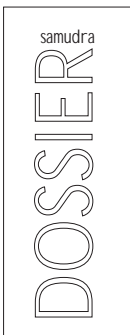




solutions based on their own traditional knowledge systems. While their demands are for greater decentralization and local autonomy, many of these movements think globally and have begun to make alliances worldwide.

Most significant among these are the movements of the indigenous peoples and peoples displaced by huge development projects. More recently, the fishworker's movement has begun to make alliances. In many countries, there are alliances, as in India, where various movements have got together to create the National Alliance of People's Movements.

It is too soon to say what the impact of these alliances will be. They are indeed very fragile, as each movement has its own history and specific demands. Each movement is also under great pressure of its own struggles, and limited in resources. With the foresight, secrecy and speed at which the forces of domination intervene, many of these movements are caught on the defensive. Existing resources do not permit them to be effective locally and globally at the same time, and this is the need of the hour. Being continuously under such pressure, they have little energy left for creative thinking, constructive work and inter-sectoral alliances. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that as modern technology disorganizes the working class and makes it redundant, the international working class has to find ways of uniting to save humanity and the planet. 



## Realization of the Programme

It is in the light of the above context that the Women in Fisheries programme has taken shape in each country. As stated earlier, the focus of the programme has been different in each country, depending on how the co-ordinating team understands the role patriarchy plays in the existing social reality. In order to be true to the perspective of each co-ordinating team, their reports have been incorporated. These reports must be read in the light of the background information of the Draft Report of the Exploratory Phase of the programme.

### PHILIPPINES

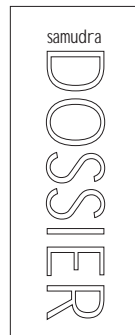
*(The programme was developed within the fishworker organization called Bigkis-Lakas, which is one of the national fishworkers' organizations in the Philippines. The team from the Family Centre at the Asian Social Institute was responsible for the development of the programme. This section has been reported by Nenita Cura, Betty Soleza and Nilo Brucal.)*

#### The National Scenario

Confronted by the onslaught of globalization, the fisherfolk's organization in the Philippines, Bigkis-Lakas, increased its advocacy at the local level. But this was not at the cost of their lobbying for the passage of the Fisheries Code at the national level. As a result of this effort, Ka Onie has been appointed as the fisherfolk sector representative to the Social Reform Council, a government agency of cabinet rank that directly feeds the President on issues pertaining to the problems and needs of the basic sectors.

The fisherfolk maintain the stand that unless profound changes occur in the political and economic systems as reflected in policies, no real reforms will come about for the fishing industry.

To strengthen their position, the fisherfolk initiated and/or joined coalitions and alliances at the provincial and regional levels. The NGO-People's Organizations coalition in the Quezon province came about to monitor development programmes taking place in the province. The fisherfolk of Bicol, on the other hand, joined the regional organization of the Philippine Council for sustainable development for the same purpose. While there seems to be no end to the illegal fishing and poaching activities in the municipal waters, the fisherfolk relentlessly carried on the law enforcement campaign through their Bantay-Dagat program. This is along with mangrove reforestation, artificial reef installation and lobbying for the designation of certain areas as fish sanctuaries or marine reserve, and the regulation of fishing activities and gears used.



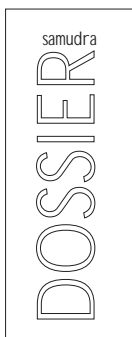
## The Condition of Women

While the fishermen are swept aside by prevailing issues, the women are made to directly confront the consequences of economic dislocations. While earlier they were trying to make do with their husbands' meagre incomes, now they are forced to set aside their domestic chores to seek employment or to engage in income-earning activities.

As economic hardships continue to prevail in the household, the women's domestic roles broadened from engaging in part-time livelihood endeavours to becoming full-time income earners. Most of the time, however, women go out vending fish and food or seeking employment in small restaurants and rich households. Others opt to go to urban centres such as Manila for better jobs. Still others venture into overseas work, hoping to find greener pastures in a foreign land.

This preoccupation with economic activities usually leaves the household in the care of the older siblings. The eldest assumes domestic responsibilities, including child rearing. It is not uncommon that basic concerns such as child health are hardly attended to until the child's condition grows worse, leading, more often than not, to death. Health issues take secondary priority in the burgeoning list of women's concerns.

While the broadening of their economic roles is still perceived by women as an extension of their domestic obligations, it has, nevertheless, strengthened their disposition and started to build their confidence. While, from the point of view of division of labour, the women appear to be burdened most, their expanded roles put them at an assertive level of relationship with their husbands and with the rest of the community. However, at this level, women's thoughts are projected more in the context of economic survival, not of equity or self-actualization. Organizing themselves into a group is born of a need to protect their sources of income, rather than cater to their specific needs as women.



### *The Lavaseras of San Pedro, Pagadian City*

The *lavaseras* are the native vendors in the province of Zamboanga. In the past, they took the fish they sold in the market from big-time fishing operators. Often, they fell into the hands of policemen, because the fish they sold was allegedly caught by blast (dynamite) fishing. They confronted the operators about this and even went to the extent of demanding that they refrain from this method. This enraged the operators who, later on, refused to give the women a share of their catch.

The women organized themselves into a group and demanded a dialogue with the operators. They demanded the operators allow them to avail of the latter's catch. This, of course, was refused. This led to a series of consultations with Bigkis-Lakas in areas where the

women found that commercial fishing operations edge out the small fishermen. This process resulted in a change in the orientation of the *lavaseras* from demanding fish from the operators to banning commercial operations.

#### *The Vendors in Pipisik, Gumaca, Quezon*

These are wives of the small-scale fishermen who sell their husbands' catch in the public market, which was razed by fire in 1995. Though a new one was built, the stalls were leased out at prohibitive rates. The women vendors occupied the sidewalks and did their selling there. They were, however, constantly harassed and pursued by the policemen. As a result, they went to the Municipal Mayor and demanded that new stalls be built and leased to them at a more affordable rate. This has been granted, benefiting not only fish vendors but other peddlers as well.

#### **The Role of Women in Fishworkers' Organizations**

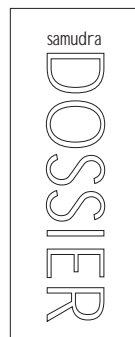
While the fishing sector is largely male-dominated in the Philippines, the participation of women in fishworkers' organizations is greatly increasing. Their roles in fisheries, however, have been evolving out of the need to protect common economic interests with the fishermen, rather than as a self-actualizing process. This is perhaps the reason why they can occupy a larger space even in fishworker organizations. They are elected to various positions, ranging from members of different committees and the Board of Directors to being President of the fishworkers federation.

It is also because their concerns are premised on the general condition of fisheries that the women could project their thoughts without eliciting vehement reactions from their male counterparts. Their demands reflect the very agenda that the fishermen pursue.

In the context of the roles that women play at present, their contribution is no longer viewed as supportive or supplementary. Addressing issues in the fishery sector affects both the husband and the wife and, therefore, requires their partnership. With the continuing campaign on gender awareness and, given the quality of interaction among the women during the conferences and seminars and the gradual, change in the attitude of the men, the women are steadily beginning to see their involvement in fisheries beyond survival issues. They have begun to appreciate their role as partners of men in the home front as well as in the organization.

#### **Creating Gender Awareness**

The women in the Fisheries Programme in the Philippines started in the CALARIZ areas of Cavite, Laguna and Rizal, then moved on to Quezon (Pitogo and Agdangan in Luzon). The programme is presently spreading in the Visayas and Mindanao. The gender awareness campaign proceeded at three levels, namely, at the level of the women, the level of Bigkis-Lakas and at the community level,



nationally. Conferences, dialogues, meetings and seminars were held with women's groups in the above target areas. The issues! discussed included the fisheries situation and problems and trends *vis-á-vis* their specific concerns as persons, mothers, wives and members of society. What was so significant and heartening about these sessions was the realization of their rights to live in dignity as persons—the enjoyment of some leisure time, the recognition of their contribution to the fishing industry, their distinct role as homemakers in partnership with their male counterparts, as well as their social and political involvement in the community.

At the Bigkis-Lakas level, the gender perspective has been dovetailed into the organizing and networking effort in the Visayas and Mindanao, specifically Iloilo, Cebu and Biliran in the Visayas and Surigao del Norte (the whole of Siargao island), Butuan, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte and Pagadian, and Zamboanga del Sur in Mindanao. In all these places, it was not difficult for Bigkis-Lakas leaders to accept some facts regarding the plight of the women in fisheries, i.e. the burden of household chores after a day's work selling fish or working in the field, the women's supreme sacrifice in making both ends meet, and doing all sorts of odd jobs so that the family can survive the impact of economic dislocation.

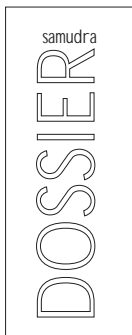
Efforts have been in the direction of 'mutual growth' for both men and women in the resolution of the fishery issues. These have focused on personal growth and development, enhanced family life, leadership in the organization and increased community involvement.

Gender awareness received a big boost as a result of the anti-illegal recruitment campaign spearheaded by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, ably supported by six national organizations, including the Family Centre. The tragic deaths and maltreatment of migrant workers abroad have highlighted the problem of poverty in the country, as well as the labour export orientation of the government. At this stage, while it is too much to expect the government to stop exporting labour, especially women, some steps are being taken, such as selection of countries that are sensitive to human rights, and the establishment of social centres in these countries to attend to the needs of migrant workers.

### **Activities under the Programme**

The following are the objectives of the programme:

1. To conduct a study on the condition of the women in the fishery sector, specifically in the areas of production, marketing, processing and distribution.



2. To launch consultations on selected fishing communities in order to deepen the understanding and analysis of the women's situation in relation to the political, economic and social change recurring at the local and national levels.
3. To carry out training and seminars aimed at creating awareness and consciousness of women on their rights to equal access to resources and decisions over its use and management.
4. To identify and establish areas where women's role is most visible and enhance/build on this to facilitate their active intervention in the fisheries movements
5. To incorporate gender issues in the discussions of Bigkis-Lakas, both at the local and national levels
6. To form a women's core group that will take the lead in pursuing and effecting gender perspectives in the struggles within the fishery sector

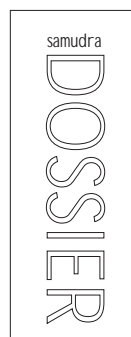
Initial studies have been conducted in the area of Cavite, Laguna and Rizal (CALARIZ) and Alabat Island, province of Quezon in southern region. The draft studies were conducted by Annie Villaruz, the former WIF Co-ordinator in the Philippines.

A follow-up study, through a participatory research approach, was conducted by a group of women leaders in the area of Pitogo, Agdangan and Unisan in the Bonduc Peninsula Region in the province of Quezon. Data gathering has been accomplished by involving 125 women respondents from these areas. Also part of this process were analysis sessions and feedback. Specific action programmes are expected to take shape from this activity.

Training modules have been developed on the following themes:

- a. womanhood
- b. women and environment
- c. women and culture
- d. women and development
- e. leadership

These topics have been aimed at raising the political consciousness of women. The regular training programmes of Bigkis-Lakas have also incorporated these topics.



## THAILAND

*(In the absence of a fishworker movement, various NGOs working with fishworkers formed a coalition to develop the programme in Thailand. Pisit Charmsno, an ICSF member, took the responsibility to find a country co-ordinator and Jawanit Kittitornkool from the Prince Songkla University, Hatji, undertook the task of reporting.)*

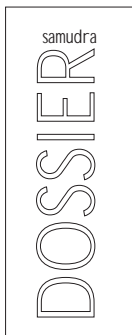
### The National Scenario

The fisheries are in crisis due to the near-depletion of fish stocks. Depletion resulted from polluted sewage discharged from rural and urban sectors, depletion of coastal resources and exploitative fishing gears. The small-scale fisherfolk desperately struggle to get by through conserving their near-coastal areas for their livelihoods.

According to the 1990 fisheries census, there were 63,091 fishing households in the southern region, which accounted for about 68 percent of all Thai fishing households. Within five years, the fishing households increased by 7,335 units, mainly aquafarming and fishworker households. Southern fisheries tend to shift their direction from natural fishing to aquaculturing for exports.

In 1991, the number of southern registered fishing boats was 12,154 units, which accounted for 54 per cent of the national total. The highest numbers of fishing boats were in Nakorn Si Thammarat (2,543), Songkhla (1,779) and Surat Thani (1,396). The results of the 1990 marine fisheries census are as follows: More than 60,000 fishing households with 498,929 members accounted for about one per cent of the national population. Seventy-three per cent of the fisherfolk were small-scale ones with outboard motor (OBM) boats. Eighty-five per cent, or about 30,000 households of small-scale fisherfolk, live in the south. In 1990, the number of fisherfolk without fishing boats decreased by 50 per cent from 3,208 in 1985 to 1,595, while the number of those with OBMs increased seven per cent, from 26,891 to 28,81. The number of trawlers in the south (3,857) accounted for 54 per cent of all Thai vessels, while ones with push-nets accounted for 53 per cent (790 vessels).

The decrease of the catches in Thai waters directly affects many thousands of small-scale fisherfolk and their families. The modernized fisheries not only reduce the fish numbers but also invade the fishing areas of the small-scale fisherfolk who use simple fishing gear for their subsistence and income. Moreover, the southern small-scale fisherfolk have also been affected by the decrease of mangrove forests for various activities, especially for shrimp farming, over the last ten years. This has been a major cause of the forest depletion in this region. At present, the one million *rai* of the remaining mangrove forest area accounts for about 12 per cent of the southern forest land. Most of the southern mangrove forests (91 per cent) is in the western coastal provinces of Pangna, Krabi and Satun.



