

# National Workshop on SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India - A Report



8 to 10 April 2022

Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai, India

Report prepared by Mythili DK and Nivedita Shridhar



International Collective in Support of Fishworkers Trust  
[www.icsf.net](http://www.icsf.net)





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**Report prepared by**

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**Front Cover**

Participants at the National Workshop on  
SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India

**Front Inside**

Mumbai fish market, Maharashtra India

Shuddhawati Peke / ICSF

**Back Inside**

Women fishers and fishworkers welcoming the workshop statement / ICSF

**Back Cover**

A young woman from a fishing community in West Bengal in eastern India.

UN Women / Anindit Roy-Chowdhury

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## List of Abbreviations

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BPL	Below Poverty Line
CIFE	Central Institute of Fisheries Education
CIFT	Central Institute of Fisheries Technology
CMFRI	Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute
CRZ	Coastal Regulation Zone
CS	Central Sector Scheme
CSS	Centrally Sponsored Scheme
DMF	Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FIMSUL	Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
ILO	International Labour Organization
IYAFA	International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NCDC	National Cooperative Development Corporation
NFDB	National Fisheries Development Board
NFF	National Fishworkers Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMMSY	Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Organization
SHG	Self Help Group
SSF	Small-scale Fisheries
SSF Guidelines	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication





NOOR NISHA. K

Women catching prawns near Kattur mangroves, Tamil Nadu, India



## Executive Summary

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The National workshop on ‘SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India’ focused on mainstreaming gender into policies and legislation at the national level, recognizing women’s livelihood spaces, and improving their participation in decision-making processes. The workshop is third of a series. It follows the ones held in 2016 (<https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/930.ICSF158.pdf>) and 2019 (<https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/930.ICSF214.docx>).

The workshop provided a space for women from fishworkers’ organizations in coastal states to follow-up on key issues relevant to their lives and livelihoods, and develop a working agenda for the Women in Fisheries Platform in India. The participants constituted women fish vendors, fish harvesters and members of civil society organizations, among others. A preparatory workshop was held with women fishworkers in Mumbai in December 202. It helped understand how their livelihoods had sustained despite new and existing challenges. This workshop’s programme was developed based on their inputs (<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/a-platform-for-action/>).

### Livelihood Issues

1. Available evidence suggests women in the fisheries sector deal with a plethora of livelihood related issues related to access to resources, tenure, and climate change.
2. The rapid increase in development projects, both public and private has led to small-scale fishers losing their lands. The process and compensation received for acquisition of coastal land is poorly planned. It is critical to allocate rehabilitation such that it does not affect the livelihood of the community. It is vital to obtain prior informed consent of fishing communities while initiating any exploration, exploitation and development project in marine, coastal and riparian areas.
3. One of the repercussions of the pandemic has been the influx of male fish vendors in the market. They have displaced women vendors through innovative marketing. Women vendors have resorted to technological support to boost sales. Discussions during the workshop also revealed that the pandemic’s impact on incomes had led to an increase in child marriages in some parts of the country.
4. Resource depletion is increasingly evident. Women harvesters, including shellfish gleaners, testified to spending time and effort just to find enough catch. Additionally, fisherwomen are not provided allocated spaces for post-harvest activities like drying and net mending. Fisher women demanded that they determine the selling rate of fish—currently fixed by the merchants.
5. Recommendations for bettering livelihood of women in fisheries included forming women specific fisher collectives that prioritize and directly benefit fisherwomen. There is also a need to provide training to help improve marketing skills.

### Marine Biodiversity, environmental issues and climate change

6. Fisher communities have been impacted by pollution, natural disasters, climate change, loss of biodiversity and coastal commons. In most cases, women in fishing communities bear the brunt of this impact.
7. Bigger fleets have unsustainable practices which has led to a loss in resources and disrupted the ecosystem.
8. Increased frequency of cyclones, unseasonal rains and floods on both the east and west coast has left to damaged property, loss of lives and livelihoods in the community. However, it is the women in fisher households who are forced to manage losses and repay loans with their meagre incomes.
9. The workshop brought to light the bias women face availing compensation for losses due to erratic weather conditions, cyclones, floods etc. While some state governments provided financial assistance to boat owners and vendors during cyclones women fishers and pickers received none.
10. The workshop recommended that inclusive climate action combine social equity, economic opportunity and environmental action.

## Decent work and social security

11. There is no proper record of the catch and revenue contribution of women harvesters, thus making it impossible for them to avail social security schemes. The sector has a significant gender divide. Accessing schemes related to ban relief, pension is a challenge for households without men.
12. Fisherwomen find themselves vulnerable to development projects due to a lack of validation of customary rights. The lack of pattas for their lands adds more insecurity to their lives and livelihoods.
13. Women vendors face discrimination and harassment on a daily basis while travelling and auctioneering. They are verbally humiliated and refused entry to board public transport because of the smell they carry.
14. Women vendors and harvesters demanded they be compensated for injury due to fisheries related activities and during lean periods, just like men. The demand was from different pockets of India, including tiger widows from the Sundarbans and seaweed gatherers of Ramanathapuram.
15. Discussions revealed that social security schemes like Provident Fund (PF) and Employer State Insurance (ESI) exist only for the formal sector. Participants agreed that memberships in cooperatives was the strongest way to access schemes.

## Governance

16. Women's participation in decision making at the local, state and national levels is still nascent. This despite women contributing majorly to fish marketing and processing in the country. Additionally, the nutritional security of fisher families is fulfilled from catch harvested by women.
17. Fisherwomen and their issues are usually sidelined during meetings with fisheries department. They also lack support from male members in the community. The workshop discussed how local self-government meetings (gram sabhas) could act as spaces to put forth their issues and demands. Fisherwomen wanted to be consulted for scheduling as well as agenda creation, especially when it was related to fishing or their community.
18. A lack of gendered budgeting has led to fisherwomen not benefitting from existing schemes. Women in fisheries are not aware of budget allocations, programmes and schemes available to them. It is therefore important to document, recognize, value and address challenges women harvesters face. A lack of recognition also restricts access to resources. The workshop suggested local registers as a means of data collection. Every village could record their production individually and this data could then be pooled together. The fisheries census could be yet another opportunity to mainstream concerns.
19. The workshop recommended that all fisherwomen and fishworkers, including gleaners (hand pickers and harvesters) be registered and provided licences.

## Way forward

20. The workshop was a vital source of information. It enabled many women fishers to raise questions at community meetings. The process of sharing information, good practices and experiences through forums such as the women's platform strengthened their voice.
21. The workshop statement—drawn up taking into account concerns of all the participating states—concisely put forth the needs of the fishing community at large, and women in fisheries in specific. The Women in Fisheries platform was discussed, and envisioned to be a forum of different groups with similar needs that works together. The platform was unanimously given the name “National Platform for Women in Small Scale Fisheries”, NPWSSF in short, and would work towards strengthening the position of women in fisheries.



## DAY 1: 8 APRIL 2022

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### 1. OPENING SESSION

#### 1.1 Welcome address

*Manas Roshan, Programme officer, ICSF Trust*

On behalf of the ICSF Trust, Manas Roshan welcomed participants to the workshop. The workshop was supported by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. This was also an occasion to celebrate small-scale fisheries as 2022 was designated the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA). Roshan welcomed women who are particularly under-represented in harvest and post-harvest activities in fisheries—those who harvest shellfish, seaweed and other species in diverse forest, estuarine and island ecosystems. He welcomed women fishworker representatives from Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. These four state groups came together in 2019 to discuss how to incorporate women fishworkers' concerns and perspectives into policies, legislation and management. A group from Goa had also joined for this workshop. He welcomed Nikita Gopal, PS Ananthan and Aswathy Senan, resource persons for this workshop; the interpreters, Shilpa Nandy, Ashwini Jog, Shanmuga Priya and AJ Vijayan; the workshop documentation team: Vishakha Gupta, the rapporteur; and Louis and Vignesh, the video team and ICSF Trustees, Nalini Nayak and V. Vivekanandan. The Chair, V. Vivekanandan introduced ICSF and welcomed Nalini Nayak to give an overview of the workshop.

#### 1.2 Overview of the Workshop

*Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

*Chair: V. Vivekanandan, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

While many participants had attended workshops earlier, Nalini said that this time, in addition to fish vendors, a group of women fishworkers were attending too. She emphasized the need to



V. Vivekanandan, Trustee ICSF, addressing the participants during the opening session; he talked about the organizational structure of ICSF

organize within their respective states. She pointed out that states where women were organized, there was participation. This was the third session together. In the first, they had come together with the men and in the second only women from four states attended. During the peak of the pandemic, they met virtually. Nalini highlighted the need for women to meet among themselves because in larger mixed meetings very little time was spent on women-specific problems. She emphasized the importance to paying attention to the translations. Only knowledge would enable them to fight for their rights. In 2019, women from four states (Goa joined in this workshop) decided to work together and create a platform. A platform, Nalini said, is not an organization but just a group of people who think, discuss, and try to work together. She asked if any of the previous attendees remembered decisions made at the end of the 2019 workshop. Most representatives gave general answers about creating a platform, a committee etc.

Nalini reminded the participants that in 2019 they had spoken about not being able to go fishing, and the inability to access subsidies when not fishing. It was necessary to do background work to avail any support, she said. She pointed out that during Covid-19, fisherwomen did not get much by way of support and asked participants to share their experiences of aid received during the pandemic. The group from Kerala testified to receiving a bag of rations—rice, sugar, pulses, masala, soap and oil—every month for two years. In addition they received Rs. 1000 (USD 13) twice via the welfare board. But this, they emphasized was aid for all, not fishers specifically. In West Bengal, the local panchayat distributed common rations a few times. It is a practice that continues even now. In addition, a new scheme called Lokki Bhandar provided women BPL Rs. 1500 (USD 19) per month and SC/ST women Rs. 1000 (USD 13) per month. In Tamil Nadu, in 2020 and 2021, participants testified to receiving Rs. 1000 (USD 13). In Maharashtra, the ration scheme was available in rural areas and continued through the lockdowns. In urban areas because of the high rate of infection, many fishers confessed to not wanting to queue in front of ration shops. Maharashtra also experienced two cyclones in the period of the pandemic. The state government announced a relief fund of approximately Rs. 65 crore (USD 8,269,398 mn). Big and small boat owners were given Rs. 30,000 (USD 382) and Rs. 20,000 (USD 254) respectively. Women fishworkers were given Rs. 6000 (USD 76) to buy ice boxes. Participants from Goa said that rations were distributed through the gram panchayat.

Nalini summarized their experiences saying that fisherwomen got very little support during the pandemic. What they did get was not exclusively for the fishing community. She highlighted the need to work together, have clear demands and focus on details. She stressed on the importance of gathering information, putting together statistics and then approaching their respective Members of Parliament (MP) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLA). This would enable them to have the upper hand when they aired their grievances. Nalini asked all the participants to make use of this opportunity, learn about the SSF Guidelines, new labour laws and ask questions from those who had immense knowledge of fisheries.

### **1.3 Introduction of participants and their organizations**

The participants introduced themselves. They told the group about their work and the organization they were a part of.

### **1.4 Sharing one positive experience and one challenge experienced during the 2020-22 period from each state**

The Chairperson called on one person from each state to present one positive experience and one challenge faced over the last two years.

#### **West Bengal**

The unprecedented spread of Covid-19 started in March 2020 and two months after that, Cyclone Amphan hit the state. A year later Cyclone Yash caused devastation across the state. Markets were closed because of the lockdown. There were no jobs. Migrant labour returned—but many died and

huge numbers were put in quarantine. Families had to survive against the odds and for those on the outside, it became very stressful. The local administration (panchayats) worked towards providing aid and bringing migrant labour back to the state. Numerous NGOs and Trade Unions helped them access services and resources. ICSF also provided support. A huge positive was that fish numbers have increased in rivers, ponds and the sea. This was aided in part by the lockdowns, market closure and fishing bans. Local fish was available in the market when they opened. Industry shutdowns meant traffic and pollution also reduced in the area.

### **Goa**

People were forced to stay home due to the lockdowns and often rations were unavailable. Traditional fishers selling fish by the roadside were beaten and chased away by the police. A positive was that there was a lot of fish available.

### **Maharashtra**

Loss of livelihood was the biggest impact of the pandemic. Shellfish collectors were chased away and beaten by the police. This news, when reported on TV provoked the Chief Minister to ask for an enquiry into the matter. Subsequent investigations revealed that fishers were harassed by police and barred from going into the sea because of lockdowns. Many were punished, harassed and beaten by a constable, who was marked for suspension but was later transferred upon request from local fisherwomen—they recognized that he was only carrying out orders relayed from above. As compensation the government distributed 45 tonnes of grain in the area.

