

New Crew, Same Horizon

As ICSF nears four decades of solidarity with small-scale fishworkers, a year of transition has opened a new chapter of renewed energy, connection and collective action

Much has happened since the last issue of *SAMUDRA Report* was published in July 2025. The year since has been especially eventful, marked by important national and international processes shaping the future of small-scale fisheries – and by a pivotal period of change for ICSF itself. As ICSF approaches the 40th anniversary of its founding this November, we look back upon four decades of transformative and inspiring work in support of small-scale fishworkers around the world, while also looking ahead from a momentous year of organizational transition and renewal.

In the fall of 2025, following a long period of internal reflection and discussion, ICSF took the difficult, yet necessary, decision to close its long-standing Secretariat office in Chennai, India, along with its host, the ICSF Trust. This move enabled us to ensure that the Secretariat could continue to adapt to, and reflect, the international context and character of ICSF's collective work, while retaining the physical flexibility needed to stay in closer contact with, and support, small-scale fisheries organizations and our members across all regions. Our small yet mighty Secretariat team is now firmly rooted and working remotely across Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, with a mini-hub remaining in South India, ICSF's birthplace and crucible.

Despite a challenging and complex year, the new ICSF team has emerged from this transition with renewed energy, motivation and inspiration for the work ahead. This issue of *SAMUDRA Report*, the 94th edition in the publication's storied run, is the result of the collective efforts of ICSF's members and Secretariat, reflecting our strong shared commitment to ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of small-scale fishworkers around the world continue to be gathered and shared with an international readership.

In keeping with ICSF's ethos of connecting local and national experiences with international processes, this issue includes articles that span multiple levels: from the national to the global. Three articles highlight national capacity-building processes focused on implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in Ghana, Costa Rica and the Philippines, co-organized by ICSF's members, Secretariat and local partners in November 2025. Further national-level experiences reflect on the compound catastrophe that was the Sumatra disaster in Indonesia in November 2025;

challenges in the Philippine IUU Fishing Policy Framework; the human costs of the annual fishing ban in Bangladesh; the essential history of an influential fisher federation in India; and the lived realities of lagoon fishers confronting environmental degradation in Sri Lanka.

At the international level, several articles cover global governance and advocacy processes spanning the globe. These include the third Nyéléni Global Forum, organized in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in September 2025; the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Belem, Brazil, in November 2025; the second International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20), held in Cartagena, Colombia, in February 2026; the second session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, convened in Reykjavik, Iceland, in February 2026; and the fifth World SSF Congress, held in Hua Hin, Thailand, in April 2026. Other articles in this collection reflect on the crucial linkages between small-scale fisheries and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) process; the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS); and the 18th edition of the World International Film Festival, held in Lorient, France, in March 2026.

As we reflect on a productive year in small-scale fisheries, and look towards another, a key process will be the upcoming third Small-scale Fisheries Summit and the 37th session of COFI, to be held in Rome in September 2026, which are also highlighted in this issue. The SSF Summit will be an especially crucial moment when small-scale fishworkers' organizations, NGOs, researchers, governments and intergovernmental organizations from around the world will gather to strengthen alliances and collaboration, and to discuss the current state of implementation of the SSF Guidelines and how this process can be made more effective on the ground.

This will be an important opportunity to illuminate and draw upon the experiences, needs and priorities shared by small-scale fishworkers and their supporters in global governance spaces such as COFI. But, perhaps even more importantly, it will be an opportunity for fishworkers' organizations from many different contexts to come together, strengthen their unity and build towards their common goal: ensuring that a human rights-based approach to fisheries governance becomes the norm everywhere – from rivers to lakes and seas.