The other eight per cent is located in the eastern coastal provinces of Nakorn Si Thammarat, Surat Thani and Pattani.

During the last 13 years, the mangrove forests have been rapidly depleted. Before 1979, the depletion was caused by charcoal concessions and during 1979 to 1987, by several development projects, including infrastructural construction, aquaculture, expansion of settlements and mining. But, since 1987, the major cause has been shrimp farming, which also brings about conflicts in community resource uses, particularly among rice farmers and fisherfolk who originally lived in the southern communities.

During 1979 to 1993, about 300,000 *rai* of mangrove forests were depleted at the rate of 23,000 *rai* per year. The mangrove forests in Pangna were depleted the most at the rate of 6,614 *rai* per year, compared to those in Satun (3,517 *rai* per year) and Chumporn (2,608 *rai* per year).

After 1990, the dense areas of shrimp farms in the eastern coast were polluted, particularly in Nakorn Si Thammarat and Surat Thani. Therefore, the shrimp farming businesses have been transferred to the western coast, including Kan Tang, Pa Lien, and Yan Takao Districts of Trang Province, and then to Satun, Pangna, Krabi and Phuket.

These changes in the southern Thailand fisheries are also reflected in the changing phenomena in some small-scale fishing villages. For about the last five years, many small-scale fishing communities in the southern region of Thailand have been organized to solve the problems of coastal resource degradation by setting up various projects, for example, seagrass-bed conservation, mangrove conservation, savings groups and petrol co-operatives. These community organizations learn, through success and failure, to collaborate, to collectively negotiate solutions and to build up networks for co-ordination and experience-sharing.

Since 1994, fishing community organizations in 10 southern provinces have been organized into the Federation of Southern Small-scale Fisherfolk. It consists of 30 committee members, who are representatives and leaders of the provincial organizations. The committee has a meeting every three months to discuss affairs and to plan activities. The Federation has gradually developed its work strategies with different degrees of organizational strength in the provincial organizations.

### **The Role of Women in Fishing Communities**

Women are also a crucial part in the effort, even though the roles of women in small-scale fishing community organizations are not yet recognized and accepted. Women in the southern small-scale fishing villages take care of children, husbands and old people in their



families. They are also in charge of cooking, cleaning houses and laundering for their family members. Meanwhile, women go fishing with men or work to earn for their families.

The significant roles of women in the small-scale fishing families as mother, wife, housekeeper and income earner are not different from their sisters in other communities. At the same time, whenever there are social activities in the villages (religious functions, funerals, wedding ceremonies, mangrove reforestation projects, artificial reef production and placement projects, etc.), women are the ones who inform and persuade their family members, relatives and neighbours to participate. They also take an important part in these activities. Particularly, in fishing villages where community organizations have consolidated to solve the problem of coastal resource deterioration, women play a significant role in initiating, mobilizing and implementing a variety of activities together with men. Yet, such roles are not recognized in Thai society at all.

The underprivileged fisherfolk in a number of southern Thai small-scale fishing communities have tried to organize to tackle their own problems, with support from local NGOs. However, the degrees of organizing strength vary due to different internal factors, including the capabilities of leaders and the extent to which the village is exposed to capitalism. Villages with convenient transportation systems, land speculation and shrimp farming business are complex, with internal conflicts and are difficult to organize.

Additionally, local NGOs are also a significant factor contributing to the strength of community organizations. Although the villagers initiated their own conservation activities due to particular pressures of their livelihoods, the budding community organizations could not gradually grow up unless the local NGOs played an active role in supporting them for a certain period of time. Otherwise, the village groups would temporarily exist only to tackle urgent problems from time to time. Nevertheless, the significant learning experiences the community organizations gained from their collective activities would enable them to gradually develop themselves to become people's organizations in the long run.

In summary, women in southern small-scale fishing villages have been actively playing many roles for a long time. When they are young, the girls help their mothers do household chores and look after the younger brothers and sisters. As single women, they help take care of household livelihoods and share their mothers' burdens. Women also help weave and mend nets and go fishing with men. Then, when married, they have the added burdens of being wives and mothers. Within the acute situations of marine and coastal resource deterioration and competition for the limited resources among small-scale fisherfolk themselves and also between

small-scale and medium-scale fisherfolk, the poor small-scale fisherfolk with debts and simple fishing gear are pushed into a corner. Women in these deprived families have to take part in solving these problems shoulder to shoulder with men.

Women work very hard in the dry season, particularly when crabs are abundant. Some days, they have to work from morning to mid-night. In the monsoon season, even though they can not go fishing, women still work as hard in their households as in the dry season.

However, it is necessary to quantify the working hours and financial contributions of women and men in fishing families with different kinds of fishing gears over a long period of time to gain a systematic understanding of the sexual division of labour between women and men.

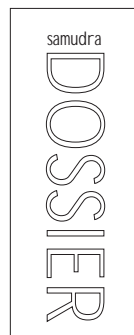
The Andaman coast has more mangrove forests and more islands with varied resources than the western coast. This difference allows fisherfolk to use more kinds of fishing gear than those in the Gulf of Thailand in both the dry and monsoon seasons. Both men and women can earn their living or reduce their expenses by using simple fishing gear in mangrove forests or canals. Meanwhile, the fisherfolk in the Gulf of Thailand areas are severely constrained by geographical limitations and degradation of coastal resources. A large number of them have to move out to seek jobs in the monsoon season and to work as wage labourers in shrimp farms. That is why the level of debt of fisherfolk in the Gulf of Thailand area is higher than those in the Andaman coastal areas.

In addition, young women in some fishing villages work as wage-earners in canneries or cold storage factories, attracted by the regular incomes in these places. Moreover, they can not rely financially on fishing any longer. There are certain aspects of social changes in fishing communities affected by changing lifestyles which necessitate further study.

There is only one research study about Muslim women in Pattani Province who work in factories. It found that households in the small-scale fisheries suffer economic problems due to the drastic decrease in fishing caused by trawlers. Therefore, the women have to commute to work in urban factories. They also adopt urban culture in their daily activities which brings about some changes in lifestyles. Yet, the changes have not seriously affected the social norms of the Muslim village.

### **Initiatives Undertaken**

Three women's group meetings were held. Women agreed that the families and the community could get by with only the coastal resources—the more catch they could get, the more earnings they



could gain for their families. The women were concerned with the problems of coastal resource deterioration, which directly affected their families' livelihoods. Therefore, they concluded that men and women in all families had to be organized to solve these problems. People either had to take action themselves, such as placing artificial reefs in the sea, or they had to request government agencies to solve the problems, for instance, by submitting an official appeal to the Chief of District to direct the police to arrest the trawlers and push-nets that were encroaching illegally.

Nevertheless, the women regard the duty of taking care of the family members' daily lives as their primary responsibility to be fulfilled before participating in community activities. They also relate this significant role to the sustainability of the community. However, when crises call for prompt action, they temporarily leave their families behind to take part in community activities. Additionally, women regard working shoulder to shoulder with men in the family as a pleasure and pride.

From the experiences in co-ordinating local NGOs, we could see that the southern small-scale fishing community organizations have implemented a variety of projects to tackle the problems of coastal resource deterioration. These are:

*The protection of rights in using coastal resources*

There are different cases here. The Chao Mai villagers protested against the national park planned over their land in 1994. The Tha Chana fisherfolk were organized to submit an official appeal to the high-ranking officers to prohibit illegal trawling and push-nets within 3 km offshore in 1994. The fisherfolk also produced and placed artificial reefs to protect against the encroachment of trawlers and push-nets.

*The rehabilitation and conservation of degraded coastal resources*

The Chao Mai villagers implemented the seagrass-bed and *dugong* conservation project in 1992-95. The artificial reef project of Tha Chana fisherfolk was implemented to protect their rights in coastal resource use and to regenerate the resources at the same time. The mangrove reforestation project of Ban Pra Muang and Ban Mod Tanoy villagers in 1993 and the one in Ban Klong Rang in 1994 are also examples.

*The development of the quality of life*

Savings groups, petrol co-operatives, income-generating groups and religious groups for community voluntary development are included in this category due to their objectives of developing the villagers' quality of life for self-reliance and solidarity. There are such projects in almost all villages, but with different degrees of strength and achievement.

In fact, these three categories of projects are inter-related in a process of strengthening community organizing in the long run. The community organizations have gradually grown due to their learning experiences and the support of local NGOs. They are connected to networks of small-scale fishing organizations at district and provincial levels and were organized under the Federation of Southern Small-scale Fisherfolk in 1994. The executive committee of the Federation comprises 30 members, who are representatives from fisheries community organizations in 10 provinces. During these two years, the Federation has been developing its work strategies by co-ordinating with different organizations in government and the private sector. Since 1996, the Federation has been granted 13 million baht by DANCED, the Danish Government agency, for developing and strengthening the southern small-scale fisherfolk organizations for two-and-a-half years.

Throughout the consolidating process of the community organizations, women have been playing several roles:

#### *As leaders*

Only one woman leader is evident in the community organization of Ban Chao Mai in Kan Tang District, Trang Province. She played a crucial role in initiating and implementing conservation and development projects in the village. She was the only woman who was involved in all phases of the village protest, when the government attempted to designate the villagers' occupied land as a national park land in 1993.

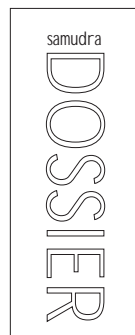
However, despite her outstanding potential and comprehensive understanding of conservation issues, the development of the community organization and her role are limited due to the villagers' conflict of interests caused by business investments from outsiders.

#### *As core group*

Women are essential components in the core group of community organization in almost all villages. They actively take part in planning, preparing and implementing any activity of the community organization. Women of some villages in Tha Chana District were so upset with the difficulties caused by illegal encroachment of trawlers and push-nets that they led the villagers in making a request to the government officers. In addition, some core group members, men and women alike, agreed that having women to negotiate with their counterparts could decrease the amount of violence and confrontation.

#### *As participants*

There were as many women as men to mix cement and sand together for producing artificial reefs and to lower them into the sea. Women also worked alongside men in the mangrove reforestation projects for community forests. Additionally, those who prepared food and



served water were always women. In this respect, women energetically played different roles, both upfront and behind the scene.

#### *As supporters*

Although women are sometimes too burdened by their daily household chores to participate in community activities, they are influential in persuading (or forcing) men to take part in the projects. Apart from this, women also provide support in cash or in kind. In some families, men were quite indifferent to the projects. But they could not withstand the women's influence and so they had to participate in the activities.

Women play a crucial role in community conservation projects because they are concerned with the hardship their families and communities have to experience due to pressures and conflicts in natural resource use and in the deterioration of coastal resources. Women are also worried about their children's future and want to conserve community resources for future generations. This kind of caring motivates Thai women in several underprivileged social groups to come to the forefront of the Thai environmental movement.

However, within Thai social constraints of sexual inequities, the prominent roles played by women in fishing communities are certainly attributed to specific factors to be identified.

#### **Factors for Women's Prominent Roles**

According to the interviews of women leaders in community organizations, the factors that contribute to women's prominent roles in the small-scale fishing communities are:

##### *The accumulation of participatory experiences in social activities*

The women leaders in the fishing community organizations have experience in participating in community organizations initiated by governmental agencies, i.e. housewives' groups organized by the Department of Agricultural Extension in 1987, voluntary women's groups for rural development organized by the Department of Community Development in 1991, and voluntary groups for village public health organized by the Ministry of Public Health in 1977.

Some villagers complain that these women's groups are mandatorily set up without taking village needs and conditions into account. The women members are always ordered to serve the officers in governmental functions. However, these activities provide chances for women to leave their limited household areas to broaden their horizons, learn about group expression and get exposed to various experiences which are significant in developing their self-confidence and expressive capabilities.

In addition, these women leaders also gain experience from other social activities, i.e. selling, managing their family's small business, etc. Their skills and personality development from interactions with society outside the household are somehow related to their outstanding roles in community organizations. In particular, the woman leader in Ban Chao Mai spent almost two years working with an academic as a research assistant in her village before she became an outstanding leader.

#### *The support of men in the family*

These women leaders are all supported by their husbands or fathers, who are also involved in community activities, to play an active role in community organizations. Some women's husbands help them with the household chores or take care of the children while they are away for community activities. Other couples with grown-up children participate together in activities. Such support makes women self-confident and they do not have the fear of not being accepted by their families and communities.

However, despite their strong intention to contribute to community betterment, a great number of women can not actively participate in the community organizations due to the following constraints:

#### *Overburdening*

As mentioned before, women are always in charge of household chores and earning money for their families, so that they are overwhelmed with different kinds of work all day, especially in the dry season. Therefore, they cannot play an active role in community organizations.

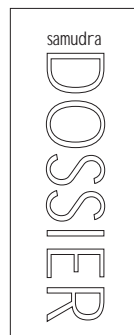
The critical question is how to manage conservation projects without adding greater burden to women who are already overloaded with work. In other words, how can men share women's household workload, so that both men and women can equally and co-operatively participate in conservation activities?

#### *Lack of self-confidence*

In general, women are less confident than men in expressing themselves publicly, due to socialization. Most rural women never speak in public gatherings. Even when they strongly want to express their ideas or ask questions, they are not able to do so.

Nevertheless, once women begin to learn by introducing themselves at a meeting, they gradually practise expressing ideas about their project and other issues. Through this process, they come to gain self-confidence. Some women eventually develop into articulate speakers.

Self-development for women best begins with small group activities before they are exposed to other larger meetings. The role models of



woman leaders at different forums are also very significant. It can be concluded from the project experiences and those of other NGOs, that the group process is an important condition for women's self-development.