Like in West Bengal, there was less pollution during the lockdowns and an increase in fish species that were previously unavailable. Once the world opened up though, pollution returned. The organization did a lot of work to help migrant workers get back home. With roads closed, sea routes were used to ferry 10,000-12,000 from Gujarat. Many people started community kitchens to feed those who could not work or had lost their livelihoods because of the lockdown. Community kitchens were run by many organizations. The representative said that ICSF and FISHMARC also helped in various ways.

### **Kerala**

In Thiruvananthapuram, because of lockdown there was less fishing—sometimes none—and so markets were closed. Even after the government allowed fishing to restart, selling produce was a huge problem. Women were beaten by policemen and their fish baskets were emptied on the road. The return of many professionals from Gulf states also further clogged the market. A lot of these young men started selling fish, going house to house on two-wheelers and cycles. This hurt the livelihood of women fish sellers who worked on the same routes and lost out on sales because the new sellers had already been there. In addition, the government set up fish selling booths/fish stalls in different places on the roadside. This also impacted their sales. On the plus side, SEWA the fishworker union came upon the idea of using WhatsApp to better their sales. They would, via a WhatsApp group, spread news about their products and their availability. Customers soon started approaching them.

### **Tamil Nadu**

Participants said that because men couldn't go fish during the lockdowns, their livelihoods were also affected. They would get fish from wherever possible—paying the usual bribes to the corporation and police—and sell it. 80 per cent of their income went into bribing the authorities and buying the fish itself. Whatever was left was barely enough to run the household. Women also testified to struggling in various other ways too during the lockdowns. They would have to take care of cooking and home care while the men went off to the beach or sat around watching television. On occasions when the women could go out to sell their wares, they had to wear masks or invite a fine between Rs. 200-500 (USD 3-6). Corporation barricades around their localities meant they couldn't move unless they showed hard proof of need (like a medical emergency). The corporation also took over



a space used to sell fish to instead build toilets. A participant from Tuticorin said that children's education had suffered due to the closure of schools. Many have subsequently dropped out of school completely. A few NGOs and organizations that worked with women—like Vrutti and Fishmarc—were helpful during the pandemic. The allocation of 20kg free rice for all ration card holders was a boon. At a time when no one could move about, Vrutti provided 10kg rice—a huge amount for those hard days.

The opening session came to a close with Vivekanandan thanking participants for sharing their positives and negatives of the last two years. He said that they would have a chance to discuss these issues later in the afternoon.

## **2. SESSION 1: Exchanges between fisherwomen collectors/ processors/ collectors on their livelihood issues - testimony by one member from each group**

*Panel: Sunayana Suhas Meher, Lila Vasant Karbhari, Gita Mridha, Parul Haldar, Jyotsna Rani Bar, Meenachi and Rakkammal*

*Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

The session, Nalini said, would focus on women harvesters. They included two tiger widows (both fishers) and a fisherwoman who fished with a small boat, from West Bengal; two shellfish gatherers from Palghar; and 2 seaweed collectors from Tamil Nadu.

### **2.1 Sunayana Suhas Meher and Lila Vasant Karbhari, Shellfish gatherers from Palghar, Maharashtra**

Shellfish gatherers use equipment like knives and scythes to pull out shellfish stuck to rocks. Injuries to hands and feet are occupational hazards that these women face. Climate change induced out-of-season rainfall often washes away the shellfish they gather. Shellfish quantities have reduced over the years. Previously, the women said, they could put the rice to cook, go down to the shore and pick enough shellfish to rack up a good meal. Nowadays they have to spend hours to find enough for even home consumption. There are 57 villages in Palghar district and a lot of women there gather shellfish. None of these workers were registered. Their activities were undocumented and occupation unrecognized. Addressing these issues was a priority.

Sunayana said their area had seen widespread pollution over the years because of rapid industrialization. Effluents released into the river and sea affected the availability of fish and shellfish. She also reiterated that a lack of employment recognition meant they could not seek compensation for loss.

### **2.2 Gita Mridha and Parul Haldar, Tiger widows of Sundarbans, West Bengal**

Gita said that her husband collected fish, crab and honey in the Sundarbans. He died in a tiger attack. In Gosaba block, women whose husbands have been killed in tiger/crocodile attacks are awarded Rs. 2 lakh (USD 2,544) as compensation. She couldn't however avail this because she does not have a proper death certificate. The core zone of the sanctuary, where fish and crabs are found, is a prohibited area. Fishers illegally travel to these core areas by dinghy. On days she's not caught by foresters she can harvest about two kilos of crab and fish. Gita says she formed a Tiger Widow Mahila Samiti in Gosaba block. It has 15 women members. The organization travels out to other blocks to bring other tiger widows (over 3000 in number) into its fold. They plan on reaching out to the government and request better compensation.



Panel of women fish harvesters spoke on the lack of registration and legal recognition of their work and other livelihood issues that they face. (Sitting L to R- Sunayana Suhas Meher, Lila Vasant Karbhari, Gita Mridha, Parul Haldar, Jyotsna Rani Bar, Meenachi and Rakkammal)

### 2.3 Jyotsna Rani Bar, Active woman fisher, West Bengal

Jyotsna fishes with her husband. They do so within twenty nautical miles from Bahuran Jalpai village. The area is a popular tourist spot and many passersby trample on their drying catch. The men often get drunk and abusive. They have registered complaints about this at SD BDO office.

### 2.4 Meenachi and Rakkammal, Seaweed collectors of Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

Meenachi was around 11-years-old, and had studied upto 5<sup>th</sup> grade when she began collecting seaweed. At that time a kilo of seaweed cost Rs. 1 (USD 0.013). She was married when she was 16. Since her husband did not provide for the family and there were children to bring up, Meenachi—one of many such women—would go to sea, earn Rs. 100-150 (USD 1-2) and somehow manage the household. There would be 6-7 women in a boat, with one man. In those days, there were no regulations on seaweed collection or staying in the 21 islands between Rameshwaram and Tuticorin. She would leave her children with her mother for 4-5 days and go to the islands to collect seaweed. She was always keen to educate her children. Her daughter is currently pursuing a Masters in Commerce. The last two years have been tough for her. Seaweed collectors are not fish. She couldn't go out to work during the lockdowns, and there was no income to support the household. Just like fishers seaweed collectors also can't work during the ban period. Unlike fishers though they do not receive support. Meenachi said that during the ban period they should be able to access alternate livelihoods and opportunities.

### 3. Session 2: Exchanges between women fishworkers

#### 3.1 Discussion on contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries to food and livelihood security; issues facing traditional livelihoods and knowledge; rights of women to coastal resources

*Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

##### Group discussion 1:

On contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries to food and livelihood security; issues facing traditional livelihoods and knowledge; women’s rights in coastal resources

Participants sat in state-wise groups to discuss food security, livelihoods and social security. State-wise responses are in Annexure 2. Nalini opened the session saying that they had gone through the participants’ reports describing their achievements and their problems. They also interacted with women harvesters and were aware of their issues. She broke down the discussions from the opening session into three main topics, food, livelihood and social security. She said that a majority of participants, fish vendors, had spoken about access to catch. During the pandemic all faced food shortages, and accessing fish—which they could sell and then buy other rations for themselves. Only small scale fishing was viable during the pandemic.

The first issue was that of food. She addressed the issues around accessing protected forested areas in the Sundarbans. She asked participants if they understood what ‘illegal’ meant and why it was a big issue when it came to accessing food. She pointed out that just like in the Sundarbans, where fishers could not access certain areas, fishers could not access islands in Rameshwaram. Participants from Maharashtra and West Bengal had earlier cited reduction in pollution as among the chief reasons for the return of traditional varieties of fish. Nalini highlighted how it took very little time for life underwater to restore itself. This, she said, made it important to protect fingerlings.

In the context of restoration, the idea of fishing bans came up and participants from Maharashtra said that the government’s 60-day ban on fishing was not enough. They called for a 90-day ban. This



State-wise groups discuss issues related to contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries to food and livelihood security; issues facing traditional livelihoods and knowledge; rights of women to coastal resources



interjection led to an elaborate discussion between the participants. Different people voiced varying opinions on what the ban entailed. Vivekanandan offered a clarification on the legal position. The actual Supreme Court order states that during the ban period all boats greater than 10HP are prohibited for fishing. This varies from coast to coast. In Kerala, because of the community's dependence on the profession, the Assembly passed a law to protect monsoon fishing. It protects even large ring seine boats now. In the first year of the ban ring seine boats were prohibited. States enforced the ban in different ways. In every state there were difficulties with enforcing the judgement on to certain groups and other small ones were exempted. Maharashtra and Gujarat's annual ban—called a holiday—is enforced for three and a half months for bigger boats. Trawlers have broken the traditional law but haven't faced any action so far. Gillnetters and dolnetters have asked for a 90-day ban but have faced resistance from trawlers. Vivekanandan said that multiplicity of laws and poor implementation meant that only extreme measures worked and were often overused. He concluded by saying that using just one instrument to control fishing was not good practice. Nalini emphasized on the need for women leaders to be aware of these facts so they could support the right causes.

Nalini next brought up a discussion on livelihoods. Access to resource, she said while citing the example of those prevented from fishing in certain areas, was essential for livelihood. Many fishers had complained about not being able to dry their fish anywhere. Access to land was also very important. Seaweed collectors and women fishers said they faced financial shortages to buy equipment. Without access to finance, this would never be solved and their livelihood would be in jeopardy. Access to spaces to sell fish—especially after all the changes in market spaces post Covid-19—was another key issue. Nalini emphasized the need for digital skills, citing the example of the Kerala fishers WhatsApp group. Technology would also improve their access to market, and improve livelihoods. Technology though did not always refer to large freezing plants and cold chains. Essential technology needed to be affordable. It was important to understand and learn from others experiences. She opened the floor for participants to comment.

Ujwala Patil said that in Maharashtra they were attempting to bring together women whose markets had been displaced. They had tried to do this to provide them with social security but with little success. Maharashtra, Nalini said, has had limited success with fish markets. They trained women to distribute fish directly to customers using scooters. This training had been conducted at the fisheries college. Nalini requested that participants share their insights from this exercise. Responding to this, Ujwala said that this relatively new idea had partly been successful. While some of the results were there for all to see, more needed to be achieved. She acknowledged Fishmarc's aid.

The next point of discussion was social security. In this context, Nalini stressed on the importance for good health to be able to do good work. Health benefits such as ESI, she said, are part of social security. The bulk of the responsibility though fell on fishers themselves. They needed to demand clean and safe food. Nalini then moved on to discuss the impact of pollution on fisheries. She pointed out that while agitating against industrial pollution was a necessity, it was also important to curb the dumping of plastic from villages into the sea. This simple act would help the ocean and protect their livelihoods. She brought up the case of shellpickers and small fisherwomen from West Bengal and Palghar whose work is not recognized by the government. Nalini said a lack of recognition meant they were denied certain rights. The question therefore became one of 'identity before the government'. Every job needed to be recognized and workers identified as such. Fishers, like government employees needed to be given housing allowances, Nalini said. This was even more important when contextualized against how their traditional lands—where they'd been for centuries—were being taken away.

This issue sparked a conversation among participants. Jharna from West Bengal said that a marine drive project would see small fishers lose their lands. They had led protests over the issue. Another such example came from the Tajpur area, near East Medinipur, where a sea harbour project had affected small-scale fishers' livelihoods. Participants from Maharashtra said that during the pandemic, two major projects took off in Mumbai—the coastal road and the sea link. The work got underway at the time of lockdowns when fishers could not go to work or unite and protest. The CRZ



rules were changed just before the pandemic, to allow these projects to begin. Nalini pointed out that all big corporations were eyeing coastal land. It was necessary to band together with other affected communities to protect their rights and protest against these incursions. She asked participants to sit in state groups, discuss issues, and list those that they needed to act upon or require more information about. These points of discussion were collected by rapporteurs.

## 4. Session 3: Biodiversity, climate change and sustainable fisheries

### 4.1 Presentation: Linking fishworkers' lives and livelihoods to national and international environmental processes

*Resource persons: Manas Roshan, Programme Officer, and Nivedita Shridhar, Programme Officer, ICSF Trust*

*Chair: Venugopalan. N, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust*

Venugopalan, the chairperson, started the session by saying that biodiversity, climate change and sustainable fisheries were at the heart of lives, livelihoods and food security. Ever since the term biodiversity was coined in 1985, it has been a hot topic of discussion across sectors. In this session he said that presenters would look at the impact on biodiversity due to pollution, oil spill, coastal development. They would also discuss how loss of biodiversity in marine and freshwater areas leads to resource depletion.

