

Latin America/ Chile

No Equity without Gender Equity

The Chilean government calls for a gender equity meeting for women in artisanal fisheries

This article has been compiled by Brian O’Riordan using information from the following websites: SERNAPESCA (www.sernapesca.cl) and the Latin American Artisanal Fishing Forum (<http://www.cedepesca.org.ar/foroclaro/>)

The Chilean Fisheries Subsecretariat is organizing a gender equity meeting on November 27 and 28, 2007. Over 80 women, engaged in artisanal fishing from Chile’s Vth Region, are expected to participate.

According to official SERNAPESCA (Chilean Fisheries Service) data, 5,500 women work in the country’s fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Between the years 1990 and 2006, Chile’s Directorate of Port Works (DPW) invested 76,551 million pesos (106 million euro or US \$151 million) in fisheries infrastructure. This benefited 29,515 men and 2,568 women, together comprising 54 per cent of the total workforce.

According to the DPW Director, Sergio Arévalo, since 2003, when a gender focus was formally incorporated into his Directorate’s policies, women’s work, including fish processing, baiting hooks and net repairs, has become more visible. It has led to the improvement of working conditions of women: sun-shades and sheds have been constructed; access facilities improved; and hygienic services introduced for the exclusive use of women working in *caletas*.

A report released in October 2007 by SERNAPESCA highlights these issues. Says Dr Inés Montalva, the SERNAPESCA Director: “As part of the programme for modernizing the state, the Government has directed that the gender perspective be incorporated to improve management—the contribution of a “grain of sand” towards increasing equity and equality”.

The end-November meeting will bring together artisanal fishing women from all over Chile as well as some international representatives. It will provide a platform for an exchange of experiences to strengthen equal opportunities and rights.

Since 2002, the Fisheries Subsecretariat has implemented gender equity in the formulation of sectoral policies in alignment with the principles of the Central Government’s Equal Opportunities Programme. The induction of women in the national work force, under conditions of equity and equality, constitutes a central plank of government policy.

The programme includes a code of non-discriminatory working practices, co-ordinated since March 2006 by the National Service for Women’s affairs. The code has four objectives: the State should implement the gender equity programme; the public sector should follow non-discriminatory and equal access work practices; working conditions should provide for a balance between work and personal life, and finally, the quality of work life should be improved.

The code addresses concerns thrown up by the fundamental changes that have taken place in Chile, restructuring gender relations, the family, the workplace and society. Women have joined the workforce in large numbers and increasing numbers of women today head single-parent families. The workplace thus faces the challenge of responding to these changes and accommodating a more flexible, humane and socially inclusive culture.

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