#### *Lack of power*

A great number of women have to comply with the decisions of their husbands, in spite of their own will. Some women in the small-scale fishing villages were originally active in initiating or participating in community projects, but when their husbands disagreed, they had to give up these ideas and limit themselves to household work as before.

The issue is how to educate men to understand and accept that women should have an equal opportunity to participate in community activities. In this respect, men in NGOs and community organizations have to include gender issues into their project activities.

#### **Policy Implications**

The issues described above lead to some specific suggestions for action.

#### *Develop women's learning opportunities*

It is necessary that women be organized into groups concentrating on particular issues to develop teamwork and leadership skills. Moser suggested that grass-roots women need a space of their own: "...this space, both physical and conceptual, is the prerequisite for identifying needs and then mobilizing to meet them. Women's groups offer a legitimate forum beyond the private, domestic world; membership of an organization offers an initial substitute for lack of bureaucratic know-how, and inexperience with public discourse..."

Nevertheless, it is crucial that the group being organized not repeat the same mistakes made by governmental agencies. Moreover, the organization should not be limited to women only because community betterment will be achieved by collaboration between women and men.

#### *Promote men's understanding and acceptance of women's roles*

It is important that men share women's burdens and support them in playing an active role in community organizations. In addition, men in community organizations should keep their family members, especially their wives, informed of their project activities as well as encourage women's participation.

#### *Strengthen community organizations and encourage women's participation in all phases*

Men and women need to learn to develop community organizations together throughout the different phases. We have found potential



women's groups only in communities where community organizations are relatively strong.

*Formulate long-term policies and plans to promote women's roles*

It is necessary that networks of small-scale fishing community organizations and the Federation of Southern Small-Scale Fisherfolk formulate long-term policies and plans to systematically promote women's roles in community organizations. It is hoped that a larger number of women will actively participate in small-scale organizations and networks in the future.

*Begin women's development projects in local NGOs*

From the final project meeting with the few NGO staff members who had a long-standing co-ordination with the project, it became clear that local NGOs should assign additional female staff to work specifically in promoting women's roles in fishing communities and in developing existing networks of women's groups. The female staff have to closely collaborate with their colleagues, who are already overburdened with other project activities, to implement the women's development policy originally stated in their plan.

However, given that it is likely that NGOs will not, in the near future, employ staff specifically for women's development projects, they should begin with identifying potential staff to play an active role in this area. Next, the staff should have the opportunity to develop their skills and awareness of gender issues for the future. In addition, local NGOs should co-ordinate closely with NGOs in Bangkok working in women's development to initiate some activities for women's groups and women's networks.

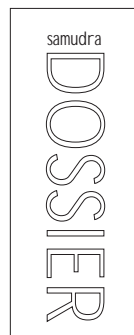
Indeed, the process of strengthening community organizations and women's groups and of building networks consumes great time and effort. Yet, amidst the surging waves over the southern small-scale fishing villages, women and men of fishing communities have together already steered their boats towards this destination, regardless of the distance and the obstacles.

## **INDIA**

*(The programme was developed within the ambit of the National Fishworkers' Forum, NFF, which is the only independent national trade union for fishworkers in India, not affiliated to any political party. Aleyamma Vijayan and Nalini Nayak, who have a long association with NFF, and Mercy Alexander, who was deputed from the NFF, took responsibility for the programme. This is their report.)*

### **The Role and Plight of Women in Fisheries**

All over India, hundreds of women continue to be involved in fish-related activity, mainly to sustain their families. As the fisheries resource is increasingly threatened, the task of women gets more and more difficult. This not only relates to problems of access to fish, but



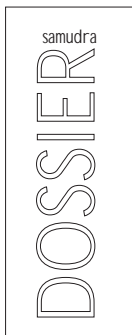


also in terms of access to credit, marketing infrastructure and basic livelihood infrastructure at the village level. In many parts of the country, women are in the forefront of the fishworkers' struggles, demanding their right to survival in fisheries.

### **Getting Public Attention on Fisheries Issues**

As a result of the fishworkers' struggles, both locally and nationally, on the deep-sea fishing policy of the Government of India and the impact of intensive shrimp culture, the problems of the coastal communities have begun to receive media and government attention. In addition to a Parliamentary Committee being commissioned to conduct hearings on the deep-sea issue, a high-level Environmental Enquiry Committee was commissioned to look into the issue of shrimp culture. Both committees ruled in favour of the demand of the coastal people, which, in many ways, counters the liberalization approach of the government's New Economic Policy. There still lie discrepancies between the rulings and the implementation, which, of course, put the coastal communities constantly on the defensive, leaving very little energy for constructive alternatives.

The persistent struggles also drew the attention of the press and, as a result, there has been extensive media coverage of the fishworkers issues. While most States now have a Fishing Regulation Act, only recently have some States formulated a Fisheries Policy. But the jurisdiction of the States is only within 22 km of the marine area. In 1991, the central government issued a coastal zone regulation notification, but it is only now that the States are beginning to create their zoning regulations, and, hopefully, their management plans. There is much debate on the issue, as the tourism and industrial lobby want to make sure their access rights to the coast are not hindered. There is still no deep-sea fishing regulation. Many of these discrepancies have been highlighted by the fishworkers and the press and, hopefully, some reforms will be undertaken.



### **Future Trends**

The question of 'right over the fish resources' and the right of 'first sale of fish for the fishermen' are becoming important issues now. The traditional use-rights of fishing communities have been in question, with the developments of the last decade. Absentee owners of fishing crafts, especially in the mechanized sector, are on the increase. As a result, the traditional fishermen are being pushed out or becoming wage labourers. So, reforms which give ownership rights only to actual fishermen have been suggested in the Fisheries Policy of Kerala State, in south India. If these are implemented, they will go a long way in empowering the traditional fishermen and women.

## **The Role Women Play in Fishworkers' Organizations**

The fishworkers' organizations differ from State to State. In some, they are well structured and active; in others, they are not. The real participation of the fishworkers, therefore, differs.

Although women are involved in fish-related activities in all States, they often do not find a space in fishworker organizations. The organizations are oriented mainly to problems that fishermen face at sea as so-called fish producers. As the man is considered the head of the family, in occupations where the whole family is involved in productive work related to the dominant occupation, for all administrative purposes, only the man is considered a worker and all Plan and Budget allocations are also made only with the men in mind.

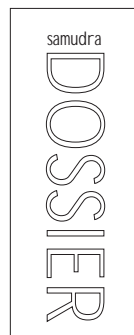
Wherever fishworker organizations have been engaged in struggles, the women have generally been in the forefront. Yet, even when women form the backbone of the struggles, they do not find space as official members, office-bearers or decision makers.

In Kerala, only because of very conscious intervention have women been integrated into organizations in some districts. In this case, they are on par with men. In other districts, they are organized in separate forums and are 'nominated by the men' on to the district communities. In these cases, they are 'under' the men. In some areas, women have organized autonomously, sometimes with the patronage of a political party. But it is generally when women are autonomously organized that they militantly take up issues that affect them directly as workers and also as marginalized people in general. It is they who take up issues that relate to daily life, like housing, water, sanitation, health and educational facilities.

In Kerala, despite the active involvement of women and the long history of awareness-raising on gender issues, it is still very difficult to find women who accept decision-making roles, because men do not easily accept women in these roles. While active fisherwomen find it difficult to be available for organizational work, even women activists are constantly opposed and rudely challenged by male leaders.

### **Difficulties Women Face in Finding Space in Fishworker Organizations**

There are various reasons why women do not find space in fishworker organizations in India. These organizations are very short-sighted, on the whole. As workers in organized industry have fought mainly for more wages and benefits, so also fishworkers have generally fought for greater access to the resource and, to some extent, have also been concerned with the management of the resource. They have not really related this to their life on shore, their



life with their families or their quality of life. The logic has been the more the fish, the more the money and, hopefully, a better life.

In reality, while the money from fishing has increased, this need not have resulted in emancipated living conditions. Fishing villages are still very marginalized in terms of development infrastructure. This short-sightedness also results from the fact that women's work is not considered important—women's labour is not seen to contribute to the fishing trade or to the development of the family and the community, so much so that even articulate women do not know how to introduce their issues into the organization.

By definition, if a wife of a fisherman is not involved in fish-related activity, she is not accepted as a fishworker. Hence, even if she spends long hours in assisting her husband prepare for a fishing trip, and even if she actively participates in struggles, officially, she is not accepted as a member of the fishworkers' organization.

Men often think their wives have nothing to say or should have nothing to say. In fact, they shun outspoken women. Men embarrass them with their questions and throw them various challenges that finally force the women to give up.

The social upbringing and cultural conditioning is such that men and women are expected to play specified gender roles. Only very recently has this begun to be questioned, and women are slowly entering the public realm, thereby challenging old patriarchal standards. While these processes encourage women to play different social roles, they make men feel more insecure and, as a result, men become more aggressive.

For fisherwomen who are mostly illiterate and burdened with the triple duties of child care, household work and fish-related activity, it is very difficult to find time, space and a congenial atmosphere to stay on in the movement and to take up leadership positions. So long as men are ill at ease with household chores, this restricts women's mobility.

The growing sexual harassment in society also exert restrictive pressures on women. It is unsafe for women to travel alone and to be out after sunset. Therefore, even if women are interested in taking an active part in their organizations, their mobility is again affected.

### **Demands and Actions of Women since 1993**

Demands have been made at different levels—the village, the district, the State or at the national level. There have been different kinds of action through which these demands have been made to government, starting with memorandums, negotiations with the authorities, day-long mass protests, longer agitations such as hunger fasts, long marches and legal battles. Many of these actions have been

initiated by fishworker organizations that are affiliated to the NFF, while some have been spontaneous and others independent, the main independent one being the agitation by women on the east coast against the growing shrimp aquaculture industry.

At the local level, some of the demands have been for allocation of house sites, ration cards for settlers, health, water and sanitation infrastructure, purchase by men of hand-made nets to safeguard the employment of women, credit for fish-related activity in which women are involved, protection of fish vending space, and banning of shrimp farming on the east coast.

At the district level, some of the demands have been for public transport facilities for fish vendors, improving facilities at markets, control of market taxes, access to fish landing centres, stopping of construction of a fish drying plant that will displace women workers, campaigning against alcoholism and violence on women in and outside the family.

At the State level, the union has demanded that women be included in the savings-cum-famine relief scheme of the Government. At the national level, there has been a demand to protect the migrant women processing workers, to control the varieties of fish that can be exported so that there is fish for local trade and consumption, in addition to a demand for at least 30 per cent representation in fishworker organizations.

### **The WIF Programme**

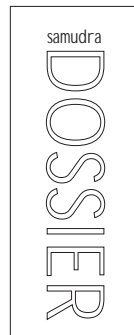
Through the NFF, a Public Hearing on problems of women in fisheries has been organized. This received some media coverage and brought women from around the country together.

Subsequently, the proceedings of the hearing of the 'Problems of Migrant Women Workers in Fish Processing Plants' has been published as a SAMUDRA Dossier by ICSF. The second in the series, on women's work in fisheries, also includes data on women involved in fish-related activity all over the country. Although this data does not cover the entire coastline, it does cover a significant part. This will be the first publication of its kind.

The situation of women in fisheries has been brought to people's attention in the following ways:

- presentations at different forums;
- drawing attention to women in fisheries in the broader women's movement in the country; and
- interacting with different NGOs working with the fishing community, helping them to focus on gender issues.

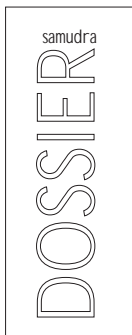
More recently, fisheries-oriented groups have been introduced to the 'Platform for Action' and to other material related to the Beijing Conference.



Different training sessions have been organized, some specifically on a gender perspective in fisheries, others as part of a national programme. These sessions are listed below:

- 1993: Only for women activists in West Bengal : six days
- 1993: During a general training at the State level in Kerala : one-day during a six-day programme
- 1993: During a general training at the National level: one day during a eight-day programme
- 1994: Only for women activists in Maharashtra : five days
- 1994: Jointly organized the gender workshop for ICSF members in Cebu, Philippines: five days
- 1995: For the district committees in Kerala: four one-day seminars
- 1995: During a general training at State Level in West Bengal : two days during a 10-day programme
- 1995: During a general training at State Level : one day during a five-day programme
- 1996: For a mixed group at the State Level in Tamil Nadu : five days

One handbook in Malayalam entitled 'Women in Society—a Gender Perspective' has been published. This is now the only available handbook in a local language which introduces an analytical framework from a class and patriarchy perspective. It explains concepts and methods that can be used to develop gender consciousness (The preparation of this handbook was begun in 1991 by Aleyamma Vijayan.)



The building of more groups of women at various levels interacting with fishworker organizations has been attempted at (i) the national level—a group of about 10 women; (ii) at the State level—although this process started rather enthusiastically, it has been pursued only in Kerala, West Bengal and Maharashtra until now, but there is hope that this activity will pick up in Tamil Nadu also; and (iii) in Trivandrum District in Kerala, where efforts have been made to create a forum of women leaders from among the fish vendors, and this is a fairly active group.

Serious action on the issue of migrant women workers in the processing plants has been taken up. These women are exploited, and have no protection. There are over 40,000 such women who migrate from Kerala and Tamil Nadu to other States in India. The following steps have been undertaken as follow-up:

- visits to areas to which women migrate;
- a study and documentation of the problems;
- organization of meetings with workers when they return home on vacation;
- organization of a public hearing on the problems;
- following up the issue with the Labour Commissioner, who has responded positively by issuing a notice for labour contractors to register;
- collection of names of contractors for the Labour Commissioner;
- issue of public handbills in the coastal areas so that people in trouble know whom to contact;
- requesting the National Commission on Women to grant 'right of inspection' status to NFF so that the processing industry can be monitored;
- interacting with the Commission for Labour of the Catholic Church which is interested in the issue and, in addition, representation on their action committee (a large number of migrant women are Catholic); and
- negotiation with the owners of the processing plants in Veraval, Gujarat, expected to have some positive repercussions.