Ecosystems and natural resources, Manas Roshan said, were fundamental to livelihoods and well-being of fisher communities. The marine ecosystems include not just fish but the coral reef underneath, and various organisms interacting with the water column. Biodiversity, he said, includes every living organism in every ecosystem. Manas subsequently detailed out the concept of the pyramid of life. At the bottom were the primary producers, phytoplankton, which photosynthesize. The next level consists of primary or first order consumers—like zoo plankton and herbivorous fish. Intermediate predators feed on these primary consumers. At the very top of the pyramid are apex predators—which are very important for fisheries. He highlighted that the shape of a pyramid corresponded to the population of the group. If fishers caught apex predators, it would have a cascading effect through the pyramid. Ecosystems therefore were important for fisheries.

All human activities, from pollution to port development, impact biodiversity. Globally, Manas said, fish catch is declining. According to the FAO, in the 1970s, only 10 per cent of global fishing was unsustainable. That figure stands at 34 per cent today. Catching juvenile fish, and therefore hindering replenishment is among the most unsustainable of fishing practices. Small-scale fishing on the other hand has less impact on the healthy ecosystem. After the presentation the floor was opened for participants. Responding to the issue of unsustainable gear, participants from Maharashtra said they used gillnets to avoid catching small fish. When asked if fishers sometimes used smaller gillnets and bigger boats, participants from Tamil Nadu said the size of net corresponded to the size of the fish they were looking to catch. Manas further pointed out that in Tamil Nadu gear was selected based on species and season.

In Maharashtra traditionally fishers used dol net, gillnet and other sustainable fishing gear. In the south of the state—specifically in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg areas—though purse seiners with small mesh size, targeting large shoals of fish were being used. Their long nets, Manas pointed out, would encircle shoals and catch all of it. Small fishers lose out on their catch. Manas also keenly pointed out the fact that each fishing community deflected blame to another. In Gujarat, he said, trawlers blamed purse seiners. In Maharashtra, fishing vessels from Gujarat were the problem. It was important to establish, and the women agreed, that what was happening was wrong and had many reasons. In Kerala so called small-scale fisheries were undergoing change, and often imitating large fisheries. In Thiruvananthapuram for example, fishermen earlier used small anchovy nets, sardine nets etc.



Manas Roshan, Programme officer, ICSF Trust presenting on linking fishworkers' lives and livelihoods to national and international environmental processes

They had now shifted to using a particular kind of *Thattumadi* with which they caught everything—including juveniles. This shift in practices was making even small-scale fisheries unsustainable.

The conversation shifted to international laws and policies that could support the demands and concerns of fishing communities. Manas introduced the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which recognized the need for environmental protection. After India signed the CBD, it enacted the Biological Diversity Act 2002. This was followed by many other laws important to fishing communities. He pointed out that the government's report to the CBD, filed every four years, was prepared via a participatory process. The purpose of these laws, the international framework and the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Manas said, was to protect the natural environment and the people dependent on it. Increasingly though—and this was not limited to India—the laws were working against the people. He gave examples of the Sundarbans and areas along the Odisha coast where marine areas fell under the scope of the Wildlife Protection Act and were under the purview of the forest department. Many of these areas were historically fishing sites, but fishers were now outlawed from accessing them. This was because there was no consideration for supporting livelihoods while also protecting the environment. There were many issues of pollution and port development that were relevant to the CBD. These needed to be discussed at the national level.

Nivedita Shridhar began her presentation on climate change by talking about long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Climate change, she said, would lead to a rise in sea levels, a major concern for coastal communities. In addition to melting glaciers, thermal expansion would contribute to 50 per cent of rising seas. Using photographs from Thiruvananthapuram, Nivedita explained the concept of coastal erosion. She cited rising sea levels as one among many reasons for this. Erosion leads to sea water intrusion which would lead to a shortage of potable (drinking) water. At the current rate, mega cities would be underwater in a few years. She stressed the urgent need to mitigate climate change. With the help of another photograph, this time from the Sundarbans, Nivedita showed how cyclones destroy ecosystems and animal habitats. This often led to human-animal conflict.

Climate change impacts human lives in many ways. Flooding and subsequent water stagnation leads to the spread of vector borne diseases. Change in water temperature affects catch, which subsequently impacts food security. Safety concerns abound for people living on coasts prone to hazards and cyclones. Unpredictable seas are a risk to fishers out at sea, putting their lives and livelihoods at

risk. Inclusive climate action, Nivedita said, would combine social equity, economic opportunity and environmental action. Policies needed to be inclusive. There needed to be a balance between demands of the community and that of international groups. Nivedita ended her presentation with suggestions for the fishing community to adapt to climate change. These included using decomposable organic fishing nets instead of nylon nets, practising fishing methods that do not disturb the sea bed, modifying engines to be more energy efficient, using alternate energy sources and improving safety at sea.

In the question-answer session, participants from West Bengal posed the Catch-22 situation of development and biodiversity. Manas agreed, and furthered the conversation by asking how women were impacted by climate change. Participants from Kerala said that any natural disaster usually impacted incomes and the brunt of this fell on women. Men would bring in little money to run the household and women would have to make ends meet. Damaged houses were often repaired by women. In many cases where a husband was lost at sea, women were forced to repay loans. Manas concluded the session by thanking all participants and suggested they reflect on the day's presentations, and consider what action they would like to see at the state and national level. He also emphasized on the need to identify not just the problems but also who and how to approach authorities and institutions to resolve them. Just a list of demands wouldn't do, it was necessary to build relationships and identify already existing ones to find solutions.

## DAY 2: SATURDAY, 9 APRIL 2022

### 4.2 Group Discussion 2: Addressing fishing communities' vulnerabilities to natural disasters, pollution, climate change impacts and loss of coastal commons

*Chair: Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology*

*Rapporteurs: Archanna Prasad, Vishakha Gupta, Nivedita Shridhar and Manas Roshan*

Nikita Gopal opened the day's session by revisiting themes of biodiversity and climate change. She also reflected on the observation that many participants had made about unsighted species reappearing during the pandemic. Subsequently, three questions were outlined for discussion.

- 1) How are your communities affected by environmental issues in your state/district? How do they address it through their organizations?
- 2) Are these issues taken up by your local panchayat? If not, why? What provisions/strategies exist to take these up?
- 3) Do you see women participating in decision making at the local, state and national levels? How can women's participation in these processes be improved?

Participants conducted discussions in state-wise groups. The responses are given in Annexure 3.

## 5. Session 4: Women fish harvesters in India: Issues and challenges

*Resource person: Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology*

*Chair: PS Ananthan, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education*

PS Ananthan introduced the session by reflecting on issues of fish harvesting, shellfish collection, mollusc collection and seaweed collection raised the previous day. This was something previous workshops had not addressed. He appreciated tabling a separate session to focus on these issues.



Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, CIFT presenting on the customary rights and the urgent need to document them in her session on issues and challenges that women fish harvesters in India face



Women harvesters, he said, were valued even lower than women in post-harvest professions. It was important therefore to document, recognize, value and address challenges they faced. State specific issues may vary but the common element was that they effected women across the board and therefore needed addressing. Women's involvement in fish harvesting varied across coastal regions and states. For instance, seaweed harvesters in the Gulf of Mannar area had their own specific issues. A lack of access to islands in lieu of biodiversity conservation put their livelihoods in direct conflict with conservation practices. Women fishers in the Sundarbans face similar challenges. A lack of recognition plagues much of the western coast. They lack access to specific schemes, and safe working conditions. Unlike other harvesters, they cannot avail of compensation during a lean harvest.

Taking over from Ananthan, Nikita Gopal said a lack of recognition of women in harvesting was prevalent across the globe. Production figures never documented what women harvested. While the individual quantities may well be low, the cumulative figure would, undoubtedly be very high. She said that many people conducted small studies about this in various countries. Citing the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute's (CMFRI) annual census, Nikita said that half of the adult population in fishing communities consists of women. Of that only 32 per cent were considered to be working and were employed by the sector. This was factually incorrect because in many fishing villages all adult women work in the sector. A lack of any data on women fishers and harvesters made the report redundant and in need of revision.

Women do a variety of work in fisheries, Nikita said. In earlier times—before readymade synthetic material was easily available—women were involved in net making and mending. In Odisha and the eastern coast, they collect seeds. Salting, drying, marketing, auctioning are all activities women engage in. Women used to produce dry fish themselves, but now they are mostly engaged by men as labour. Women are involved with fermenting fish in the North East.

75 per cent of fish marketing and 90 per cent of all processing is done by women. Officially though, there is no data on harvest. Evidence from the field suggests that women catch fish in lakes and rivers, beels, estuaries, backwaters and ponds. They also glean fish by hand. In Raigad, Maharashtra women go gillnet fishing and use several different types of gear—fishing nets, traps and small nets. In lakes in Kashmir, in addition to fishing, women also collect water chestnut, dry it, process it and sell it in the off-season. The West Bengal group interjected to point out that they too collect water chestnuts. Nikita said this was seen in Manipur as well. In Raigad, women go gillnet fishing with their husbands. The man's role ends there, but women take the catch to the market. In Kerala on the other hand, case studies show that men take it to the market and both are involved in net mending.

In Kerala, the fishing season alternates with the paddy season, thus allowing people to fish in the on and off. Women generally catch fish by hand and place it in aluminium pots with lids made of natural material like coconut, banana or areca nut. In the backwaters a common sight is that of people catching fish using a pole and a line. Groups of women fish together using self-fabricated nets. Community fishing is prevalent in some places across different seasons. In the North East, women, men and children go fishing together. It resembles a festival. They fish using small bamboo traps. Mollusc collection using knives is a common practice in Palghar. For three months of the year, husband-wife teams go mollusc collecting. Sometimes relatives are also involved and it resembles a family enterprise.

What women harvest is very important for nutritional security of their families. Nikita pointed out that not all harvest is sold. The portion left over becomes food for the household. Women, Nikita said, probably don't recognize the importance of their contribution. Self-recognition is essential and must come before asking others for it. A lack of recognition causes conflict with law enforcers. The lack of a license means legal resolutions are not available to them. There is also a need for special provisions. Seaweed is often harvested without any protective gear. Though some fishers are investing up to Rs. 1000 (USD 13) for this, a legal mechanism that provides them equipment is necessary. This though can only come with recognition of their labour. A lack of recognition also restricts access to resources and leads to conflict. For example, if the owner bars entry into a paddy field, then fishing is no longer possible. This is already being seen in Kerala.

Nikita emphasized the advantage of becoming a licensed fisherwoman by citing the example of Rekha. From Thrissur district in Kerala, she is the state's only licensed fisherwoman. She goes gillnet fishing with her husband and another man regularly and was honoured by CMFRI on Women's Day. Documenting women's contributions, Nikita said, would go a long way in helping the community. She urged participants do this themselves, since they were more aware of the community's work than anyone else.

In response, participants from Maharashtra pointed out that boats were often registered in the name of women. They were also members of cooperatives. In these cases, they had licenses but didn't always go fishing. Nikita revealed that other cooperatives have women members too, but don't get the same financial benefit as men. Two women from West Bengal said they had licenses and went fishing with large mesh gillnets in the open sea. This was followed by Nalini asking what the next steps of documentation could be. She wondered if it would be possible to project the proportion of catch by small harvesters in a state.

Nikita said some rough projections were made in the women harvesters study, but they were possibly underestimated. In her opinion, to make accurate projections, it was necessary to know the number of women involved and the types of fishing they were involved in. Sebastian's suggestion to use a map to show active women fishers would be helpful. Nalini asked if there were studies that documented traditional rights and laws. Roles which now require licenses have traditionally been ones women have held rights over. She said traditional laws held even if they were being overstepped. Nikita responded to the question by citing the example of padasekharams where women were prevented from fishing. Traditional rights, she said, were generally informal and needed to be published and recorded to be claimed.

Nikita said that in places where growing rice and fishing was alternated, women were allowed to fish for a few months—even this was considered a big favour. But recently, some padams had shifted to fishing continuously and were preventing women from exercising their traditional rights to fish. While there was nothing preventing the documentation of traditional rights, formalization would help open access to many areas. The effort to do this, she said, needed to come from communities and not just institutions. Sebastian then brought up the issue of expense involved in data collection. He suggested local registers as a means of data collection. Every village could record their production individually. This data could then be pooled together. This method, he said, would need to be decentralized.

While emphasizing the importance of formalizing traditional rights, Jesu from Tamil Nadu also said that Sebastian's suggestion for local registers could function along the lines of the existing biodiversity registers. Nikita revealed that in Thoothur village they had experimented with the village register. It could be used as a model study to replicate in other villages. She reiterated the need for community involvement to formalize traditional fishing rights. Delaying this would lead to losing more of these rights. Purnima from Maharashtra said that the committees were in existence in villages around Palghar, the registers were not maintained properly. There existed among the villagers a fear that this data would be misused. She said the Panchayat samiti, had, at the block level organized a workshop to teach people about data collection and maintain a biodiversity register. People started doing that but the NGO that conducted the workshop took the data with them, provoking deep suspicion among locals, who felt it would be used to bring needless development projects to the area.

