



38 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers

Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

The importance of research on safe and efficient post-harvest technologies in fisheries as well as the free and widespread dissemination of the research and the sharing of the technologies cannot be overstressed. This issue of Yemaya documents two initiatives in postharvest fish processing, one from Uganda and the other prototyped in Canada, that hold the potential to transform the health and fortunes of women fish processors in the small-scale fishing sector. Both technologies reduce exposure to smoke, involve less wastage, and yield quality processed products, and hence, better economic returns. Given the climate crisis, such initiatives are the need of the hour, crucially benefiting the environment by reducing biomass use. They are particularly important also because they free women from the need to constantly monitor fish processing operations and hence from the drudgery of work. It is equally the case however that traditional biases and local needs often restrict the uptake of these technologies, pointing to the need for efforts towards the customization and sharing of research and technology to meet diverse local needs.

A review of several studies of women in the small-scale fisheries sector from across the globe indicates that even where women have formal access to decision making in fishing communities, their actual participation is limited by patriarchal norms, which restrict gender equal participation in discussions and decisions. This type of exclusion has definite material outcomes, negatively impacting women's economic returns in the sector. However, as the articles from Costa Rica and Chile show, in cases where government support is made available to facilitate women's participation in decision making in cooperative fisheries groups, it leads to improved earnings for women; better representation of women in leadership; and better environmental outcomes. The case study from Malawi shows how important it is for mainstreaming efforts to go beyond the issue of equitable access to markets for women engaged in fish trade, and to include equity in pricing and returns for both women and men. The study also shows the importance of addressing gender biases in the ways in which women and men perceive discrimination.

When women's work receives focused attention, the importance of their contributions to the sector is duly revealed. Several research projects on mapping dried fish presented at the GAF-8 Conference in Kochi in November 2022, shed light on the substantial contributions made by women fishers in postharvest processing and trade. However, women's work is important not just in terms of their contribution to fishing and fish processing. The article from Tamil Nadu in India shows how in families, forced to migrate to larger cities due to dwindling economic opportunities in their native villages, women play significant and cohesive roles within the migrant community, often facilitating financial upscaling and social stability.

In a changing world where, on almost a daily basis, fishing communities face new economic, social, and environmental challenges, women often play central roles in holding communities together. It is critical therefore that the mainstreaming of women takes multiple routes, encompassing technology options, gender-inclusive policymaking, and continuous research to uncover the significant contributions women make to fisheries in multiple ways across the world.

Editor's Note: With great sadness we wish to inform our readers that our beloved cartoonist, Surendra, will no longer be able to render the Yemaya Mama cartoon strip. Our best wishes to Surendra - he will be dearly missed! 🙏



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