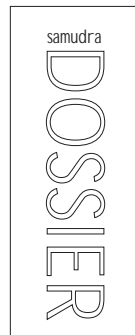
### **Alternative Organizational Strategies**

Women workers were helped to organize their own forum in Alleppey, Ernakulam District in Kerala. As the existing union did not provide space for women, these women have organized independently. They are presently taking up their own issues and will ask for direct affiliation to the State union. This is the first all-women's union. Although earlier efforts were always to integrate women within the local union, the utter disregard of women's issues led to attempting this strategy in an area where the male leadership is very antagonized on gender questions.

One attempt was made to help dry fish traders in Trivandrum gain access to fish from distant markets. In 1994, it was fairly successful, but by 1995, dry fish prices had shot up because of liberalization of exports. Nevertheless, attempts will persist, as women's groups on the east coast still have access to trash fish for drying and are looking for markets. But the seasonal nature of these operations and consumer preferences make organizing difficult.

The organization of the net weavers in Kakdwip in West Bengal (4,000 women in all) was attempted through the following steps:

- a study of the problem ;
- organization of the women and creation of women's wing of the West Bengal Fishworkers Union;
- taking up their struggle for water;
- conduct of a literacy programme for the women; and



- helping a group of 40 women to produce nets as a collective in order to increase their earnings.

Unfortunately, in 1994, the gill-net fishery collapsed and there was no ready market for the net. Subsequently, the fishermen have been switching over to trawl nets.

As credit is one of the major needs of women, savings-cum- credit programmes have been initiated with groups of women in several areas. Credit comes from various sources, but is controlled by group processes. To a large extent, this programme works where supervision is regular.

### **Making Visible the Involvement of Women in Fisheries**

General steps have been taken to make visible women's involvement in this sector through collection of data on the various activities that women are involved in, in the majority of the coastal States in India. This data is available village-wise and, except for pockets in Maharashtra and Andhra, all other States have been covered. This will be the only such data available in the country.

Detailed documentation of the various spaces that women occupy in the fishery and how they sustain themselves in these activities. This will be published as a SAMUDRA Dossier.

The efforts made to study and publicize the problems of migrant women workers in the fish processing plants has made the Labour Commissioner and other local authorities, including the Churches, more aware of this problem. These migrant women also know there is now some forum of appeal, when in trouble.

Meeting the Parliamentary Committee during its public hearings in Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu on the problems women face because of present fisheries development strategies has helped safeguard women's interests in the Murari Commission Report submitted to the Government of India.

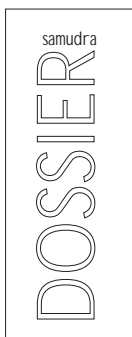
The problems of the women workers has been brought to the notice of the National Commission on Women.

It has now to be seen how budgetary allocations can be made specifically for women.

### **Efforts to Raise Awareness**

Action has been taken on several fronts to raise awareness on women's issues within fishworker organizations:

Persistent efforts have been made to integrate the feminist perspective on fisheries into the general training sessions where



fisheries policy and development policy have otherwise been the main topics of content.

It has been insisted that there be at least 30 per cent representation of women in the elected bodies of fishworker organizations.

Attempts have been made to include issues that affect women and the family on the agenda of fishworker organizations. These issues include: water facilities, sanitation, market facilities, and alcoholism among men.

Sometimes, some rather radical actions, for example, walk-outs, have been resorted to at common meetings so that women's issues also receive attention. These seem to have worked, but have left behind ill feelings.

### **Reflections**

Women have to be exceptionally strong and intellectually sharp to make any breakthrough. On the other hand, the fisheries too have been in such a crisis that there is little time to devote to creative alternatives and thinking within organizations. But we do feel that the persistent effort has brought us (i.e. those in the national core group involved in the organization of the programme) a better grasp of the issues at stake and more clarity on how these issues can be addressed. We, therefore, intend to continue the core group meetings and to pursue the struggle within.

We have planned to take more seriously the problem of fish vendors at the national level and see how their rights can be safeguarded, in the light of the changing norms of liberalization.

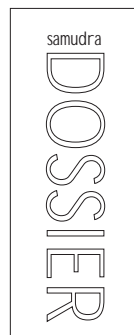
More generally, we want to study the problem of migration and see how more comprehensive laws can be enacted and implemented so that women workers can be protected. Whether or not we will be able to apply pressure for the ban of export of locally consumable fish is a big challenge, but we will persist in our efforts.

### **SENEGAL**

*(The programme was developed through the Collective National de Pechures du Senegal, CNPS, which is a national organization of the artisanal fishworkers of Senegal, with the assistance of the local NGO, CREDETIP. It has been reported by Aminata Wade and Aissotou Faye.)*

### **Background**

Women play an active part in the fisheries of Senegal. While the CNPS initially consisted only of fishermen, the inputs of the WIF programme have resulted in women becoming organized and now forming an integral part of the CNPS. Within ICSF's Women in Fisheries programme, the theme of Gender and Development has been developed in Senegal through two seminars organized by the





women's cells in CNPS in 1994 and 1995. These seminars took place in Joal and Kayar, with assistance from CREDETIP and using CNPS facilities. The objective was to make women more aware of the disparity between women and men in both professional and social life.

Playing a key part in the national economy, artisanal fishing and associated activities represent a strategic activity in the daily life of a significant part of the Senegalese population, as much in fishing communities as in urban and rural areas. Considered by far the most significant economic component of the Senegalese fishing industry, artisanal fishing provides almost all the fish consumed locally. As far as consumption of animal proteins is concerned, the Senegalese population consumes about 27 kg of fish per person per year. This makes them one of the highest consumers of fish in the world.

Providing more than 75 per cent of the total fish catch and nearly 40 per cent of the export income, the artisanal fisheries sector directly employs 60,000 fishermen. In total, it is claimed that processing and other marketing activities employ a further 240,000 people directly and indirectly, at a time when employment in the formal sector is declining. In spite of this important role, the artisanal sector is experiencing serious difficulties, which are slowing down its growth and even threatening the very survival of the Senegalese fishery.

It can be said that the State's policies for developing artisanal fisheries have often been inadequate and, at times, contrary to the interests of the professionals. As a result, the dynamic development of the artisanal fishing sector is threatened by a process of diminishing fish stocks, due to the systematic pillaging of the fisheries resources by European fleets under fisheries agreements between Senegal and the EU and, in addition, through joint ventures. This is forcing fishermen to fish farther than six miles from the coast. The physical damage and the human injuries caused by collisions between fishing boats and *pirogues*, the disappearance of certain species and the considerable decline in the size of certain fish are all also consequences of the overexploitation of resources due to the massive invasion of our waters by foreign fishing boats.

Apart from these problems, there are other difficulties which are equally important, linked to the devaluation of the CFA franc, which has resulted in a negative impact on the cost of many fishing inputs. Due to a number of factors associated with the devaluation, the activities of women have declined significantly and, as a direct consequence, their incomes have been reduced. Contrary to the contention that devaluation is advantageous for the rehabilitation of the artisanal sector, the fishermen, the fish vendors and the processors, who are the first links in the marketing chain, are, in actual fact, not benefitting, and even worse, they are witnessing the undermining of all the efforts put in over a number of years through

the alternative framework of their professional organizations. What is also apparent is that the increasing price of certain species after devaluation is not reflected in increasing incomes for the producers (fishermen, fish vendors and women processors). This is the unanimous view of these producers, who are aware that they have a key role to play in finding appropriate solutions.

The first initiative that they have undertaken is to establish an independent and autonomous professional organization. CNPS was established in 1988, with the objective of bringing together all the necessary means to develop action programmes capable of removing the obstacles in the way of sustainable development of the artisanal fishery.

### **Fisherwomen and their Problems**

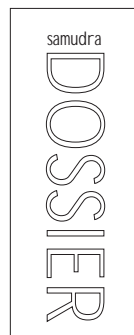
Women, whose effective contribution to the economic and social development of the country takes place through their strong presence in the fishery sector, joined the organization three years after its creation. The place they occupy in the sector and the role they play in the development process justify their participation in all activities undertaken to overcome the difficulties of the sector. Nevertheless, they are confronted by serious difficulties, including access to institutional credit; lack of infrastructure for preservation, storage and transport of products; and the payment of numerous taxes and administrative difficulties in obtaining a licence to trade.

Confronted with these problems, which considerably inhibit women's activities and limit their room to manoeuvre, CNPS, which has always fought for the survival and development of the fishery, is reorganizing itself and rethinking its activities. New initiatives are being undertaken, which concern economic as well as political questions linked to the development of the resource and that are fundamental to the survival of the people.

### **Organizational Perspectives**

Women's integration into the organization several months after holding the Congress in 1991 through the formation of women's cells at the level of local committees, represented a decisive step towards having women's demands taken up by an official organization recognized by the public powers. The incorporation of women's issues is justified by their family links with fishermen, their professional relationships with them and the key role they play in the sector. It has allowed women to establish a plan of action in addressing their difficulties.

In the interest of efficiency and to improve the co-ordination of their activities, an office for the women's wing has been established at the national level, following a General Assembly which brought together, in Dakar, various delegations from all the local committees. The main responsibilities of this office are to define priority actions,



monitor, follow up and evaluate the implementation of the programme, and to participate in discussions with public bodies, organizations and project partners.

However, despite the efforts of the women to overcome their difficulties and the positive results due to their membership in CNPS, they have not yet been able to establish their rightful place in the professional organization. Women have not yet been effectively integrated into the decision-making process through the executive committee, in spite of their many demands. Also, the separation of women and men within the organization is a discrimination against them and, as a consequence, the whole movement is weakened. Even if the organization undertakes many actions in favour of women and provides them with the means to gain strength and confidence, unless they are integrated into the decision-making processes of CNPS, their ability to understand their situation better through taking decisions and adopting appropriate measures, will not be improved. Through the programmes undertaken, they should be able to acquire the ability to take on a social and economic role as equal partners of men.

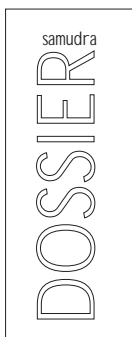
A deeper analysis of the situation confirms that men only support women's activities when their own positions and personal interests are not jeopardized or because these activities allow women to earn more money to meet the needs of the family.

### **Initiatives Undertaken**

Following the integration of women into the organization, many initiatives have been undertaken to overcome the numerous difficulties facing them. The most significant of these are described below:

*The savings and credit programme undertaken following a recommendation made during the first Congress of CNPS*

The objective of this programme is to develop an appropriate strategy to promote savings in the fishery to channel the maximum possible resources into credit guarantees or as collateral to finance projects. As a result of this programme, an informal credit system that has been useful in supporting women's activities has been successful within CNPS. Through this programme, CNPS has facilitated the provision of lines of credit to more than 700 women fish vendors and processors. In this way, the difficulties of accessing credit have been, for a large part, overcome by the beneficiaries who have, at the same time, increased their income and partially renewed their processing equipment (drying mats, washing basins, etc.). Other positive impacts of this project include increasing incomes, increasing levels of savings and various other social and economic impacts.



### *The programme for marketing fresh and processed products*

This programme, which focused on developing the local market and on penetrating the regional and sub-regional markets for a better production flow, represents a basic requirement for the survival of the artisanal fishery. It has allowed the women to find new markets in Togo through links developed between women in Sendou and groups of young fishermen from Togo.

The various initiatives undertaken by the women's cells to open up other markets have been successful in making contact between several participants in the sector. Following their participation in the CEDEAO fair, in Dakar and the one in Conakry in 1995, new avenues opened to the women of CNPS. These interactions have given rise to an ongoing collaboration.

As a way of developing this project, the multi-annual programme of CNPS is proposing the creation of a central service centre for the promotion and export of processed fisheries products from the artisanal sector for the regional market. With this in mind, a training course on smoked products was organized in Gambia for five CNPS women through the regional programme for West Africa. The specific objective of this training was to improve the skills of women involved in fish vending and processing. Two long training courses have been created for 15 young educated women for six months. In addition, a shorter 20-day course for 15 women entrepreneurs will be organized next.

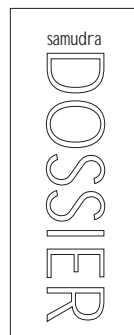
Subsequently, as part of an ICSF exchange, friends from Ghana visited Senegal and built a choker smoker and trained the local women in better methods of processing. Links have also been established between fish processors in Senegal and fish vendors in Ghana, and the latter will procure fish for sale. Thus, women fish vendors will be able to develop new lines of bilateral trade for survival.

### *Organization of meetings*

Several conferences, seminars, courses of study and reflections on themes such as savings and credit, marketing, gender relations in fishing, the impact of globalization on the fishery sector and women and poverty have been held. These activities have raised the awareness of women about their socioeconomic situation.

As part of these efforts to understand better the problems women face and to evolve strategies to tackle them, three studies were undertaken on the following subjects:

- the requirements of ice and the problems of access;
- the tax burden of women and implications for advancement of women in vending activities; and
- the fish marketing problems of women



There have been other activities, such as the discussions on how to use the funds derived from the financial compensation given to Senegal from the Fishery Agreement signed with the EU for the period 1994 to 1996. As these funds should have been allocated to the women as a revolving amount, women have successfully participated for the first time in discussions relating to the allocation of this money. Likewise, it was also a first for the artisanal fishery sector for the CNPS women to participate in the CEDEAO fairs in Dakar and Conakry.