Ananthan thanked the participants for a very fruitful discussion. He summarized the questions and listed some actionable points for institutions to take up based on them. He concluded the session by outlining the efforts undertaken by the Fisheries Survey of India in creating a fisheries census at the central government level—a long pending item from the policy draft. He said the methodology to do this was still under discussion and there was potential for representation at the community, institutional and advocacy organization levels. The census could be an opportunity to mainstream concerns raised in the session.

## 6. Session 5: Women's employment, working conditions and social security

### 6.1 ICSF Study on fisheries sector budget and socio-economic status of women in fishing communities in Tamil Nadu

*Resource person: Aswathy Senan, Independent Researcher*

*Chair: Manas Roshan, Programme Officer, ICSF Trust*

Manas welcomed and introduced the resource persons Aswathy Senan and Ananthan to the workshop. The duo would make presentations on social security schemes and budget allocations for women in fisheries respectively. In 2016 and 2019, Manas recalled, ICSF had been asked to conduct a study on schemes women have access to (<https://www.icsf.net/resources/the-invisible-informal-workforce/>). The study was limited to one state.

Aswathy began her presentation by leading a discussion on what exactly the terms 'fisher', 'worker' and 'woman' meant. She highlighted the importance of understanding them intricately.

#### **Fisher**

Participants from West Bengal defined 'fisher' as those who catch fish. This included all groups actively involved in fishing. Participants from Maharashtra however, defined fishers as those who belong to a specific caste or community. They also differentiated between non-functional fishers and active fishers. Aswathy said that a much wider set of people fall under the term, not just those actively involved in fishing. She reiterated the two categories, those born in the community and those engaging in the activity.

#### **Worker**

Participants from Tamil Nadu said that the difference between fishing and working as a salaried employee was that in the fishing community, they are both labourers and owners. When there is catch, they get income and when not, they incur loss. Participants from West Bengal added support



Aswathy Senan, Independent researcher presenting the ICSF Study on fisheries sector budget and socio-economic status of women in fishing communities in Tamil Nadu



workers—like those who weave and mend nets—to the list. Aswathy pointed out that support workers need not be from the community. Participants from Kerala defined fish workers as those who catch and sell fish. Those from Tamil Nadu differed on this point, arguing that while those who catch fish can be called fish workers, since fish can be sold by anyone, all fish sellers cannot be defined as fish workers. Participants from Goa objected to people who encroached into the profession being referred to as fish workers.

### Women

Participants from Kerala defined women fishworkers as wives of those who caught fish and also those who take part in vending and processing. Participants from West Bengal said women fishworkers don't just catch fish but also work as sorters and dryers in vending centres. Furthermore, in East Midnapore, women run small petty shops in landing centres.

Aswathy then revealed figure to facilitate better understanding. She said 56 per cent of the fisher population in India were women. Highlighting the diverse activities women engaged in, she asked whether the state's definition of fishworkers matched that of the people. The Marine Fisheries Census 2010 defined marine fisherman as a person who engaged in marine fishing or any activity associated with marine fishery or both. The definition includes men and women. Traditional fishermen are defined as, fishermen by birth and for whom fishing is an ancestral occupation. A fishing family is one where at least one member is engaged in marine fishing, its associated activities or both.

Aswathy then went on to present a table on gender wise fisher population in Tamil Nadu in 2019-2020. She pointed out that the number of women engaged in marine fishing activities full time was listed as 'Not applicable'. This, she said, was confusing. She asked if women engaged in full time fishing activities in the state. A participant Tamil Nadu answered in the affirmative. Her mother and her are full time fishers in Cuddalore. To this she also added women who caught prawn and crabs by hand full time in Pudukottai district. Not categorizing these women as full-time fishers, Aswathy said, needed to be questioned.

She said her study looked at how the state views fisherwomen, and analyzed policies and schemes designed for them and the number actually availed by them. She said that ICSF had put in multiple requests for data on gendered budget allocation and expenditure. No such data was available. Aswathy said that fisherwomen interviewed for the study claimed to only know of three schemes—the savings-cum-relief scheme, fish ban period scheme and the fish lean period scheme. When the conversation shifted to relevant bodies and schemes, Aswathy showed the website of the Tamil Nadu fisheries department and the schemes it listed.

She went on to highlight the importance of cooperatives in availing schemes. Every person, she said, need to be a member of a cooperative to avail fisheries department schemes. These cooperatives exist in every village, every district, and every panchayat but are largely inactive beyond enabling members to access schemes. In Tamil Nadu, there were separate cooperatives for men and women. While discussing women's cooperatives, Aswathy pointed out that the membership figures for fisherwomen cooperatives had not changed for five years (2017-21). This, she said, was impossible. New members were constantly being added and senior citizens were shifted to pension schemes. Women, members, she pointed out, were not in decision making roles. This was in part because of their numerous other responsibilities. It became tough for them to put time and effort into cooperatives. This burden of responsibility was also cited as a reason for many women not spending time to understand different available schemes.

Aswathy also pointed out another interesting observation made as part of the study. Women, she said, are not main members of cooperatives till they get married. Shifting cooperatives involves a lot of paperwork and so women shy away from becoming members before they're married—in case they have to shift villages. This led to gender disparity in the functioning of cooperatives. It also meant men could access welfare schemes easily, simply because they could process the paperwork themselves. Memberships in cooperatives, she emphasized was the strongest way to access schemes,

and therefore needed to be increased. She answered Vivekanandan's question about eligibility criteria by clarifying that anyone aged 18-60 residing in the village was eligible for membership. People over the age of 60 were only eligible for pension schemes.

Aswathy also detailed schemes for women offered by other state departments. The Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme was available to all women. She reiterated that fisher women needn't go through the fisheries department for anything. The social welfare department, she said, had a lot of schemes for girls, children, and orphans. There were helplines and shelter homes available for domestic violence and abuse survivors. The labour welfare board had computer training and child care centre. She also mentioned the education department's schemes and the Pradhan Mantri Awaz Yojana which ensured housing facilities. Schemes like pensions to widows, disabled and specially abled people were also mentioned.

It was important for unions, collectives, members and thalaivis to stay updated. She said that many schemes were listed in the report and it also contained details about eligibility and application processes. She encouraged other states to conduct similar studies. Manas thanked Aswathy for her presentation, and along with Nikita, introduced the next presentation on a similar topic by Ananthan.

## 6.2 National programmes and schemes to enhance the livelihoods of women fishworkers and budget allocations

*Resource person: PS Ananthan, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education*

*Chair: Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology*

Ananthan said his presentation was in two parts. The first on gender budgeting, had been presented in 2019. The second half of his presentation discussed the money spent by the central government on fisheries development. It would also discuss two ongoing studies for Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The government has, since 2005, advised Ministries to prepare budgets that segregate their expenditure for women. This sort of gender budget is not just about allocating money to women. It also includes policy planning, implementation, follow up and execution. MGNREGA 2005 required a third of beneficiaries to be women. Because it is an employment-based programme, the benefit must also go to women.

Gender budgeting is the first step towards gender equity and equality. It can be applied at the central or state level, to the department or even individual projects. A gender budget cell, headed by the Joint Secretary, was set up in all departments in 2005-06. Over the last decade, the fisheries department have been advised to spend at least 30 per cent of their development expenditure on schemes for women. Prior to the advisory, the expenditure was between 5-6 per cent. Even in the Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), an umbrella scheme, 30 per cent must be allocated to women.

Introduced in 2019-20, PMMSY targeted spending Rs. 20,000 crores (USD 2540 mn) in five years (almost three years of which were lost to Covid-19). This would help increase fish production by 7 million tonnes and provide employment to an additional 55 lakh people. Ananthan revealed that according to the fine print, only approximately Rs. 9,407 crores (USD 119,719,324 mn) for this would come from the central government. The balance includes what states and beneficiaries (approximately Rs. 5,700 crores (USD 72,541,740 mn)) will spend. The scheme has two components. What was earlier called Blue Revolution (2015-16) is now called PM Matsya Sampada Yojana. All existing schemes have been put under PMMSY and grouped under two categories—Central Sector Schemes (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). The centre contributes the entire amount in a Central Sector Scheme. In a Centrally Sponsored Scheme the centre, states and beneficiaries split contributions.

Under PMMSY, the central government provides a 40 per cent subsidy on project cost for general category. Women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are given 60 per cent subsidy on projects. While not specifically woman oriented, this provision is favourable to them. Centrally sponsored

schemes fall into three broad categories. The first is meant to boost production and productivity. Under this fall several sub-schemes. This also includes programmes for seaweed and bivalve cultivation (not harvesting) which can be offered to groups of men or women.

The second category of schemes cover post-harvest and cold chain infrastructure. These schemes can be availed by women. Ananthan gave an example of Jyoti Meher from Maharashtra, who had used such a scheme to set up a fish feed mill and availed of almost Rs. 1 crore (USD 12,727 mn) for a feed mill plant. Funding for marketing infrastructure was meant mainly for the fisheries department and municipal corporations. Ananthan urged women groups to mobilize, influence and advocate for modernizing fish markets by using this scheme.

The third category covered fisheries management and regulatory framework. Women fishing in creeks or the open sea can avail sea safety and security devices. Ananthan then appraised participants of a new scheme called Sagar Mitras. Under it, people from the community could act as extension agents and resource personnel to liaison with the state fisheries department. They would be paid a monthly salary. States like Andhra Pradesh had recruited a lot of Sagar Mitras. Graduates could apply for this scheme in each state.

In 2021, Ananthan said, fisheries department's total expenditure was around Rs. 880 crores (USD 11,199,426 mn). This, Ananthan pointed out, was less than half of what they would be required to spend (Rs. 2000 crores (USD 25,453,242 mn)) annually, if they adhered to the government's Rs. 9400 crore (USD 119,630,237 mn) estimate for five years. Sebastian interjected to point out that in 2021-22, the spend rose to Rs. 1401 crore (USD 17,829,996 mn) and the Finance Minister's speech suggested that in 2022-23, it would rise further to Rs. 2180 crore (USD 27,744,034 mn). This was a significant uptick. While agreeing with the numbers, Ananthan said that while the allocation was high, the actual expenditure remained low. This was true for the pre-Covid era too. He then moved on to discuss figures for Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Tamil Nadu, he said, had spent almost Rs. 750 crores (USD 9,544,966 mn) on fisheries development over the past three years. The expenditure was lower than the initial Rs. 900 crores (USD 11,453,959 mn) allocated but in 2016-17 and 2019-20 there had been a jump. While some of the funds came from the centre, others came from the state's mobilization of other resources. Almost two-thirds of the money



PS Ananthan, Principal Scientist, CIFE presenting on programmes and schemes related to the welfare of women fishworkers in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, India



went into subsidies and welfare benefits. Women were among the key beneficiaries with 26 per cent of the rise in expenditure going on to benefit them. In addition, the state was spending about Rs. 60 crores (USD 763,597 mn) each for women and for men as relief pay out every year. This was in addition to the special allowance for the non-fishing period.

Ananthan revealed that 60-80 per cent of the money for these schemes came from the state government and between 15-30 per cent from the centre. The remainder came from sources like the World Bank and NDCD. While there was no data on spending per fisherwoman or fisher family, crude estimates suggested that every kilometre of Tamil Nadu's 1000km coastline was receiving Rs. 45 lakhs (USD 5,727 mn). Every fishing village was receiving Rs. 79 lakh (USD 99,226) annually. The expenditure per active fisher (men and women) was about Rs. 1200 (USD 15).

Ananthan went on to compare these figures to that in West Bengal. The state spent about Rs. 274 crore (USD 3,487,094 mn) annually (data from 2017-20) on fisheries. This was less than half of Tamil Nadu's expenditure. He highlighted the fact that in West Bengal the central government's contribution was a mere 13 per cent. Most of it was met by the state—almost Rs. 141 crores (USD 1,794,454 mn) compared to the centre's Rs. 17 crores (USD 216,353 mn). He also noted that unlike Tamil Nadu, states like West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh had fisheries department staff posted at the block level. A third of the posts though were vacant. This was followed by a discussion on how fishing ban relief could not be accessed by women. Vivekanandan clarified that according to the department, the relief was awarded per family. The participants from Tamil Nadu interjected to point out that if the family did not have a male member, they could not access the relief. Aswathy said that this was the reason she had asked to define fishermen—the definition includes men, women and members of the LGBTQ community. It was also a reason to demand separate schemes for women.

On the topic of PMMSY, participants from Maharashtra said that since there was no clarity on whether only fisherwomen could access the scheme. Ananthan clarified saying that the scheme was meant to be inclusive and encouraged all who want to start fishing. He also said, that all central and state schemes, since 1974 have been designed in that way. He admitted to not being able to confirm if women in Tamil Nadu were actually getting the amounts stated.