The initiatives undertaken to obtain trading licences from the public authorities and to obtain insulated containers from the ITA (Institute of Food Technology) need to be encouraged and highlighted, even if they have not succeeded to date.

*Co-operation with other foreign professional organizations and partners*  
This has facilitated several overseas visits for CNPS women to participate in international conferences, meetings and seminars. As a result, they have gained knowledge and experience necessary for strengthening their organizations and making their voices heard. However, these positive initiatives do not conceal the fact that there are many demands of women that are still not satisfied.

### **Women's Demands**

Amongst the demands of women are:

- the integration of women as office bearers and members of the executive committee of CNPS, to allow them to participate in decision making and discussion of questions concerning them;
- the following up of contacts made by CNPS with ITA to complete the project to make insulated boxes to conserve their products;
- the establishment of processing areas in the localities of Hann, Soumbédioune, Ngaparou and M'bour;
- the involvement of women in the management of insulated vans owned by the local committees of Kayar and Joal, and their access to these vehicles when needed;
- pursuing the Directorate of Fisheries to allow women to obtain trading licences, and waiving or reducing considerably the payment needed to obtain such a licence;
- the improvement of exploitative working conditions of women in processing factories;
- pushing for discussion between CNPS and the Department of Fisheries to release funds allocated to women and provided for in the fisheries agreements; and
- the implementation of a number of planned projects, including construction of storage depots and ovens for fish smoking, initiation of medical and sanitation projects to benefit the fishing communities, and organization of training courses, particularly in functional literacy, to allow women to acquire an understanding of management and other issues.

## CANADA

(This section has been reported by Chantal-Abord Hugon, Maureen Larkin and Barbara Neis.)

### Present Trends in the Atlantic Canada Fishery

#### *Resource depletion*

Canada is now facing severe resource depletion that is caused by overfishing, overcapacity of both harvesting and processing technology, and the use of technology that is very destructive of fish stocks. The most well-known example of resource depletion is the collapse of the Northern cod stocks and the closure of the groundfishery on the East Coast of Canada. This 'catastrophe' has been more deeply felt in the province of Newfoundland and parts of Nova Scotia.

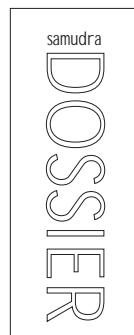
The provinces still enjoy healthy crustacean stocks, such as lobster, crab and shrimp. In 1995, crab landings were the highest ever. However, many fishers see signs of decline in both these stocks and are concerned about the intense pressure on these fisheries. In the case of crab and shrimp, access to licences to fish these species is extremely limited. In Newfoundland, in particular, expanding crab and shrimp fisheries have only marginally compensated for the loss of the groundfish fisheries. Fishworkers' organizations are increasingly aware of the importance of becoming involved in resource management to protect the future of the fishery.

#### *The impact of the groundfish fishery collapse*

The closure of the cod fishery has left hundreds of communities devastated and with no economic alternatives. Not only did fishers and fishplant workers lose their jobs, but communities depending solely on the fishery have seen a ripple effect, although the specific impact on women has received far less attention. Since World War II, women had gained a space in the fisheries as a paid workforce forming 50 per cent of processing workers and 12 per cent of fishers. They had gained financial independence and a better self-image. With the closure of the cod fishery, the government implemented adjustment programmes based on paid work. Women who have been involved in the fishing business had smaller salaries and less working time. This makes them less eligible for these programmes.

There is also great inequality in the implementation of these compensation programmes. Sixty per cent of male fishers are eligible to participate in this programme until it ends in 1999, compared to 10 per cent female fishers. Fifty per cent of male fishplant workers are eligible, compared to 27 per cent of female plant workers.

It is obvious that in their traditional family and community roles as care givers, women bear much of the stress of this crisis. The government programmes are aimed at reducing participants in the



fishery by half. Men and youth are moving away from the communities, thus leaving them in the care of women. But removing 'individuals' ignores the household and community basis of the fishing industry. This approach will have the effect of excluding more women from direct involvement in the fishery.

Women have been less present in fishers' organizations and thus have fewer means to influence the decisions that governments are making to shape the future of the fisheries and the fishing communities.

#### *Changing role of government*

The failure of previous management models for the fishery, as well as the general ideological context of privatization and of rationalization based on productivity, have resulted in government withdrawal from, and downsizing of, the industry. It is developing new management regimes, increasingly based on private property rights and privatization of control of the resource, i.e. selfmanagement. Where fishers' organizations are strong enough, they will be able to take control of management. Where numerous smaller organizations are present, the competition for access to the resource may be ferocious. In this race for management, some inshore fishing communities will lose. Higher user fees and new licensing regulations will make access to the resource more difficult for small boat fishers. The Canadian Government is also introducing major changes in the unemployment insurance programme, making it more difficult for seasonal workers to qualify.

Though the impact of these measures has been felt differently, depending on the regions, in all cases, they have caused major demonstrations during the winter of 1995-96. In Nova Scotia, for example, people in the harvesting sector have felt threatened by changes regarding professionalization, increased user fees and licensing policies. Although this is more of a 'men's' issue, the whole community and family structures will be negatively affected, explaining why women were instrumental in the struggle.

Although the general goal of professionalization has been broadly accepted within Newfoundland, the government proposal to designate a much reduced group of 'core' fishers is perceived as too extreme. Virtually no women meet the criteria for core designation. In New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island (PEI), fishers operate under the bona fide system and feel less threatened by changes in fisheries policy that affect access and management.

In all provinces in the region, people mobilized to protest the cuts in the unemployment insurance. The processing workers, the majority of whom are women, and the crew members are the most threatened, as they face the possible loss of half of their incomes. Fishworkers have also had to mobilize to resist cuts to the government



compensation programme. Here again, women took the lead as organizers, participants and spokespersons in the protests, and so it became more of a coastal community/seasonal worker issue than a specifically fishery issue. Nevertheless, the government has been very successful in convincing people that because of debt repayment, it has no other choice than to withdraw government funding and to implement these structural adjustment measures.

#### *Globalization of markets*

The globalization of markets has both positive and negative impacts on Atlantic Canada fishery, and it affects men and women differently.

#### *Increased value of shellfish*

The value of the landings in lobster and crab has increased. This is not the result of a reasonably stable resource, but mainly because of access to more luxury markets. More and better infrastructure to handle exports has enabled fishers to access these markets. The increase in the value of crustacean products has had a very positive impact on the economy of coastal communities which are dependent on these species. However, this positive impact has not been extended to women concentrated in the fish processing sector. They continue to provide low-cost labour and their salaries do not reflect the wealth of the crustacean industry. They are also exposed to significant occupational health risks as well. Luxury markets tend to prioritize live products over those which are processed, thus reducing the processing employment created from the resource.

#### *Concentration*

The globalization of markets tends to make the harvesting and processing sectors more capital-intensive. This, in turn, reduces the number of small family enterprises in the industry. In this situation, women provide cheap labour in the processing plants. For those who are not unionized, it is very difficult to improve their working conditions. In the harvesting sector, women play an important and informal role in the inshore family enterprise. If these family units are to lose access to the fishery, women will certainly have fewer options for employment. If women lose access to fishing and fish processing employment, many inshore fishing enterprises will no longer be viable. Concentration, privatization and resource depletion are also threatening the access of fishing communities to fish as a major food supplement in their homes. Households in Newfoundland can no longer legally harvest cod, salmon and some other species for home use.

#### **Role of Women in Existing Fishworker Organizations**

In the harvesting sector, women are practically invisible in terms of membership in fishers' organizations. The first step to claiming space is fulfilling the eligibility requirements for membership. In most of the mainstream fishers' organizations, to be a member, one must be



a boatowner and hold a bona fide or full-time licence. Though more and more women are now fishing with their spouses, especially in the lobster fishery, they are still classified as crew members and not as bona fide licence holders. Therefore, most do not qualify for membership.

In the past 10 years, a few organizations of women have been formed, but they have a limited membership base and operate in very local situations. In the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU), crew personnel can be members if they fish. However, the MFU has very few women members. Another barrier is cost. For those few who are eligible, it is expensive to pay two membership dues from the same household. Part-timers and crew members can be members of the Newfoundland Union, FFAW. However, there is the cost of membership dues to contend with, particularly during a period of fishery closure.

The men in fishers' organizations have made limited efforts to create space for women in their organizations. They have stated that they are not against women being members and verbally agree that women are welcome, but they do not feel it is a priority to change organizational structures to make it easier for women to be involved. However, in the past couple of years, we have seen positive changes in the attitudes of male fishers towards women being more involved. Many leaders will readily admit that women should be more involved and, also, that the elected leaders have not made sufficient efforts to encourage them. At the 1996 convention of the MFU, some women organized a women's caucus for the wives of delegates. There was a lively and interesting discussion and many women stated the importance of finding ways to get women more involved.

In the processing sector, approximately 60 per cent of the workers are women. In the Maritime provinces, however, the majority of the processing plants are not unionized. Thus, there are few ways for women to be formally organized in the processing sector. In Newfoundland, most processing plants are organized but, with the collapse of the groundfish fishery, the processing industry is very weak. The unions have not fought for their women members as strongly as they have for male members in the harvesting sector.

### **Creating Gender Awareness**

In the past two years, some new organizations for women in the fishery have been appearing. One example is Fishnet, a broadbased group of women, which includes academics working on women's issues, women's NGOs, women activists, women union members, and women from fishing communities. Its activities have focused on organizing educational workshops in fishing communities and publishing a newsletter. They have been most active in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Another example is women from fishing households organizing annual workshops to share experiences and

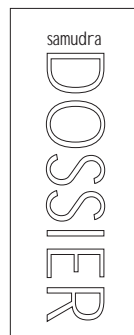
take action on specific issues. These groups do not have a strong structure. They come together once or twice a year in workshops and work closely with NGOs which support them in their activities. They have had no sustaining funding, so follow-up to workshops and recommendations have been difficult.

The first-ever regional conference of women in the fishery was organized in March 1995 in Prince Edward Island and brought together over 70 representatives from the four Atlantic provinces as well as the eastern US. It was quite successful in providing a forum for women to share experiences and analysis from varied perspectives. It was also helpful in motivating women in some provincial groups to organize follow-up workshops in 1996. These had an enthusiastic participation from a large group of women. The regional conference was less successful in identifying a clear direction for women to take for future organizing.

Another interesting phenomenon during 1995-96 was the involvement of women in fighting changes in government policies. Women have come together in organizations such as Coalitions of Seasonal Workers, Fishnet and SOFFFA (Save Our Fishers, Families and Friends Association) and have taken a strong lead in protesting policies which they saw as detrimental to the inshore fishery and the survival of coastal communities. They were very creative and militant in their resistance and organized such actions as sit-ins in the Department of Fisheries offices, community and provincial demonstrations, meetings with politicians, etc. The women in these demonstrations came from both the harvesting and processing sectors. They were also involved in a movement of multisectoral seasonal workers (forestry, tourism, etc.) forming a broader coastal community involvement.

With the groups which have sprung up in the different parts of the Atlantic, women have gained confidence and have become more informed about the issues affecting the fishery. Many women have said it is much easier for them to state their views on fisheries issues at a public meeting. Still, after all these positive changes, women do not always feel respected by men involved in the fishery. Women have a difficult time attending meetings and more problems accessing resources. They are usually the ones who stay home and look after things, so that their husbands can attend the important discussions and meetings.

Also, the increasing self-confidence of women often causes problems at home. After all, this represents quite a change in the household. Often, the men react in negative ways when women become more involved. There is much debate in the household about whether the women should concentrate mainly on helping the men with the issues they define as important or whether they should focus on their own issues. (Sometimes, of course, the issues are similar). Women



often face the dilemma of whether to get involved in the male-dominated fisher organizations or to organize at the community level and around more community-based issues.

It has been somewhat surprising to see women taking such a lead role in the protests, when they have not been involved in the official fishers' organizations. It is obvious that the social issues have struck a chord with women and they have responded to defend their families and communities. The changes in Canada's social programmes, such as unemployment insurance, will directly affect their personal and family incomes. This has been the spark for women to take action.

Women seem to be less attracted to becoming members of mainstream (male) organizations. They are more interested in getting involved in issues that directly affect the survival of their communities. In the recent protests in Atlantic Canada, there were some acrimonious and competitive disputes between various fishers' organizations. In all the public meetings, it was the women who spoke out strongly for the need to put differences aside and to work together.

The organizations of women that have sprung up in the past few years are somewhat ad hoc in nature and do not have much formal structure. It is not clear how they will evolve and whether they will survive. In the current context, these organizations are vulnerable and often are co-opted by forces which, in the short term, protest the status quo, but, in the long term, have a rightwing agenda.

Coalition-building among fishery women and other women's groups is essential if the effects of globalization, privatization and resource depletion are not going to seriously threaten women's work lives, home lives, communities and the region as a whole. Such coalition-building requires resources and the time and commitment to build trust and understanding.

### **Women's Contribution to an Alternative**

In the current climate of cutbacks, resource depletion and dramatic changes in fisheries policy, there is a great deal of confusion and anxiety for the future. Generally, women express their concerns in the context of the survival of the inshore fishery and of coastal communities in which they live. Fishermen tend to see their relationship to the fishery as being in a fishing family and community. Thus, in terms of organization, women are motivated to get involved in actions which still support their continuing to live and work in coastal communities.