Vivekanandan then revealed that most of the funding coming into Tamil Nadu, post-tsunami, from sources like the World Bank, was directed towards ports and infrastructure. While fisheries budgets had gone up, most were promoting environmentally problematic and employment reducing practices. Small-scale fisheries were being decimated by these investments. Participants from West Bengal bolstered this observation by pointing out that in their state, agricultural lands were being converted to fish farms. To understand fisheries, Aswathy said in conclusion, it was necessary to understand larger financial bodies and infrastructure plans. This would happen when cooperatives, sangams, SHGs and collectives were strengthened gained more knowledge.

### **6.3 Presentation: Rights at work of women fishworkers in light of Labour Codes and the ILO Convention 190**

*Resource person: Sonia George, General Secretary, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Kerala*

*Chair: Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust*

Sebastian introduced the topic by saying that while the new labour codes were fairly inclusive, much needed to be done to see how workers in fisheries value chains fit into them.

Unlike farmer movements and environmental movements, Sonia George said, fisheries movements were not always associated with large-scale labour movements. It was necessary to understand how larger labour welfare laws and schemes affect and influence the livelihoods of fishers in India. To do this though, first it was important to understand the difference between the informal and formal sector. To explain this simply Sonia chose to use women in fisheries as an example. Many women fishers worked from home or on the seashore. They did not have a defined workplace—a condition for formality. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, while fishers lost their jobs and were unable to pursue

their profession, those in formal workspaces earned a salary even while sitting at home. The fishing community did not get any compensation or relief from departments they depended on.

The informal sector, she said, does not have income security the way formal sector has. Social security schemes like Provident Fund (PF) and Employer State Insurance (ESI) exist only for the formal sector. Formal sector employers make substantial contributions to employee welfare. In fisheries, fishers were their own employers. Most laws, like minimum wage, Sonia said, were applicable only for the formal sector. Labour unions like SEWA had pushed for labour laws that would be inclusive to the informal sector, and give them rights for labour. These negotiations and dialogues have been underway since the late 1980s. One of the main objectives of the government appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Labour Commission in 2002, was to create labour legislation which recognizes the informal sector in the country.

Their suggestion to create an umbrella legislation to include informal workers was watered down to mere social security—the Unorganized Social Security Act—for informal workers, in 2008. With negotiations underway, various parties claimed that the number of laws in the country were a hurdle towards economic progress. For ease of business, labour laws needed to be made flexible. It was through this process that the labour laws and labour codes came into existence. As part of the process 44 labour laws were whittled down to 29, which were then amalgamated into 4 labour codes.

All labour laws related to wages, remuneration, bonus, gratuity and benefits—Minimum Wages Act, Equal remuneration for equal work, Bonus Act etc—are listed under the **wage code**. Right to Minimum Wage is an ILO Convention. The government is currently looking to include everyone under a minimum floor wage. Informal workers feel that this will further weaken women and marginalized communities. Work done by women is often considered to be unskilled, and therefore eligible only for minimum floor wages—paid a piece-rate or an hourly rate.

The **Industrial Relations Code** is applied only to the formal work force. The Trade Union Act was merged with the Industrial Relations Code. The code lists decorum for a strike—like necessitating a 60-day notice before a strike. It is already under implementation. **Social Security Code** and **Occupation Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code** are very important for women in the fishing sector. Nine Acts are now merged into the Social Security Code. ESI, EPF, gratuity, maternity benefit etc were separate acts listed under Social Security. These different acts have now become schemes and will not be applicable to workspaces with less than 10 workers. None therefore will be applicable to most informal sectors.

Schemes like—old age plan, pension, health insurance, Pradhan mantri avaaaz yojana or Pradhan mantri suraksha yojana—mainly designed for the poor, are available for the informal/organized sector now. None of them even get a chance to bargain and avail schemes like ESI and EPF. Two new categories—gig workers and platform workers—have been defined. So far, it is not clear who falls under this. The Occupation Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, while important, does not mention any hazards in relation to the informal economy. It talks extensively about mine workers, plantation workers etc. but again, not about establishments with less than 10 people. Domestic services are not included under this code. While work regulation is among its responsibilities, it does not mention anything about it.

Sebastian questioned how India had justified merging different Acts to the ILO. To this, Sonia responded by saying that their attempt had been to present it as being inclusive. In the Occupational Safety Code for example, it was agreed that women could work night shifts. This, Sonia said, had its pros and cons. Violence and harassment were never mentioned. Sonia then went on to talk about the e-SHRAM portal. All informal workers needed to register in the portal. Gaining an ID would allow them to avail benefits of the social security code.

Sebastian thanked Sonia and noted that the new labour code, did not extend to fisheries—more so if you claimed to be in the informal sector. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Labour Commission had recommended that fishing be treated a skilled occupation. Sebastian asked if claiming the sector comprises of skilled workers



Sonia George, General Secretary, SEWA Kerala presenting on Rights at work of women fishworkers in light of Labour Codes and the ILO Convention Number. 190 (2019)

would make any difference. Additionally, ILO Convention 188 (Work in Fishing) referred not to minimum wage or minimum floor wage but to regular wage. Sebastian asked if this citation could help fishers benefit from the wage code. Could the status of workers in fishing and fish processing be raised in a way where they could access the benefits these codes guaranteed them? Additionally, he asked if the sector was included in any of these codes at all?

Sonia said that people working in the informal economy were concerned about these new changes. Labour movements and unions were considering what to do. Manas asked if there was any chance that states could form their own rules, and in some cases have progressive rules. Sonia clarified by pointing out that their power was limited. All power lies with the central government. The code was now the labour law.

## 7. Session 6: Women's participation in decision making

Discussion on women's representation in fishworker organizations and associations, and their visibility in policy

*Panel: Purnima Meher, Jharna Acharya, Seeta Dasan, Jesu Rethinam*

*Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

Nalini went on to introduce the session. It's focus was on representation of women and women's issues in decision making bodies. Speakers from each state would give a personal perspective.

### 7.1 Purnima Meher, Maharashtra

Purnima Meher greeted everyone and introduced the Maharashtra Machimar Kruti Samiti and its objectives. When conversations about women's roles in organizations started, a lot of it centred around women empowerment and strengthening participation, even at the government level. It works in thought, Purnima said, but doesn't always translate into action. She thanked ICSF for the various issues discussed through the workshop. The training programmes and information would enable many women fishers to raise questions at community meetings.



Purnima detailed the multiple problems faced by women in fisheries. Their demands were rarely met and issues rarely discussed. Chief among them was a lack of financial assistance. In Maharashtra, they had undertaken a three-day dharna (strike) to raise awareness of these issues. Pu

rnama went on to give an example of the government apathy towards women fishers. At the time of the cyclone, the Maharashtra government provided financial assistance to fishermen (boat owners) and vendors. No mention was made of women fishers, vendors or collectors. Jyoti Meher, secretary of the National Fishworkers Forum and member of the Maharashtra Machimar Kruti Samiti put forth this concern to the central government. Subsequently, financial assistance for women was considered and sanctioned. But the money was never awarded. It all felt a bit unfair, considering men availed of it with relative ease.

## 7.2 Jharna Acharya, West Bengal

Jharna Acharya started off by saying she has been working on tribal and tribal forest act issues for two decades. She joined DMF in 2015 and was now the Additional Secretary. She went on to provide some background of DMF's women's wing, formed in 2018. The wing has 10 members right now. Their primary role over the last five years was to form committees at the local, panchayat and block levels. They collected and recorded demands and issues raised at these levels and sent them to the Minister in charge of the fisheries department. Women representatives subsequently met the minister. They spoke about the need for a 20 per cent representation of women in the budget and in policies. They were assured of action, after discussion with the Chief Minister. This conversation happened prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the state elections. It has not progressed since.

## 7.3 Seeta Dasan, Kerala

Seeta Dasan said the fisheries department only conducted meetings with trade union leaders. SEWA are the only women's union at the meeting. This proves to be a huge problem, because the other unions focus solely on men's issues. Women fishworkers' issues are brought up only by SEWA and are often not supported. There is a general crisis in fisheries. While resources are depleting, competition—even in small-scale fisheries—is rising. Subsequently, catching effort, fishing



Panel of women fishworker leaders discussing on women's representation in fishworkers' organizations and associations, and their visibility in policy making. (Sitting L to R Seeta Dasan, Jesu Rethinam, Jharna Acharya, Purnima Meher and Nalini Nayak)

gear and craft numbers is also on the up. Now, even small-scale crafts require at least Rs. 1 crore (USD 12,727 mn) capital. Kerala needs a management policy that would regulate and control fishing. Women, Seeta said, can bring in ideas that aid conversation, because they understand the pain of regenerating resource in a way men don't.

#### **7.4 Jesu Rethinam, Tamil Nadu**

Jesu Rethinam said that while women representation had increased at all levels, this hadn't translated into political clout. This was especially true when demands were discussed and policies formulated in discussions with FWOs etc. Most of the time, the focus was on fisheries and its associated economies, but not on fishers themselves. While reservation guarantees women some posts in the panchayat and even Parliament, they are rarely given opportunity to engage and contribute further. Women contribute to the economy and need to be heard too. Jesu said that women's demands to include allied sectors within fisher movements was not well received. Their rights were related to both land and water and needed to be claimed. Jesu asked that ICSF engage with women fishers more and help educate them on international dialogues, positions instruments and debates.

Nalini thanked participants for not hesitating in bringing up issues and efforts. She emphasized the need to articulate them more freely and often. She ended by quoting a slogan from 1987-89—"if there are no women in fisheries there is no fish in the sea".

## DAY 3: SUNDAY, 10 APRIL 2022

### 8. Session 7: Action points for implementation at State (Provincial) and National level

*Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

#### 8.1 Group Discussion 3 to identify action points at the state and national level

Participants from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra opened the day's proceedings by singing songs about the sea, fish and the markets. Nalini thanked them and commenced the day's activities. The first was a group session, with participants sitting state-wise to discuss issues related to fisheries. They would also list out actions for the future at the national and state level.



Participants from Tamil Nadu. State-wise groups discuss on action points required at state and national level for bettering lives of women in fisheries

### 9. Session 8: Presentations of Group Discussion 3

*Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust*

The discussions for the states were summarized by Nikita Gopal (West Bengal), Nivedita Shridhar (Tamil Nadu), Archanna Prasad (Kerala) and Vishakha Gupta (Maharashtra & Goa). The summaries are in Annexure 4.

#### 9.1 Discussion on action points, organizational matters and elements for the workshop statement

Some of the key action points raised by the state groups were:

- \* All women fish harvesters must be recognized and documented. Their quantitative contribution to fish harvest also has to be recognized.





Rapporteurs presenting the action points on the need to strengthen state level platforms of women in fisheries , India (Sitting L to R- Nivedita Shridhar, Vishakha Gupta, Nikita Gopal, Archanna Prasad)

- \* There need to be an effort to strengthen state level platforms of women in fisheries and work towards women in fisheries policy
- \* In West Bengal many trade unions looked at the interests of trawlers and motorized boat owners. These ideologies were in conflict with women in small-scale fisheries. They expected the workshop to help them form a united policy for their rights. Otherwise the workshop held little meaning for the future.
- \* Nalini said West Bengal has similar problems to Kerala. Working with smaller unions was the only way forward.
- \* Participants from Maharashtra said it was important to build alliances with people they could trust.
- \* It was important to talk to others, participants from Tamil Nadu said. It would ensure some support and also ensure people did not go against them. Alliances needed to be built at the state level.
- \* Men and women needed to be compensated equally during disasters.
- \* There needed to be specific budget allocations for women in fisheries
- \* Fishing villages needed access to drinking water.
- \* Participants said that customary land rights—housing as well as fishing— needed to be honoured. Furthermore, the government could ensure use of housing packages by acquiring land adjacent to the coast.
- \* In Mumbai, fishers could not move away from the coast. Development control rules were being integrated into policy.
- \* Nalini said a rise a sea levels would affect Mumbai first. Fishers needed to claim land whenever it was available. She also pointed out that no state, bar Kerala, had discussed climate change and biodiversity.

- \* There needed to be more awareness of fisheries resources and managing them.
- \* Nalini emphasized that it was necessary to reduce the number of boats, to make fisheries sustainable. It was a sensitive issues, and needs to be negotiated in the future.
- \* Kerala agreed and revealed that even traditional fishing families owned multiple boats. This was because of government commissions. Even single boats had multiple engines and large nets—disqualifying them as a small fishery
- \* There needed to be a process to build more awareness about existing laws.

Nalini asked participants if they wanted to continue this national platform. Participants agreed and nominated the following to the national committee. The committee would table the common issues for discussion.

Maharashtra: Ujwala Patil and Jyoti Meher.