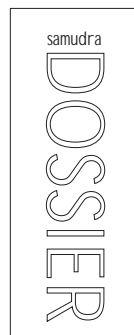
In the past 10 years, women in the harvesting sector have made gains both in terms of getting access to work with better wages and benefits from social programmes that earlier were available only to men. With

the attack on social programmes and the pressure to reduce numbers in the inshore fishery, there is a backlash from the federal government that seems to be directed against women. Women who have wage levels comparable to mate helpers are often asked to prove that they are indeed performing similar work. Also, their eligibility for unemployment insurance is often the subject of investigation. In the processing sector, where the majority of women work, they have had marginal incomes and insecure employment. In the current economic and ecological climate, their incomes are even more marginal and insecure.

Women are concerned about the sustainability of the inshore fishery and the development of healthy coastal communities. The survival of their families means that they must have access to employment, even if it is seasonal. Adequate social programmes must be maintained to ensure that a portion of the wealth generated by the fishery resource is retained in rural communities. Women are becoming increasingly aware that they must join in the promotion of harvesting technology that will ensure a sustainable fishery. They must join in the fight for licensing and management policies which will prioritize the survival of fishing communities. Their lives depend upon fishery resources, but they have virtually no say in how these resources are to be managed and allocated.

While participating in a conference in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, women clearly identified the need to develop community economic alternatives in sectors other than the fishery. They also emphasized that economic diversification generally had to occur around a fisheries base. They stressed the importance of improving education and training for fisher people in order that coastal communities survive.

In the next few years, as the fishery is being restructured, there will be intense struggles for the control of the resource. A healthy and productive inshore fishery is the key to the survival of the thousands of coastal communities in Atlantic Canada. All the various players in coastal communities—not just fishers—must join forces to fight for the rightful share of the resource for the inshore fishery. Women can play an important role in helping to focus the struggle on maintaining healthy coastal communities, rather than just on access for fishers. The challenge for women is to increase their visibility and credibility in the formal organizations that are negotiating the future control of the fishery.



## FRANCE

*(This section has been reported by Daniele Le Sauce and Raymonde Marrec.)*

### Changes Affecting the Fisheries Sector

The crisis which appeared towards the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993 and greatly affected the entire French fishing sector, has also affected the artisanal fisheries sector. The situation was precipitated by a crash in the market in 1993, from which the fishery has yet to recover. This has not allowed fishing enterprises to meet their costs, and some have not been able to survive.

Despite various government measures like subsidies, a 50 per cent reduction in social security contributions, rescheduling of debts, etc., and despite getting some preferential market treatment from Brussels, the fishing fleet is diminishing and this has serious repercussions on the economy of the entire region. For example, in Concarneau, in 1993, there were 100 active artisanal fishing boats; in 1996, there were only 80 boats.

Thus, at the beginning of 1993, on the initiative of several boatowners and their wives, the Fisheries Survival Committee was formed to defend the interests of the fishermen. This movement has continually lobbied the State on the needs of a fleet in distress

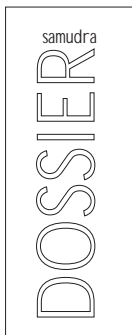
### Impact of Women in the Fishing Community

Since time immemorial, women's role has been central to the organization of family life. If this traditional role of looking after the children has confined the wives of fishermen to the background, the crisis in the fishery has propelled them into the forefront to support their husbands.

Facing a situation of fishery enterprises in decline and the resulting difficulties in their families, and wanting to safeguard this vital activity for the region, women formed groups in each port to organize meetings and struggles with the civil administrations and public authorities.

With the purpose of addressing in a concrete manner the human and social problems linked to this crisis, women deliberately chose to take on a crucial role. They met regularly in each area, often bringing along children below school age. The meetings took the form of crisis cells. Each women's group constituted an association of fishermen's wives. They decided, firstly, to contact their elected political representatives and to make them listen to their problems. Some very violent clashes took place, such as the surprise calls made to the Ministry in Paris to obtain the right to speak to the Councillors or the Secretary of State for Marine Affairs.

There were other actions by women. Confronted by very low fish prices caused by the market conditions, a free distribution of fish was



undertaken to raise public awareness on the causes and consequences of the fishery crisis. Then, a delegation of women made a visit to the European Parliament in Brussels in October 1993 to be heard by European delegates and functionaries.

In addition, facing the desperation of families in financial difficulties, women asked social workers in each port to compile dossiers for aid, emphasizing that each dossier represent the experience of a family with children to feed.

As the help provided was often minimal, women also established a food bank system, which, week after week, distributed basic food boxes (milk, eggs, sugar, coffee, flour, meat and baby food).

Coincidentally, in order to cope with decreasing family incomes, women began to look for work. However, due to the unfavourable economic situation in Brittany, with an overall unemployment rate of 11 per cent, often only seasonal jobs associated with tourism were available to women. These were only for two months. A full-time job was almost impossible to find. At this time, following requests from women, CEASM (an organization concerned with maritime social action) organized the first training course to help them obtain a second source of income.

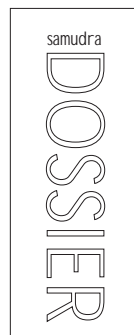
One can say that there has been a strong and natural solidarity between the women responding to the urgency of the situation.

### **Evolution of Women's Role since the Beginning of the 1990s**

This decade has witnessed a sea change in the evolving destiny of fishermen's wives. Previously, they were confined to menial household tasks, children's education and, for some, mending nets. In a nutshell, they were the pillars of the household, while husbands were fishing at sea. The crisis has forced women to unite and has raised their awareness about the financial and personal difficulties of their situation.

The main objective of establishing an association in each fishing port was to gather women together and enable them to share their ideas on how to react, to find solutions to alleviate the financial situation and to safeguard fishermen's jobs. On the other hand, for those whose husbands were boatowners, another equally important role arose, which was to become a boatowner's assistant. They then participated in managing the boat, taking responsibility for crew payments, as well as paying bills, relating with banks and with other professional organizations to which their husbands belonged.

In December 1994, an association called 'Fishery Enterprises in Difficulty (ASEPED)' was created, comprising mostly of women. Its objective was to help fishing enterprises facing bankruptcy. The president of the association is a woman, Christene Edellec. The goal



of the association is to encourage the development of all the necessary means to defend individuals and enterprises.

In May 1996, the collective 'Peche et Development' came into being, consisting also of several members. The objectives of the collective are to build relationships between fishworkers in the North and South in order to give them a better understanding of the global economic processes that affect them, to improve mutual understanding and to take collective action.

The role of the association has been to act as a channel through which training can be provided to increase the awareness of women. These training courses, which are of four months duration, have been very useful in helping women to understand a society which is difficult to become a part of if they do not have a job. As the result, within the framework of the European programme 'Human Resources ADAPT', women artisanal boatowners' assistants and seafarers' wives decided to undertake more intensive courses of study. These courses will have different themes: economic, technical and legal, all based on the needs of fishing enterprises, with specific parts devoted to public communication.

This voluntary action taken by the women belonging to ASEPED, in partnership with other institutions, should achieve its objectives and will be very useful in the current situation, given all the efforts made by women assistants to become recognized as part of their enterprises.

In conclusion, fishermen's wives in France demand social status and a recognition of their roles. This means being respected and receiving pension rights.

### **International Problems and their Impact**

At the end of the 1950s, many fishermen left the region to fish off the African coast, mainly for tuna and lobster. Since then, fishing techniques have changed and the fishing grounds have become diversified.

In order to maintain full employment in the marine sector, after the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea came into effect in 1992, Europe signed fisheries agreements on behalf of France and other EU countries with ACP (Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific) States in order to maintain access for its fishing boats. European fishing boats regarded these zones as traditional fishing areas, although they never took care to develop the local fishery. The development of certain kinds of fishing (for example, lobster nets in Mauritania) has completely depleted some fishing grounds. In addition, the combined impact of the weakening dollar and a mercury scare in tuna catches caused a serious crisis in the French tuna fishing sector.



At the same time, France set in place the Plan for Fishery Renewal to promote the rebuilding of the fishing fleet. The national and EU policies of subsidies and establishment of financial frameworks and professional structures (i.e. management co-operatives and production co-operatives) accelerated the reconstruction process.

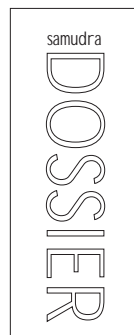
Part of the unemployed workforce of the tuna fishery and other marine sectors, for instance, seafarers previously employed in commercial shipping, became crew members on coastal and high-seas fishing boats working in traditional grounds, such as the Bay of Biscay and West Brittany. Others went on bigger boats to the Irish Sea, the west of Ireland and the west of Scotland.

The promotion of fleet rebuilding initially resulted in the development of shipyards. Also, as a direct consequence of the increasing efficiency of fishing gears, stocks were depleted. This was, at first, compensated by the rising prices of fish. Given the high prices of fish, traders sought other less expensive sources of supply, including the erstwhile USSR and Argentina, through intermediaries in such countries as Norway and Denmark.

The combination of all these factors led to the crisis in 1993 and 1994. With the overall objective of reducing the fishing fleet by 40 per cent, several measures have been adopted by Europe and France which have resulted in many recently built boats, brought into service in the period 1990-92, stopping fishing. The building of new boats has been frozen through the PME (fishing licences) system for all boats fishing in European waters, limiting engine capacity (but not fishing capacity), providing subsidies to decommission boats over 10 years old and, in addition, encouraging early retirement.

To maintain their activities, boatowners have decreased crew size to one or two men per boat while, at the same time, increasing the time spent at sea. The consequences of these actions have been felt at sea and on land. At sea, the impact has been various. Injuries affected 309 seafarers per 1500 in 1994 in Le Guilvinec and 339 in Concarneau and Audierne in 1995. The pressure on stocks has increased and the quality of iced fish has decreased. As for the seafarers who have lost their jobs, either, they find work in the tuna sector, which is in better shape than in the 1980s, as evidenced by the building of several new tuna boats, or they find work fishing in new areas, for example, long-lining in East Africa through fisheries agreements (Madagascar) or through tax incentives provided by France (La Reunion).

On land, increasing unemployment due to closure of shipyards and decreasing employment in all fishery-related sectors have resulted in the closure of many businesses in fishery-dependent towns, such as L'Abbe, Concarneau and Lorient.





## Women's Response to the Crisis

There were several positive outcomes of the crisis in South Brittany. The desperation of families forced women to assist their husbands in large demonstrations in 1993 and 1994 and to even organize their own actions, such as the one at St. Servan. They also became members of the fishery Survival Committee after February 1993.

Women organized food distribution and took back their unsold fish to sell at cost price to finance their demonstration and the basic food boxes. They met with State representatives to urge the release of funds for poorer families. Women also organized meetings for mutual support. Moreover, recognizing the urgency of the situation, they took whatever jobs they could, or undertook training. This solidarity between artisanal fishworkers' wives promoted the formation of women's associations throughout South Brittany.

In facing such an enormous crisis, women became aware of the inflexibility of most professional organizations which excluded them and which were unable to foresee the crisis, let alone solve it. They, therefore, decided to establish the organization, ASEPED. The main objective of this organization is to advise fishermen on what to do when their businesses are going bankrupt. It attempts to find the best solution to settle professional and personal problems, with the advice of personnel from the agricultural union (L'UDESEA), with which the Survival Committee has worked since the beginning of the crisis.

ASEPED is developing a list of demands to the government to help the artisanal fisheries sector emerge from the crisis. It is also contributing to the implementation of the Plan, PUECH, which aims to protect fishermen's private property, earned through much hard work. ASEPED is demanding that work done by women in assisting their husbands who own boats is granted official recognition. In addition, it is demanding recognition for women at the level of different professional organizations.

In the proposed project of the French Government concerning the legal reorientation of the fishery, a joint passage has been included. The following is an extract:

*...to create, in an optional manner, the possibility of establishing a general mandate for the day-to-day administration which allows, in the name of the enterprise, joint responsibility for its management and its direction (not to be confused with the arrangements of the Local Committees). Such a provision is legal in nature; it does not mean that status will be given to the partners in terms of salary, or that they can claim remuneration.*

Given this lack of goodwill concerning partner status, ASEPED is organizing, in partnership with the local fishery committee of Le Guilvenec, a complete training course on the subject of fishery

enterprise. The syllabus will include enterprise management, commercialization of marine products, technical and legal aspects of fishing, and communication. Women are asking to be given a diploma if they qualify.

To get this programme under way, applications for subsidies have been made to European and French organizations. But it is also necessary to show that the status of women in fishing is equal to that of their partners.

## **SPAIN**

*(This section has been reported by Ana Roman Rodriguez)*

### **The Current Situation**

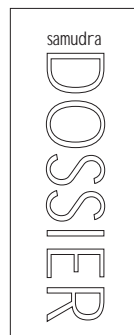
The current situation in the fishing sector in Spain, more concretely in Galicia, is characterized by an increase in joint ventures as a way out of the grave crisis that we are encountering.

A joint venture is formed with the capital of enterprises from two countries. The Spanish collaborator contributes 20 per cent of this capital, subsidized by the EU, and the collaborator of the other country puts in the rest. The ship owned by the joint venture operates in the waters of the foreign collaborator. The registration number of the ship changes and marine workers fall under the social security norms of the other country, which are not the same as the Spanish norms. They are only covered by an accident insurance. The workers, if they are grounded due to illness, or lose their work or retire, do not receive any assistance, since the Spanish collaborator has nothing to do with them, despite the fact that he himself receives an EU subsidy.

Rosa dos Ventos (RdV) is deeply concerned and demands of the government that it changes this painful situation for workers, which can lead them to utter helplessness. RdV is recognized by authorities concerned and valued by trade unions and workers in its struggle in favour of the sector. Even so, it encounters numerous difficulties.

One of the main objectives of RdV is to enter the negotiation processes in order to promote better working conditions for fishworkers, i.e. better salaries, vacations and security. The official argument for not including us is that RdV is not a social agent. One of the solutions we found was to convert ourselves into an NGO. NGOs are considered as social agents in the EU. But, in our country, the laws do not support us.