West Bengal: Jharna Acharya and Tarulata Pradhan

Tamil Nadu: Amutha and Indumati

Kerala: Sonia George and Seeta Dasan

Goa: Sujal Govekar and Sashikala Govekar

## 10. Session 9: Workshop Statement

Nalini presented the statement prepared by the workshop statement drafting committee. The statement called for developing national guidelines for small-scale fisheries and national policy for women in fisheries, with wider consultation and participation of fishers and fishworkers at various levels (The statement can be found in Annexure 5). Nalini finally thanked the ICSF team, resource persons, translators and Asha Nivas Social Service Centre for hosting the event.



Nalini Nayak, Trustee ICSF, presenting the SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries workshop statement

## Annexure 1

### Workshop Programme

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust

NATIONAL WORKSHOP:

SSF GUIDELINES AND WOMEN IN FISHERIES, INDIA

Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

8-10 April, 2022

### PROGRAMME

Day 1: Friday, 8 April 2022 (Regional Exchanges)	
9:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 11:15	<p><b>Opening Session</b>  <i>Welcome address: Manas Roshan, Programme officer, ICSF Trust</i></p> <p><b>Overview of the Workshop</b>  <i>Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i>  <i>Chair: V. Vivekanandan, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p> <p><b>Introduction of participants and their organizations</b>                      Sharing one positive experience and one challenge experienced during the 2020-22 period from each state:                      Goa                      Kerala                      Maharashtra                      Tamil Nadu                      West Bengal</p>
11:15 – 11:30	Tea
11:30 – 13:00	<p><b>Session 1: Exchanges between fisherwomen collectors/processors/pickers on their livelihood issues-- testimony by one member from each group</b>  <i>Panel:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Shellfish gatherers of Palghar, Maharashtra</i></li> <li>- <i>Seaweed collectors of Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu</i></li> <li>- <i>Tiger widows of Sundarbans, West Bengal</i></li> <li>- <i>Active woman fisher, West Bengal</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	<p><b>Session 2: Exchanges between women fishworkers</b>                      Discussion on contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries to food and livelihood security; issues facing traditional livelihoods and knowledge; rights of women to coastal resources                      Goa                      Kerala                      Maharashtra                      Tamil Nadu                      West Bengal  <i>Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i>  <i>Rapporteurs: Archanna Prasad, Vishakha Gupta, Nivedita Shridhar and Manas Roshan</i></p>

15:30 – 16:00	Tea
16:00 – 17:00	<p><b>Session 3: Biodiversity, climate change and sustainable fisheries</b>  <b>Linking fishworkers' lives and livelihoods to national and international environmental processes</b>  <i>Resource persons: Manas Roshan, Programme Officer and Nivedita Shridhar, Programme Officer, ICSF Trust</i>  <i>Chair: N. Venugopalan, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust</i></p>
<p><b>Day 2: Saturday, 9 April, 2022</b>  <b>(The state of women in fisheries in India, and the SSF Guidelines)</b></p>	
09:00 – 10:00	<p><b>Group Discussion 1:</b>  <b>Addressing fishing communities' vulnerabilities to natural disasters, pollution, climate change impacts and loss of coastal commons</b>  <i>Chair: Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology</i>  <i>Rapporteurs: Archanna Prasad, Manas Roshan, Nivedita Shridhar and Vishakha Gupta</i></p>
10:00 – 10:45	<p><b>Session 4: Women fish harvesters in India: Issues and challenges</b>  <i>Resource person: Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology</i>  <i>Chair: PS Ananthan, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education</i></p>
10:45 – 11:00	Tea
11:00 – 13:00	<p><b>Session 5: Women's employment, working conditions and social security</b>  <b>ICSF Study on fisheries sector budget and socio-economic status of women in fishing communities in Tamil Nadu</b>  <i>Resource person: Aswathy Senan, Independent Researcher</i>  <i>Chair: Manas Roshan, Programme Officer, ICSF Trust</i></p> <p><b>National programmes and schemes to enhance the livelihoods of women fishworkers and budget allocations</b>  <i>Resource person: PS Ananthan, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education</i>  <i>Chair: Nikita Gopal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology</i></p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:30	<p><b>Session 5 (continued...)</b>  <b>Rights at work of women fishworkers in light of Labour Codes and the ILO Convention 190</b>  <i>Resource person: Sonia George, General Secretary, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Kerala</i>  <i>Chair: Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p>
15:00 – 15:30	Tea
15:30 – 17:00	<p><b>Session 6: Women's participation in decision making</b>  <b>Discussion on women's representation in fishworker organizations and associations, and their visibility in policy and legislation</b>  <i>Panel: Jharna Acharya, Jesu Rethinam, Purnima Meher and Seeta Dasan</i>  <i>Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p>



<b>Day 3: Sunday, 10 April 2022</b> <b>(National Platform for women fishworkers, India: Action Points)</b>	
09:00 – 10:00	<p>Session 7: Action for implementation at State (Provincial) and National level Group Discussion 3 to identify action points at the state and national level</p> <p>Goa Kerala Maharashtra Tamil Nadu West Bengal</p> <p><i>Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i> <i>Rapporteurs: Archanna Prasad, Nikita Gopal, Nivedita Shridhar and Vishakha Gupta</i></p>
10:00 – 10:30	Tea
10:30 – 11:30 11:30- 12. 15	<p><b>Session 8: Presentations of Group Discussion 3</b> <i>Presenters: Archanna Prasad, Nikita Gopal, Nivedita Shridhar and Vishakha Gupta</i> <i>Chair: Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p> <p>Discussion on action points, organizational matters and elements for the workshop statement</p>
12:15 – 13:15	<p><b>Meeting of the workshop statement drafting committee</b> <i>Coordinator: Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p>
13:15 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 15:30	<p><b>Session 9: Workshop Statement (Draft)</b> <i>Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p>
15:30 – 15:45	<p><b>Vote of Thanks</b> <i>Nalini Nayak, Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p>



Participants registering for the National workshop on SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries at Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai

## Annexure 2

### Group Discussion 1

A summary of discussions on the contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries to food and livelihood security; issues facing traditional livelihoods and knowledge; women's rights to coastal resources.

#### KERALA

##### *Food Security*

- While they could access food during the pandemic, participants said, larger fishing groups struggled.
- The use of smaller mesh sized nets, light fishing and underwater cameras has hurt juvenile fish stock and will future resources.

##### *Livelihoods*

- Access to fishing grounds has reduced due to construction industry and tourism.
- The construction of large new harbours, such as Perumathura in Thiruvananthapuram has restricted access to the coast. The fishing community are not consulted in planning and development.
- Fishing communities' livelihoods are negatively impacted by these changes.
- Increase in frequency of cyclones threatens homes, lives, community buildings and fishing crafts and gear.
- Women lack a dedicated market space. They are being pushed out and are forced into street vending.
- Existing markets are in poor condition and need renovation. They lack basic facilities like clean and hygienic bathrooms, potable water, and lighting.
- MATSYAFED provides financial support to fishers at 4 per cent interest. However, these schemes are neither transparent nor reach actual beneficiaries.
- Participants suggested the formation of women specific fisher collectives which prioritize and directly benefit fisherwomen.

##### *Social Security*

- There is sporadic insurance cover for workplace accidents. Furthermore, there is little awareness about women's eligibility for state insurance schemes.
- Fishing villages lack clean and safe drinking and proper drainage facilities.

#### MAHARASHTRA AND GOA

##### *Food Security*

- An increase in construction, industry, power plants and tourism has increased pollution on the coast. Industries often release untreated wastewater directly into canals, streams, and oceans. This has a decrease in the availability of fish, reduced its quality and increased plastic pollution.
- In Palghar, there has been an increased in mangroves because of the efforts of the Forest Department. As It has also led to a rise in variety and quantity of different species. Unfortunately, the department does not allow fishing in the forests. Participants want to engage in discussion with them so they can sustainably harvest from the mangroves
- During the pandemic, returning migrant workers began collecting shellfish within women harvesters' fishing grounds—often engaging in destructive practices to do so. These practices have damaged the ecosystem and have a long-term impact on marine resources.

*Livelihoods*

- There is no dedicated or sufficient market space for women in Maharashtra and Goa. Women vendors are pushed out of existing markets and forced to sell on streets. In Goa, while dedicated market spaces exist, women vendors find it tough to compete with street markets set up during the pandemic.
- Women vendors are forced to compete in street markets with no facilities. They are often the victims of police harassment and abuse.
- Women also require drying yards, fish processing areas and net mending spaces.
- Construction of new ports and harbours has pushed them out of traditional fishing grounds and community spaces.

*Social security*

- To protect fishing villages and communities the initial CRZ notification was supposed to map all fishing villages. To do this, a committee was created in 2013. It included representatives from the Fisheries Department, Urban Development Department, Revenue Department, BMC and CMFRI. The mapping is yet to be done. Industries are easily encroaching coastal land. In Mumbai and Palghar the Collector has been requested to prepare these maps, recognize and demarcate fishing villages.
- Radiation from the Tarapur atomic plant has led to an increase in cancer cases among women
- The Mumbai metropolitan area is expanding towards Palghar. This development, and the subsequent pollution is worrying.
- In Palghar, fishers don't have pattas for their land and homes. This leaves them vulnerable to public and private developers.
- Due to an increase in industry and associated pollutants, access to safe drinking water has become a problem in Palghar. Women want industries to treat and release or reuse the water.
- In Goa, fishers and other traditional coastal communities are not allowed to make modifications to their old homes and land due to CRZ amendments.
- Community spaces need proper infrastructure to support working fisherwomen. This includes clean and regularly maintained toilets, clean drinking water and community lighting.

**TAMIL NADU***Food Security*

- Water pollution because of industry has severely affected the quality of fish and other marine resources. Participants called for polluters to be heavily fined.

*Livelihoods*

- Fish price is currently determined by the merchants. Women want to collectivize and gain the right to determine the selling rate.
- Compensation received for ban period is meagre and insufficient. Moreover, women do not receive any compensation whatsoever. This further exacerbates economic stress for women headed households.
- While women have received training to process value added products they lacked the training and support to market them.
- Despite the boom in seaweed collection, collectors haven't been able to profit much. The rate at which merchants purchase fresh seaweed is Rs. 15/kg (USD 0.19/kg), while dried seaweed is bought at Rs. 80/kg (USD 1/kg), which makes it extremely unfeasible for women collectors.

- A representative from the fisheries department said a dedicated seaweed policy to protect women collectors is being developed.
- Women need safety and support while working. Currently they face discrimination and harassment from bus conductors, drivers and auctioneers. They are verbally humiliated and refused entry aboard public transport because of the smell. They also face sexual harassment at markets.
- There is a need for dedicated market spaces which have basic infrastructure and facilities such as clean and hygienic toilets, potable water and lighting.
- In Chennai (Neelangarai) the market space for women was removed to widen a road. They were promised the establishment of an alternative dedicated market space. It is yet to materialize.

#### *Social Security*

- Women cannot access formal credit and are turned away from banks.
- Despite continuing to work in fisheries, women and men above 59 years of age are removed from fishery cooperatives and can no longer access associated benefits and schemes.
- Women with children face several barriers to access pension schemes. They need to obtain a separate ration card, without their children on it. This involves navigating red tape at the Village Administrative Office. They often have to bribe relevant officials.
- Widows find it extremely challenging to avail widow pension schemes.

### **WEST BENGAL**

#### *Food security*

- There was a reduction in income due to loss of fishing and working days during the Covid-19 lockdowns. During the lockdown, vulnerable fishing communities in remote areas were unable to access food rations.
- In the first few months of the pandemic, small-scale fishers were allowed to fish, while larger boats were disallowed. As a result, fishing communities could supply the local market and support their household.

#### *Livelihoods*

- Fishing communities in the Sundarbans face harassment from forest department officials. The Forest Department issues a small number of Boat License Certificates (BLC) and permits collection of honey. However only 923 BLCs have been issued. Many practicing fishers remain unrecognized.
- Victims of tiger and crocodile attacks receive no compensation if they do not have a BLC.
- In Soula (Contai, East Midnapur) beach tourism has pushed women and men from fishing communities out from their community. This occasionally leads to conflicts. At the same time, increased demand for quality fish from the hospitality industry, usually at higher prices, has supported fishers and vendors in the area.
- In markets, male fish agents and wholesalers harass and push women out of market spaces. Women have demanded a dedicated market space and exclusive transport services to market their fish.

#### *Social security*

- An increase in pollutants and plastics in the water, has caused an increase in skin diseases among women fish seed collectors in East Midnapur and South 24 Parganas.



- West Bengal’s ‘Swasthya Sathi’ scheme cards, introduced in December 2016, offer basic health cover for secondary and tertiary care for up to Rs. 5 lakh (USD 6361) per annum per family. Private hospitals are required to charge subsidized rates for treatment under the scheme.
- Safe and clean drinking water is not easily available. In the Sundarbans one tube well often serves an entire village and is not always functional. In East Midnapur, some villages have access to piped water and others depend on a few tube wells.
- During the pandemic, government support was limited. There were no fisheries schemes. A few existing state welfare schemes that have benefited fisherwomen.
- The ‘Lakshmi Bhandar’ scheme provides basic income support to female heads of households (Monthly Rs. 500 (USD 6) for general category; Rs. 1000 (USD 13) for SC/ST). Many fisherwomen have availed this scheme.
- Children’s social development and mental health was badly affected by the pandemic. Child marriage has risen.
- Several fishers have availed the Kanyashree scheme for girls’ higher education, introduced in 2015. It provides an annual scholarship of Rs. 750 (USD 10) and a one-time grant of Rs. 25,000 (USD 318).



Participants from Maharashtra and Goa during their workshop registration

## Annexure 3

### Group Discussion 2

#### Addressing fishing communities' vulnerabilities to natural disasters, pollution, climate change impacts and loss of coastal commons

#### KERALA

*How are your communities affected by environmental issues in your state/ district? And how do they address it through their organizations?*

- There has been an increase in the intensity and number of climate disasters.
- Unsustainable fishing practices, have created conflicts between different fishing groups. Different fishing groups are supported by different churches in the region. This is also occasionally cause for conflict.
- Pollution and a lack of waste disposal services in public areas such as markets and housing areas affects community health. This is magnified after natural disasters, when excess water remains stagnant for long durations.
- Issues are not taken up collectively. Individuals demands have gone unaddressed. Raising them also leads to backlash and isolation from within the community.

*Are these issues taken up by your local panchayat? If not, why and what provisions/strategies exist to take these up?*

- Panchayats were instrumental in providing services such as community kitchen, quarantine facilities and ambulance services during the pandemic and during disaster rehabilitation.
- A plan for collective rainwater harvesting to regenerate the water table, was approved three years back. It has not been implemented yet.
- The "Haritha Sena", an initiative started by the Panchayats, works on sanitation and waste disposal in different coastal districts.
- Churches in the region have supported rehabilitation and disaster relief activities.
- Participants weren't satisfied with the panchayat's work to support fishing communities—especially fisherwomen.
- Panchayats don't provide women platforms or forums for discussion.
- Participants suggested strategies to address this lacuna. This included unionizing local women to take up issues and encouraging active participation of women in all Gram Sabha meetings.

*Do you see women in decision making processes at the local, state and national levels? How can women's participation in these processes be improved?*

- Participants do not see women represented within decision making processes. Those that are members in the development committees, do not raise fisherwomen's concerns.
- Women are not consulted prior for Gram Sabha meetings. The meetings themselves are not discussion forums. They focus more on compiling individual grievances.
- To improve women's participation, participants suggested strengthening ground level mobilization of fisherwomen via regular meetings. This could be done by strengthening union activities and addressing issues in a collective manner.
- They demanded the Gram Sabha be a space where women can raise issues. Women should also be consulted during agenda creation and scheduling.
- Development committees in coastal districts must have women representatives from fishing communities.

## MAHARASHTRA AND GOA

*How are your communities affected by environmental issues in your state/district? And how do they address it through their organization? For example, conflict between fisher groups, pollution, cyclones and floods.*

- Over the last few years, the west coast has been affected by four cyclones—Nisarg, Tauktae, Maha and Kyarr. An increase in dangerous weather events has damaged property and taken lives.
- Due to rising sea levels, coastal erosion and erratic weather patterns, the fishing community has faced several problems. During high tides, water ingresses and floods households. Common areas for drying and processing fish are affected by flooding as well as by unseasonal rains. Women do not receive any compensation for the incurred loss.
- Stronger waves, changing ocean temperature, rising sea levels, strong wind patterns, cyclones and pollution has resulted in a significant fall in the availability of shellfish along the shoreline.
- In some fish species, women have noticed changes in fish breeding. They do not understand why this is happening and requested more information on this phenomenon.
- Increased mining, oil drilling, processing and other industries releases effluents in the water. Fishing communities have to deal with their effects. Plastic pollution is also a huge concern, especially in areas which support tourism.
- Oil spills from existing oil rigs are extremely destructive. ONGC and other oil corporations conduct seismic surveys to locate untapped oil reserves. It is impossible to fish around these areas. During the peak fishing months of December-March, oil companies conduct dredging activities and disrupt the entire fishery. Fishers do not receive any compensation for these losses. In some cases, the contractor might offer a one-time compensation to placate the fishers. It is neither enough, nor sustainable.

*Are these issues taken up by your local panchayat? If no, why not, and what provisions strategies exist to take these up?*

- There is a biodiversity committee at the gram panchayat. However, the funds are not properly budgeted and either unutilized or misused, rendering the committee non-functional. The disaster management committee is another non-functioning institution. These committees reserve 30 per cent of their seats for women. However, many of those seats are taken by the wives of leader. They are only there in name, and do not participate.
- There is no provision to compensate women for losses incurred due to the issues above. The revenue department is supposed to conduct assessments on these losses but do not fulfil this responsibility. Participants stressed that fishers should receive compensation, like farmers do for crop failure due to climate change.
- To protect coastlines from erosion, some villages have a protective sea wall. Due to rising sea levels, these are often insufficient. The women suggested that more sea walls be built and the height of those existing be increased.
- Representatives pointed out that the variety of different activities that women do in fisheries are all placed under the vague umbrella of 'allied activities'. They would like more categories to be recognized.
- The e-SHRAM card has been helpful. However, the fact that it needs to be linked to their Aadhar card and the registered number has been a.
- After cyclones, boat owners received compensation from the government. After women agitated for compensation, the fisheries department announced a scheme with conditions. Women vendors needed to purchase an insulated icebox for Rs. 6000 (USD 76), then provide receipts and GST certificates to their respective fishing societies. On proof of purchase, women received the funds in their bank accounts. Women pointed out that men received compensation without any conditions or complications. Furthermore, no women were consulted before the scheme

was implemented. The scheme was poorly administered. Fishing societies were responsible for providing proof of purchase but the funds were transferred directly to the women's bank accounts. Many did not need an icebox and instead used that money for other expenses. This resulted in faulty paperwork and subsequently the government blacklisted the societies. It was through these societies that other subsidies, benefits and government programmes were accessed. Ultimately the fishing community suffered.

- In Mumbai only women with licenses could access this scheme. Only 40 per cent of women vendors have licenses which meant the majority were left out. It also left out women who work in fishing, harvesting, processing, drying, smoking etc.

***Do you see women in decision making processes at the local, state and national levels? How can women's participation in such processes be improved?***

- While there are some strong women representatives participating in these processes, they are often dismissed. On occasion, men actively try to shut them down. More women need to mobilize and engage in order for their voices to be heard.
- Participants stressed the need for capacity building facilitated by fisherwomen themselves. Vocal and well-informed women could work and strengthen the work of others.

#### **TAMIL NADU**

***How are your communities affected by environmental issues in your state/district? And how do they address it through their organization? For example, conflict between fisher groups, pollution, cyclones and floods.***

- In the recent past, especially since the 2004 tsunami, the weather has become increasingly unpredictable and harsh. Fishers, reliant on traditional knowledge, now struggle to predict weather, water and species patterns. Multi-day fishing trips have also reduced.
- In case of dangerous weather, government authorities give an early warning a day in advance. However, if fishers do go to sea after the neither the government nor the village authorities take responsibility for any mishaps. While vessels have several communication instruments onboard, they often fail to work beyond 10 nautical miles.
- Plastic pollution in coastal and open waters is a significant problem. Plastic pollution often changes the color of the water. This is a significant challenge for fishers using traditional knowledge. They struggle to predict water quality and shoals.
- In Pudukkuppam, Cuddalore district, construction of a thermal power plant and jetty has affected the local fishing community. Coal dust and pollutants have affected fishing households and community spaces such as the beach, processing and drying areas and markets. The construction has impacted the natural movement of sand and is creating accretion and erosion.
- Women from Pichavaram said tourism has impacted their livelihood. They are now being denied entry into mangrove forests that have been their traditional fishing grounds. The authorities have not considered employing people from fisher families into the tourism sector either.
- An increase in the number of aquaculture farms in coastal lands poses a number of threats. The released effluents, pesticides, fertilizers and other additives affect wild species. These pollutants also filter into ground water.

***Are these issues taken up by your local panchayat? If no, why not, and what provisions strategies exist to take these up?***

- Women usually reach out to the sarpanch. However, they are not given due attention and often no action is taken. Furthermore changes in the sarpanch and panchayat makes it difficult to hold people accountable.
- Some women have approached MLAs, BDOs and area councilors. If they get an audience, these leaders often pacify them but rarely take any constructive action.



***Do you see women in decision making processes at the local, state and national levels? How can women's participation in such processes be improved?***

- While not official, women are disallowed from participating in Panchayats in the state. Issues need to be brought their husbands, sons or other men in their families. Women who engage in the panchayat are socially ostracized.
- Women face problems at home as well. Men do not take their concerns seriously and try to silence them to avoid social ostracism themselves. Participants stressed they need to raise awareness on women's rights among men too.
- Sharing information, good practices and experiences through forums such as the women's platform and WhatsApp groups is very helpful.

## **WEST BENGAL**

***How are your communities affected by environmental issues in your state/district? And how do they address it through their organizations? For example, conflict between fisher group, pollution, cyclones, floods.***

- Pollution of coastal and inshore waters has led to a decline in catch.
- Fishing communities have been displaced by issues of coastal degradation, dredging and other development projects such as ports, harbours and non-fishery related industries.
- In East Midnapur water has entered coastal areas, resulting in a loss of community coastal spaces, landing sites where fish is dried and processed, as well as homes and villages of fishing communities.
- Women reported conflict between small fishers and trawlers in 24 Parganas.
- During the pandemic, fish stocks and diversity had revived due to reduced pollution and fishing pressure.

***Are these issues taken up by your local panchayat? If no, why not, and what provisions/strategies exist to take these up?***

- Conflicts between small-scale fishers and other gear and boat groups are taken up by DMF. They represent small fishers and negotiate with trawler owners or boat owners' associations.
- Even in cases where the panchayat comprises entirely of members from fishing communities, they play no role in fisheries.
- Panchayats in inland areas, in comparison, are more active in the management of fisheries activities.
- Across the state, panchayats are responsible for communicating warnings for storms and moving coastal communities to shelters constructed by the district administration.

***Do you see women in decision making processes at the local, state and national levels? How can women's participation in these processes be improved?***

- Women are mainly active in SHGs formed with the help of DMF. Their say in decision making, however, is still limited.
- In Sundarbans, South 24 Parganas, women take their issues directly to local panchayats and block development officers.
- DMF women leaders deal directly with ministers and fisheries department officials. In other areas such as Digha and Contai, the organizational committees of DMF are strong, so women go through their leaders.
- Through SHGs in inland areas, women have leases for water bodies along with schemes for nets, ice boxes.
- Within the Sundarbans, women are comparatively more alone and unorganized. There are about 20 SHGs in the region with approximately 10 members in each group.

## Annexure 4

### Group Discussion 3

Group Discussion to identify action points at the state and national level

#### KERALA

##### *National action points*

- Strict regulation is needed for fishing vessels and gear to curtail unsustainable fishing practices. These regulations also need to be enforced.
- Social security schemes available for men and women from fishing communities is not equitable. This gendered gap needs to be rectified.
- Compensations for fisher women who lose work due to climate change and erratic weather conditions is a must.
- The process and compensation received for governmental acquisition of coastal land needs to be readdressed. The government needs to allocate alternate land close to the shore so that the rehabilitation doesn't impact their livelihood.
- Women harvesters, gleaners and fishers need to be recognized as full-time fishworkers at a national level and treated accordingly.
- A larger gender disaggregated budget allocation is needed for women in small-scale fisheries.

##### *State action points*

- Public market spaces need to be renovated. Women must be provided safe and hygienic conditions—including clean public toilets, running and potable water and community lighting.
- Market committees and harbour management committees need to have women representatives from fishing communities.
- The acute drinking water shortage in fishing villages due to pollution, waste, aquaculture and contamination needs to be addressed.
- Women migrant workers in Kerala working in fish processing units need safe and decent living and working conditions. They must be granted the same rights as local fisherwomen.



Workshop participants from Kerala discussing action points at state and national level

## MAHARASHTRA AND GOA

### *National action points*

- Fisherwomen—processors, dryers, harvesters, fishers, gatherers—need to be documented and recognized as workers.
- As recognized workers they should be entitled to the same compensation, benefits and social security nets as men.
- Women workers and their activities and roles need to be clearly separated and defined. Currently the umbrella term of “allied activities’ makes the diversity of their work invisible.
- Policy drafting committees must have women representatives from the SSF community. Policies need to have a separate and clearly defined budgets for women.
- A comprehensive census of women in fisheries is needed.
- A separate department of fisheries needs to be established across all districts.