Another fairly representative circumstance is the difficulty of being the only fisherwomen's association in our country. RdV's posturing in defence of the rights of fishworkers, whose situation has direct repercussions on their families, makes us appear different compared to other women's associations, which defend exclusively the rights



of women. This is why RdV promotes co-operation between fisherwomen and wives of fishermen.

It is also necessary to underline the need for training women; considering that in order to struggle day after day with greater force, one must overcome the handicap of political language and one must know how to decipher existing laws and norms.

One difficulty which a woman has to face in some cases is the opposition of her fisherman husband, who does not accept the involvement of the woman outside the home in a struggle. Although there are more problems that could be analyzed and discussed, we can not forget to underline the need for having a full-time worker in our organization in order to work more effectively.

### **Initiatives Undertaken**

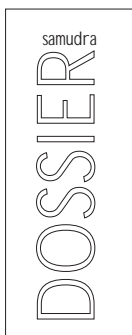
In October 1994, RdV participated in Luxembourg in the Second Women's Meet on Social Security and Health, organized by the Commission of the European Communities. In this meet, RdV presented demands collected from the fishworkers themselves. The meeting put forth the idea of the establishment of a European network of fisherwomen as well as a joint publication. To date, this network has not been officially constituted.

In November 1994, we had the opportunity to visit the women of French Brittany. This was one of the ideas suggested at ICSF's Cebu Conference, aimed at creating a network of women involved in the marine sector. Our mission was to initiate contacts with the wives of fishermen and involve them in this project. One of the first decisions of the French women was to attend the Fifth International Women's Meet in Galicia. Some contacts were made and links established, but a lot of hard work still remains to be done.

The Fifth International Meet of Fisherwomen was held at Vigo, Galicia. It was attended by wives of fishermen from Portugal, France and Spain, the theme being 'Assistance and Responsibilities.' The experiences of each port were narrated. The presence, for the first time, of Portugal and Malaga (Spain) needs to be highlighted. The women were informed about community assistance from structural funds. Opinions were exchanged on the 'turbot war'. It was decided that the women would take up a common training project. There were acts of solidarity at the meet. Women went to the Galician capital to participate in a demonstration protesting against the Canadian capture of a Spanish boat.

On 1 May 1995, the fleet operating in the Canario-Saharan bank was grounded, affecting more than 700 families in Galicia alone. Morocco's demands were as follows:

- reduction of capture, ranging from 35 to 65 per cent, for different species ;



- creation of joint ventures;
- longer fishing moratoriums; and
- a 35 per cent reservation for Moroccan crew.

As negotiations proceeded, fishworkers had to remain at home with a minimal assistance of 73,000 pesetas (US\$582) from the government. With this assistance, they could not meet even the basic expenses of the family, such as rent, water and electricity, and this gave rise to a lot of tension. Moreover, the news that arrived was not very encouraging. One could see Spain's weakness in the EU. As days passed, the seamen became more and more desperate because they wanted to work. This led to several demonstrations and increasingly violent situations. Finally, in the month of November, the fatal accord with Morocco was signed.

RdV all along supported the fishworkers through petitions to the politicians as well as actions on the streets. Amongst the various actions of our association was the interview with the Civil Governor of the Province, protesting against the persecution of fishworkers not only during protests on the streets but even in their daily lives.

RdV developed a work project, ALBATROS, for the security of the fishworkers, which would span a period of three years, with the community assistance of the funds from the ADAPT programme. The project was jointly presented with the Comité Soutien des Malades et des Accidents du Travail de Boulogrie Sur Mer of Brittany.

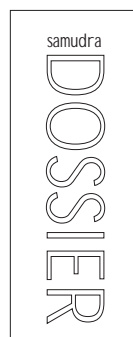
The objectives of the project are to improve the security conditions aboard the ships and promote legality in the social security stipulations, in order to achieve favourable retirement conditions for fishworkers. The ADAPT project has not been admitted for consideration by our central government, but we are working towards finding other sources for finance.

### **Creating Gender Awareness**

We can say that, for us, the place for women lies in being the voice of the fishworkers, people who do not have a voice, either in the fishing companies or in the administration, or in the negotiation tables of Brussels.

#### *Training women*

From the beginning, we were clear that human and cultural development is fundamental to complete personal development. This year, we initiated courses on culture and language to be of help in international relations. We see this as a positive step, since by developing intellectually, we also develop socially and we can fight for our families in a more prepared way.



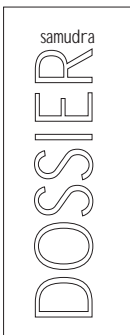
### *Security*

From the very beginning, RdV has been involved in, and has struggled for, fishworker's security, safety and social rights. Two public conventions in Vigo and two meets in the EU, as well as an analysis of official data on these topics, made us decide on the ALBATROS project. What RdV wants to do is to investigate the port installations in order to acquaint itself with the real situation regarding safety and fire-fighting methods. Also, we want to visit the ships to survey the conditions of safety and hygiene on board. The involvement of workers is fundamental in this project, which will have a duration of three years.

With respect to the development of alternatives to fishing, at the moment, we are not entering into such discussions because we are defending the right to fishing, which is the legacy of our families. Our aspirations are centred on continuing to fish in the waters of third countries, as has been recognized by the EU itself in its summit held at Quimper in France:

*...it is more expensive to increase imports than assign more money towards payment of rights to fish in waters of third countries....the figure of 44,000 million pesetas (US\$3,505,976) which the EU will credit towards being able to fish in the waters of third countries is equivalent, approximately, to 10 times of what it would cost to dismantle half of the European fleet which operates in extra-Community waters.*

We continue to hope for improvement in the fishing sector.



# Towards an Analysis

## Organizational Perspectives

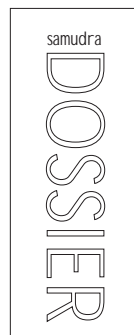
The reports in the previous section were presented at the concluding workshop on 'Gender Perspectives in Fisheries' held in Senegal in June 1996. The reports show that the focus of the WIF programme in each country was different, although the broad nature of the crisis is similar but analyzed differently. The involvement of women also depends on the nature of the fishworkers' movement in each country. As Gabriele Dietrich, a resource person at the workshop, stated,

*The kind of organization that emerges in a country is a product of the national history of that country. It is true today that not only the employment of women in the fishery sector is threatened by larger processes of liberalization but also the employment of women in other sectors. Greater numbers of women and workers in general are being thrown into the informal sector. Moreover, official and existing trade unions are ineffective in raising the issues questioning the current paradigm of development as their thrust has generally been to ask for a bigger share of the cake. Most unions have remained blind even to other basic issues such as occupational health and safety and environmental sustainability and have even seen the existence of the informal sector as a threat to their own existence.*

In countries like India, the informal sector unions have begun to co-ordinate and create alliances. The question that still remains is whether women in the informal sector should work within such unions and whether they can make their voices heard within these unions. Will such unions be able to address and pay heed to the pressing demands for change of gender relations, both in production and in distribution, while they struggle to combat the larger pressures of marginalization from the invasive and dominant private sector? Will such unions be able to address issues such as violence against women and make a connection between violence in society and the use of violent technology?

The reports indicate that women in the South organize as workers and women, whereas women in the North seem to organize as wives and women. There seemed also to be the approach of organizing at the community level in Canada. In general, what surfaced was the fact that, for women, mobilization means taking up their livelihood issues, as life and livelihood are being eroded in the process of liberalization.

While speaking of alliances, Gabriele Dietrich mentioned the approach used by the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) in 1989 in



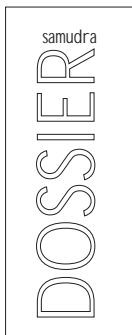
organizing a coastal march along the entire coast of India, culminating at Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip. Whereas the NFF had initiated this march as a means of mobilization to 'Protect Water and Protect Life' towards a sustainable fishery, the massive participation of women was based on their cry for access to potable drinking water and to land near the sea, their cry against displacement by tourism and their opposition to industrial growth, particularly to a nuclear plant on the southwest coast. This cry of women against the nuclear plant caused the State machinery to intervene and disrupt the finale to the march by a firing of bullets that injured several participants.

But this violent intervention of the State has not quelled the struggles of the people. The massive mobilization of people who oppose mega-projects goes on and, recently, in India, a broad alliance has been created with movements coming together under the umbrella of the National Alliance of People's Movements, with a demand for an alternative paradigm, based on appropriate technology, indigenous knowledge and skills, decentralization, self-reliance, food security and equitable distribution.

Similarly, the creation of a national federation of alternative trade unions, called the National Centre for Labour, takes up questions related to issues of contracting and subcontracting of work, seasonal work and migrant workers. Furthermore, it is exploring links between the formal and informal sectors and the need to create a social movement union.

In the North, the ranks of the unemployed are on the increase and the welfarism of the State is on the decline. In such situations, where job insecurity is so high, can workers take responsibility for one another? What kind of alliances should we build? What kind of strategies do we employ?

There seemed to be a general consensus on the need for alliances and, in fact, most of the fishworker organizations seem to have forged inter- and intra-country alliances over the last year, generally as a response to the recent fisheries crisis. Most of these alliances have been around specific issues. For instance, in Norway, strong alliances were created in the struggle against Norway taking membership in the EU. These moves were taken by the fish workers who realized that their existing fishery regulations would be greatly disturbed by the further centralization in the EU. In France, too, alliances have been made with farmers associations. In Spain, alliances have been made both with political unions and other associations of wives of fishermen. In Canada, the Action Canada Network has emerged as an alliance to lobby against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).





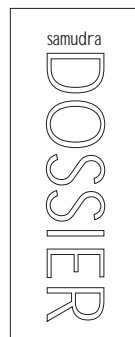
At the regional level, members from the women's movement and women in fishworkers' unions, focusing on women in poverty, have collaborated in anti-poverty marches. At the local level, alliances between trade unions and NGOs have been formed around themes of equality and social justice. They have challenged the erosion of social programmes. Fishnet was created as a network of individuals from the women's movements, trade unions, academia and women from fishing communities discussing larger issues, while the movement of seasonal workers links all kinds of workers in seasonal work in a struggle for their rights.

Alliances in countries like India and Senegal, where women are still involved in fish marketing, were looked at from the point of view of alternatives which require support. This discussion was followed by the question of how alliances could be formalized. Should they be formalized? What is the link with existing political unions? Do we negate them altogether? The participants seemed to think that we had to move *from* working on issues *towards* a programme and *from* informal networking and alliances to formal alliances. This process of growth is the 'programme politique' of the movement towards change.

The demand for a 'crisis cell' in France or a 'closed season' in India or 'security of employment' in Spain or 'retaining of a social programme' in Canada are all immediate and important issues. But maintaining the sustainability of the fishery in the face of its increasing vulnerability implies a more comprehensive programme. It means asking certain basic questions: Is there something inherently wrong with 'modern' science and technology? Is there something inherently wrong in the way the market operates, monetizing all interaction at very unequal terms by giving an appearance that all are equal because of the use of a common denominator, money? Is there something inherently wrong with this model of 'growth', when the only thing that grows is money and that too in the hands of a few, while, at the same time, nature and the larger mass of human beings are being destroyed? How and why does 'modern' development either destroy or appropriate indigenous knowledge systems, where women too were the main actors? What is this new game of 'patents'? Whose knowledge is being appropriated and patented? When and how did the term 'housewife' emerge and how does this process of 'housewifization' operate at different levels of 'modern' development? What is the origin of the 'welfare state'? Can it continue to exist in the present capitalist system and if people all over the world refuse to be exploited? What is the relationship between 'welfare' and 'equity'? Should we ask for hand-outs or the right to work?

### **The Framework**

Working with women in fisheries necessitated that we develop our own framework by which to analyze how the division of labour in





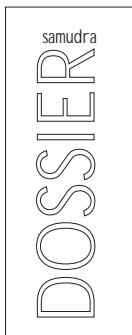
fisheries discriminates against women and how patriarchy operates to shatter the fishery.

At the outset, the preoccupation was to evolve a feminist perspective on fisheries. Seeing how predominant the destructive capture fishery had become and how unsustainable it is, both in terms of the resource and in the marginalization of the coastal communities, the objective is to evolve a 'nurture' fishery. To understand nurture is to understand that the marine environment is a living reality and that this living environment is being destroyed by the technology used in fishing—a technology which is not only destructive to the habitat but which is also overefficient in its relation to the extraction of the resource, taking with it too much fish and destroying the cycles of regeneration. This domination of nature by the excessive use of overefficient technology has led both to economic and biological overfishing. It has also led to greater competition for the resource and conflicts among fishers. The excessive capitalization of the technology leads to a flow of wealth from the shore to the sea, thereby having an impact on women, whose involvement in the fishery is more shore-based.

Focusing on the feminist perspective meant also giving importance to the aspect of production of life, often called reproduction, in which women's labour is taken for granted. Household labour goes unrewarded. Historically, societies have evolved their own justification for making it appear as if this exploitation of women's labour in the household is unquestionable because it is so 'natural' for women to give birth and nurture the family. But, materially, this has meant that men have gained in the process. By being 'in control', they have had a right over women's bodies—their sexuality, fertility and labour. In addition, by being 'in control', it is the men who have also taken all the decisions in the household and in the community.

Hence, science and technology, coupled with the overriding relation of patriarchal domination, have led to the domination of nature and of women. While we do not equate women with nature, the idea of nurture—which is a human quality and a basic need for sustaining life—is an activity that has been relegated to women and, therefore, remains unquantified and unremunerated. The feminist perspective advocates that nurture becomes also a concern of men and that nurture, which is necessary for the sustenance of human life, be also extended to the sea, in order to sustain the living environment. To nurture nature implies that the ecological balance is restored, that the food chain is not disrupted, that the habitat is recreated and that time for regeneration is respected.