### *State action points*

- The rapid expansion of the Mumbai Metropolitan Area towards Palghar is worrying for fishing communities. Fishing communities must be engaged for the development of this plan and their livelihoods and way of life secured.
- In Goa, fishing communities face high levels of red tape for renovations or new constructions on their properties. The tourism industry doesn’t face the same challenges. Heritage committees in Goa need to have representatives from fishing communities.
- In Goa, floating jetty plans were approved by the government and the fishing community. Following that, adjacent land was purchased by a private party who is not providing an NOC for the jetty to be constructed. This conflict needs to be addressed and a precedent needs to be set for the future.



Workshop participants from Maharashtra and Goa starting day 3 of the workshop with Marathi fisherfolk song



## TAMIL NADU

### *National action points*

- Compensation received for natural disasters needs to be more substantial to realistically cover the costs of damage and rebuilding. Women should receive a dedicated compensation package.
- Fishing communities' right to coastal lands needs to be strengthened. Conditional pattas leave fishing communities vulnerable to government evacuation and resettlement. A permanent patta needs to be created and issued.
- Women in small-scale fisheries require upskilling, training and support to compete with the rapidly changing market.
- Women should be provided compensation for injury due to fisheries related activities, just like men. They should also receive compensation for losses incurred due to erratic weather conditions and events such as cyclones, floods etc.

### *State action points*

- Dedicated seaweed drying yards need to be established in Ramanathapuram for seaweed collectors.
- An increasing number of women have graduate level education. However, there are no commensurate opportunities for employment available to them in their local areas and they often resort to fish vending. The fisheries department should employ educated women from the fishing community.
- Climate mitigation needs to be more holistic and inclusive of women from fishing communities. Women participants rejected the state government's proposed plan for building stone and concrete sea walls. They want investment in sustainable options such as bio-shields to arrest coastal erosion and protect the shore.
- Public market spaces need to have basic facilities of toilets, clean running water and potable water. Market spaces should also be secure and safe for women to use and with lockers to safeguard their property.



Workshop participants from Tamil Nadu discussing action points to feed into the workshop statement



## WEST BENGAL

### *National action points*

- A national day should be selected and declared for women in small-scale fisheries.
- There is need for a national policy and separate budget allocation for women in small-scale fisheries.
- There should be a separate budget for natural disaster relief and compensation for women.

### *State action points*

- Women working in small-scale fisheries need formal recognition.
- A formal dispute resolution mechanism must be created between the forest department, police and fishing communities.
- Women participants demanded that the Sundarbans be brought under the aegis of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and it be properly implemented.
- The tenure rights of fishing communities in the Sundarbans needs to be recognized and formalized.
- The community's rights to use commons like beaches for fisheries related activities needs to be established and protected.
- A broad-based holistic insurance-cum-compensation-pension scheme for Tiger Widows in the Sundarbans should be created and implemented.
- Markets and fishing villages need to have basic infrastructure facilities such as clean drinking water and safe and hygienic toilets.



Workshop participants from West Bengal discussing on action points at State and national level

## Annexure 5

### Workshop Statement

National Workshop on SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India

#### 10 April 2022

We, the women representatives of marine and inland fishworkers' organizations (associations, cooperatives, trade unions, and self-help groups) and fishing communities from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Goa and Kerala; and women earning their livelihood mainly from collecting shellfish and seaweed from nearshore waters, coastal and marine fishing, beach-drying and processing fish, and street, or door-to-door, vending;

Having met at the National Workshop: the SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India, at Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai, Tamil Nadu on 8-10 April 2022—a meeting of the national women in fisheries platform—to make our role in fisheries more visible and to avail of our rights, to enhance our livelihood space along the value chain and to get our due recognition from the Government;

Took stock of the impact of Covid-19 on our lives and livelihoods, and adequacy of pandemic relief and recovery measures;

Are concerned about the negative impact of industrial pollution and extreme weather events on our fishing and fish-vending activities;

Note the negative impact of coastal degradation, overfishing, pandemics and natural disasters are disproportionately borne by women of fishing communities;

Are troubled by our continued invisibility in all activities along the fisheries value chain, in spite of our valuable contribution to local nutrition and food security;

Draw the attention of the Union, State and local authorities and fishworkers' organizations to redress our grievances:

1. Safeguard marine, coastal and inland living resources, and secure access to adjacent land, to protect life and livelihoods of fishing communities; in this regard, address all forms of aquatic pollution arising from oil spills, transportation, sand mining, plastics, sewage and industrial wastes;
2. Enhance preferential treatment of women in all relevant fisheries policies, legislation and schemes at the State and Union level; collate and disseminate information on state-level schemes available to women fishers;
3. Expand scope of social protection schemes in fisheries to benefit men and women, especially female-headed. Register and provide licences to all women fishers and fishworkers, including gleaners (hand pickers and harvesters), and develop a database;
4. Extend adequate social protection benefits such as education benefits, old age benefits, survivor benefits, closed-season benefits, and compensating income loss from climate change/pollution impacts to women and female-headed households;
5. Ensure budget allocation under relevant fisheries and social protection schemes are proportional to the needs of women fishers and fishworkers and are disbursed in a timely manner. Improve processes and address gaps to fully recognize the right to social protection of women fishers and fishworkers;
6. Improve participation of women from fishing communities in women & child development, and social development departments, to develop specific schemes for women fishers and fishworkers;

7. Equip local governance systems to promote participation of women in the design of social development programmes and allocation of resources;
8. Develop national guidelines for small-scale fisheries and national policy for women in fisheries, with wider consultation and participation of fishers and fishworkers at various levels;
9. Promote and protect life and livelihood interests of traditional fishing communities in any policy that applies to coastal and riparian areas, and develop it in consultation with these communities, especially women;
10. Recognize and respect customary and traditional fishing/land rights of fishing communities in all legal instruments pertaining to environment, fisheries, forest and wildlife, and local legislation dealing with habitation and housing;
11. Prevent the use of small mesh and LED lights in fishing gear and operations, and regulate destructive fishing to ensure that fishery resources are available for present and future generations;
12. Reduce conflict between marine and coastal conservation and livelihood-fishing by traditional small-scale fishing communities. In this context, implement the Forest Rights Act, 2006, to protect the interests of tribal and forest-dwelling communities;
13. Obtain prior informed consent of fishing communities while initiating any exploration, exploitation and development project in marine, coastal and riparian areas; adequate compensation should be made also to female-headed households and women fishers and fishworkers, taking into account their life and livelihood interests;
14. Strengthen public utilities at markets managed by local governments, in consultation with representatives of women fishers and fishworkers, towards improving water, power, sanitation and hygiene and ensuring physical safety of women from harassment; include women in the management of markets; and introduce affordable and carbon-friendly technology for fish storage/processing;
15. Protect women fish vendors' rights to market spaces and undertake market redevelopment in consultation with their representatives;
16. Secure spaces for women street fish vendors and implement the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014;
17. Provide public transport facilities at affordable costs for women to reach markets;
18. Confirm that compensation for natural disasters, including pandemics, in fisheries is also based on consultation with women in the sector;
19. Guarantee that national capture fishery data fully reflects all fish produced by women; in this context, promote decentralized data collection, including fish harvested by gleaning; and
20. Urge fishworkers' organizations and traditional fishing community institutions to ensure the effective participation of women fishers and fishworkers in decision-making processes.

In light of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA), 2022, we, the representatives of women fishworkers and fishing communities, call for the implementation of these action points, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

***For more information about the workshop, please visit <https://www.icsf.net/resources/india-national-workshop-the-ssf-guidelines-and-the-platform-for-women-in-fisheries/>***

## Annexure 6

### List of Participants

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## FEEDBACK

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### Based on the feedback collected from 43 participants

#### Key Learnings

The participants found the presentation related to the International Labour Organization (ILO) very informative. The session on biodiversity and climate change, the basics of science and how it impacts their livelihoods was well received. The discussions on fisherwomen's land and sea rights, and the importance of synergy between states to carry out demands at a national level was appreciated. The attendees gained an understanding of fisheries-related schemes for women, including the E-shram Card. Furthermore, the workshop provided exposure to the challenges faced by women in harvesting, such as shellfish pickers and the tiger widows. One of the key takeaways from the workshop was the need for documentation of women fish-harvesters and their contribution to the sector. Overall, the sessions provided valuable insights and information on various issues related to women in fisheries.

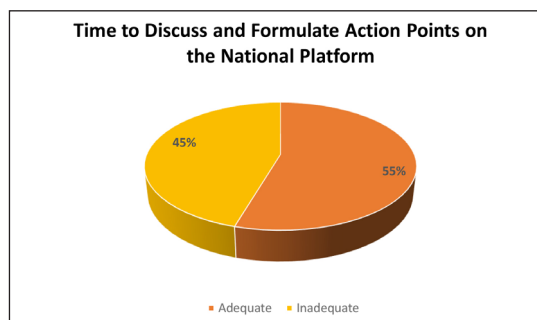
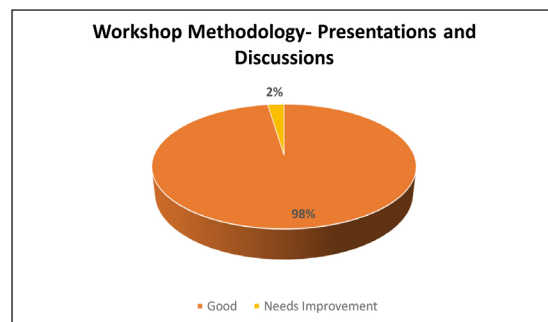
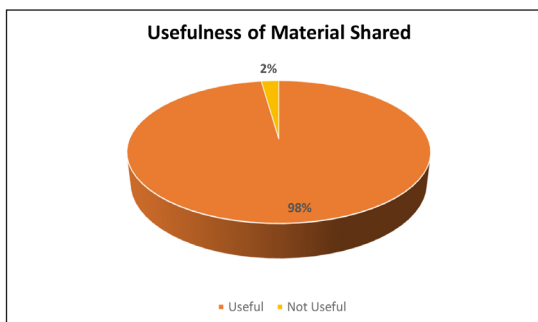
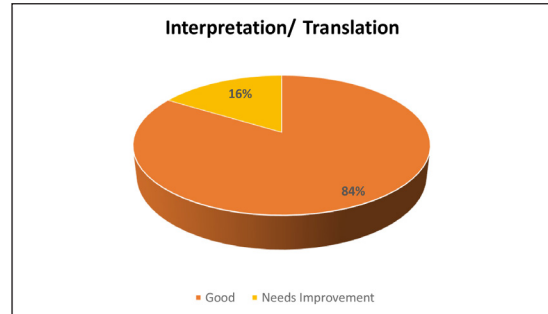
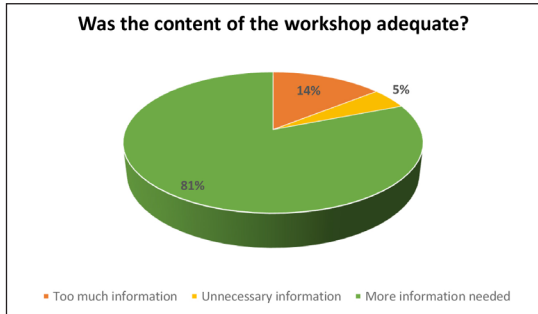
#### Suggestions and comments received:

The participants provided several inputs for the future workshops. One of the most suggested input was to organize a field visit to a relevant market place, which not only breaks the monotony of indoor sessions but also provides practical insights and exposure. The participants also said to maintain the energy levels and enhance the interaction between them, they could have small energizers. These energizers could be in the form of fun activities that help people recharge between intense sessions. The other suggestion was to prioritize discussion over lengthy presentations. As allotting more time for discussions would encourage active participation and enhance knowledge sharing. Lastly, participants felt some sessions could benefit from providing basic information before delving into deeper concepts.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, the workshop served as a catalyst for the Women's platform that was formed, providing valuable knowledge and creating new networks that will help strengthen the platform in moving forward. The event also provided the space for meaningful dialogues to take place and facilitated the alignment of like-minded individuals/ unions who share a common vision. By leveraging the insights and connections gained from this workshop, the Women's platform can continue to grow and make a positive impact in the lives of women in fisheries.

Based on the answers received for the ranking questions asked, the following charts were drawn









## Report on National Workshop on SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust organized a national workshop on the SSF Guidelines and Women in Fisheries, India at Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai, India, on April 8-10, 2022. There were sixtyone participants from five coastal states of Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. With gender equality and equity being one of the seven pillars of the United Nations International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 (IYafa), the national workshop facilitated in building a platform of women in fisheries to promote gender equality and equity, to recognize livelihood space and to improve the participation of women in decision making processes through various discussions that were held during the three days. The resource persons provided information on international processes as well as on schemes at the national and state levels to equip women in small scale fisheries to strengthen their position in pursuit of livelihoods and protect their access rights.

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