At the start of the WIF programme in 1992-93, it was not unusual to see that there were more women involved in fish-related activity in the South than in the North. In the South, wherever fish is still available in the artisanal fishery, women, in addition to being just



wage workers in processing plants, as they are in the North, still have access to fish (even if this is mediated by middlemen) to directly process or sell it. Craft and gear were still of the artisanal nature, although the use of motors had become extensive in the South. Nevertheless, the consciousness of the 'artisanal' sector was more present in the South than in the North.

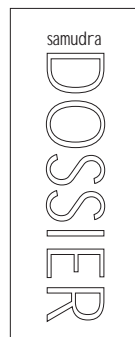
So, while women's involvement in the fishery in the South was more oriented towards securing their right to fish for sale and processing and towards better infrastructure for livelihood in coastal communities (i.e. rights to water and land, transport to market, schools for children and health infrastructure), the women from Europe organized as the wives of fishermen to struggle for the safety and job security of their men on the distant-water fleet and, later, for subsidies in times of liquidation.

It was only after the impact of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc began to be felt in Europe and after the crisis in the North forced the Northern countries to implement structural adjustments during which time the State began to disengage itself from the social commitments to its people, that women in the coastal communities in the North realized that both they themselves and the fishery were being hit. Today, the involvement of women in the fishery in the North is to demand that State subsidies be not curbed. They have also begun to demand a voice in fishworkers' organizations. Women in the North are being forced to return to fish-related activity and to join their husbands on the boats only to help their families financially. While they thereby deprive other poor men and their families of a livelihood in the process, the pressure on women to keep their husbands' boats afloat has become imperative. As Barbara Neis, another resource person at the workshop, stated,

*This flow of wealth from the shore to the sea, which initially has a marginalizing impact on women's work in the fishery, finally has its impact on poor men who are marginalized completely.*

Now, some of the women in the fishing communities in the North, in particular, Canada and Norway, have begun to see the logic of domination in the fishery and its unsustainability. While, on the one hand, they are unwilling to allow the State to withdraw from its social commitments, and rightly so, on the other hand, they have also begun to see the need to question the technology and the paradigm of modern development.

The Southern women are more emphatic that consumption patterns have to change simultaneously and that we must move towards a more simple way of life. Interestingly enough, the final debate concluded in a demand to sustain an artisanal way of life.



Whether it is in the North or in the South, artisanal fishing communities still exist in many parts of the world. The coastal fisheries still offer livelihood to large numbers in coastal communities. As Barbara Neis stated,

*The artisanal fisheries have exhibited a great amount of resilience. They have adapted to changes mainly because they have been household-based, rooted in households. They are very diverse but also very flexible and are, therefore, responsive to ecological and economic constraints. They are in no position of control, either of the environment or economic trends. Because of these uncertainties, the artisanal sector has needed to have complex strategies to respond to these changes. The modern development model tries to destroy this complexity and, therefore, it is the artisanal sector that struggles to combat it. The point to note is that this resilience of the artisanal sector is based on the work of women and children and, if it has to survive, it has also to protect the spaces of women.*

Unfortunately, women's access to the fishery wealth may generally be through their husbands or their fathers. Women are not part of the decision-making process regarding the use and management of resources. As a result of the sexual division of labour, there has also been a sexual division of knowledge. Women have not grown to understand the marine environment and, therefore, have not been able to interact on the question of the management of stocks. Neither have they been able to cry for a halt when they see rare species disappearing and costs of other species going up. Women have not realized that smaller fish being landed is also an indication of pressure on the resource. On the other hand, men have not related to post-harvest activity and, hence, are not sensitive to the demands of women. They do not realize that exporting fish deprives their women of fish for sale, that selling fish for animal food affects food security on shore and that selling fish in bulk and demanding cash payments make them fall into the logic of scale and thus marginalize women who operate from household units.

Although there did seem to be a general consensus on the above points, there were reservations expressed by women from Spain and France. Given that the survival struggles of these women have intensified in the last three years, it is only natural that the demands and pressures of the day-to-day struggle in the fishery are energy-consuming. While it is imperative that the struggles are intensified at the local level, a wider global perspective and links with the broader movements for change also become necessary.

### **A Sustainable Fishery**

The participants at the workshop went on to define what they conceived to be a sustainable fishery. If fishworkers envision a future in the fisheries, existing fisheries have to be sustainable. If, as hunters, fishworkers are oriented only to the size of the catch, the stocks will be overfished. If fishing is accompanied by the desire to nurture and

manage the fishery, the fisheries can be sustainable. To nurture the fishery implies preventing pollution, protecting mangroves, regenerating habitats, etc. Sanctuaries and estuaries are the most productive areas and these should be protected.

Fishermen should be willing to agree to management regulations, to control gear, regulate mesh size, ban certain destructive gears, and introduce seasonal trawl bans to protect juveniles. Today, because of the high cost of inputs, artisanal fishermen are also forced to compete by using high horsepower engines. This is turning out to be economically unviable. There should be regulations regarding the horsepower of engines to be used in specified areas.

Together with management regulations that are nurture-oriented, a sustainable fishery necessitates shore-based activity conducive to it. Some important components of such a fishery are:

- the right to fish be given only to actual fishermen;
- the right of first sale of fish be given to the fishermen and the right of purchase to women fish vendors;
- banning of conversion of fish into fishmeal;
- encouraging the use of traditional skills in fishing and fish processing and marketing;
- controlling exports of locally consumed varieties of fish; and
- prohibiting the privatization of water bodies and reclamation of coastal lands.

Since the health of the water bodies is so directly related to what happens on land, it is important to advocate and practise proper agricultural and farming practices. Organic farming should be propagated. Pesticides and insecticides pollute water systems, affect the life cycles of certain varieties of fish and lead to the destruction of coral reefs. Hence, efforts should be made to ban indiscriminate logging not only in forests but in the coastal stretches as well, (logging of coconut trees leads to soil erosion, siltation, etc.) and to conserve watershed areas and wetlands.

If we dream of an alternative way of life, then the development paradigm has to shift from a want-based to a need-based economy. In addition, the resistance has to start from people's collectives that dare to resist the onslaught of 'modern development'. Such collectives would:

- patronize locally made products against products made by MNCs;
- reorganize markets as places of exchange of goods rather than as places of exploitation;
- boycott technology which uses non-renewable energy;
- gear agricultural production towards basic food security and employ sustainable farming practices; and
- be gender-just and distribute surplus equitably.

# Conclusion

## Future Areas for Action

There are several areas for action that flow from the discussions of the WIF programme:

### *Continued awareness building*

The need for more information at all levels was expressed, as well as the need to help women within organizations develop better skills of understanding, analysis and organizing. Some areas mentioned were:

- a deeper understanding of the development debate and the historical consequences of North-South interactions;
- a deeper understanding among women on resource management questions, the marine environment and the conservation of biodiversity;
- greater clarity on how women's issues can enhance the understanding of gender relations;
- the evolution of a 'programme politique';
- a critical understanding of the role of the State, and its national sovereignty in the light of the present globalization processes;
- welfarism vs equity.

### *The problem of migrant women workers*

This includes the need to look more deeply at the legal questions of migration and the protection of migrant women workers as well as networking among groups and countries from, and to, which women migrate. The Philippine team intends to take this ahead.

### *The organizing of fish vendors against marginalization in the ongoing 'modernization' of cities*

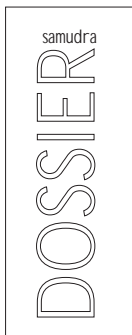
Fish vendors are losing their access to fish, to vending spaces and to microcredit in the process of the creation of modern shopping complexes, new product development and the lack of finance. The Indian team will work further on this.

### *The networking of women's groups in Europe*

The Norwegian participants felt that efforts could be made to widen networks in Europe.

### *Development of contacts and networks for exchange of fish and traditional technologies in the West African region*

This is seen as an urgent need. Links have already been initiated between Ghana and Senegal and these should be pursued. The ICSF should give serious consideration to helping women's organizations demand and create an infrastructure for the development of regional markets.



6. *The need to focus on creating alliances between movements of marginalized people on questions of food security and on introducing into the general debate on food security, the aspect of fish as food.*

### **A Personal Concluding Note**

*(This has been written by Nalini Nayak.)*

With the workshop in Senegal, the first phase of the ICSF Women in Fisheries programme came to an end. It is certain that the seeds sown in the countries that participated will continue to grow. The programme will also continue in Ghana and Brazil, from where there was good participation at the workshop.

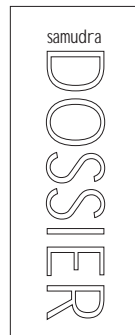
While we have arrived at some theoretical understanding regarding 'gender in fisheries' and the role patriarchy plays in marginalizing women, moving towards an effective 'programatque' is more difficult both within the movements and in the supporters group of the ICSF.

In many ways, this was considered a women's programme. Men have been occupied with the 'more important' points on the agenda. From this point of view, I think we have largely failed in reaching an important objective, which was to sensitize members of the ICSF on this subject, despite many efforts on our part to do so.

To a great extent, we have been able to make women's role in fisheries more visible and, whenever possible, have indicated ways in which women's spaces in fisheries can be safeguarded. We are aware too that the diminishing resource base in fisheries makes this difficult. In fact, despite attempts at alternative economic programmes like the net-making experiment in West Bengal or the fish trade in Trivandrum, the fact that both these attempts could not be pursued was because of diminishing fish catches and the new export orientation in the free trade market economy.

Well-meaning and concerned individuals have often asked why we expect women's spaces to be safeguarded? Why should not we find ways of engaging women in non-fish-related activity? Frankly, I must admit, having worked within the movement myself and being convinced that 'modern development' creates large groups of 'outliers', I would continue to adopt a strategy of struggle for alternatives within the sector.

I have also realized how difficult it has been to move into the direction of resource management and enhance women's roles as resource managers. Such efforts would have required much more intensive inputs in terms of time, personnel and money. We worked within the infrastructure that participating partners had at their disposal. Moreover, it was a non-directive programme and the pros



and cons of such an approach have to be weighed against one another.

From my point of view, the positive aspect is that this programme succeeded in being integrated into existing fishworker organizations and was not an imposition from outside. It did not create institutional inputs that would be a burden for the local organization after the ICSF's WIF programme concluded. Its achievements have been primarily for the local organizations as such.

Negatively, we could point a finger or two at 'poor co-ordination' as a consequence of 'non-directedness'. If the country co-ordinating team did not seem totally clear about what was intended through the programme, was it imperative that things be made clear to them or that they were consistently assisted in their programming? I can say that, for my part, being fully involved in the India programme certainly helped in giving it focus.

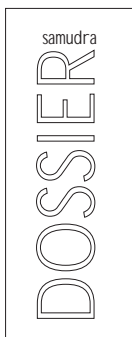
Being a part of the programme in Senegal helped with developing perspective and streamlining action. Unfortunately, the team got so carried away by the small investigative 'studies' that their involvement in organizational work was minimal. In Thailand, the coalition of the partners was very fragile and problems within the coalition caused set-backs to the programme. Although the country coordinator was constantly in touch and despite the fact that we did chalk out a detailed programme together, the local situation and, certainly, limited funds did not permit more.

In the Philippines, it was hoped that the team would draw on the rich experiences of the active women's movement there, while drawing up its programme. This did not happen, which is probably why the programme could not develop a focus or come up with any specifically clear gender analysis in the Philippine fishery context.

Without a critique of technology per se in France and Spain, the women there find it difficult to appreciate a South perspective, although the very contact has probably opened channels for discussion.

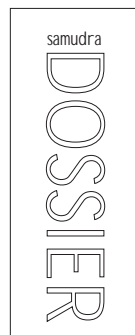
The team in Canada had an extremely comprehensive approach, with the help of social scientists who take fisheries seriously and activists who try to integrate feminist and environmental concerns into the development debate. The programme in Canada, though moving extremely slowly, has a sound footing. If this programme is carried forward seriously, with more involvement from the men in the organization, an interesting breakthrough will certainly be made.

Enhancing women's participation in decision making varies from country to country, but, in most countries, this period witnessed an emergence of women's leadership that was hitherto dormant.



Over these last few years, women in fisheries networks have also come into existence. The ICSF network is probably the only one relating directly with women in the fishworkers' movements. As networking is an important way of creating alliances in struggles, efforts must be made to facilitate these contacts and build strong alliances for change.

If the ICSF takes a proactive approach, based on the demands of the movements and particularly those of the women in them, it may be able to genuinely offer support towards developing sustainable fisheries worldwide.



**Women in  
Fisheries  
Series  
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## Women in Fisheries

The Women in Fisheries (WIF) Programme of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) was initiated in 1993. Broadly, it aims to strengthen the participation of women in fishworkers' organizations and in decision-making processes at various levels.

Among the programme's specific objectives are attempts to study the history of women's roles in fisheries (the sexual division of labour and the role of patriarchy), and to record accounts of their struggles against social, political and economic marginalization.

As a part of this documentation process, ICSF is in the process of publishing a SAMUDRA Dossier series on Women in Fisheries. This, the third in the series, draws on reports from seven countries to arrive at an understanding of the issue of gender in fisheries. In the process, it questions traditional norms in male-dominated fishworker organizations, both in the North and in the South.

ICSF is an international NGO working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is in status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN and is on ILO's Special List of Non-Governmental international Organizations. It also has Liaison Status with FAO. Registered in Geneva, ICSF has offices in Chennai, India and Brussels, Belgium. As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, ICSF'S activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns and action, as well as communications.