



PROFILE

Marie Ademar

Marie Ademar is the President of the Maritime Family Association in Martinique and a Member of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

Profiled
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In Martinique, Marie Ademar is a rare breed: a woman active in the fisheries sector. “We don’t have many women in our fisheries sector”, she says. However, Marie shares much in common with women fishers from around the world. She combines her work in the fisheries sector with her work as wife, mother and grandmother. “My husband is a sea-going fisherman, with whom I have 4 children and 5 grandchildren”, she proudly announces.

“My job in the fisheries sector, as Vice President of the independent union and as President of the Maritime Family Association, is to defend the interests of sea-going fishermen. For example, when fishers find themselves in court, it

is my job to work with their defence lawyers to dig out legal texts, and it is the Association that puts together the lawyers’ fees”.

Marie Ademar has been doing this work for over 20 years. “I was elected Vice-President of the union at the General Assembly on 01 December 1986, 22 years back. In 1987, when the President resigned, I took over as President, a post I have held till now.”

Marie is no stranger to struggle. “My struggles began in the streets with fishermen who were mobilizing for the first time. There have been various struggles to gain recognition for the sector and for fishers’ rights. Through these struggles we have secured the bad weather unemployment benefit which can be claimed when the wind is more than force 5 and fishermen can’t go out fishing. There is now also an insurance policy, social security benefits for crew to cover accidents or ill health, and

retirement benefits according to contributions to social security over a number of years.”

Marie also works directly on fishery policies. “I participated in the setting up of eight protected areas that enable fishermen to manage resources and to prevent the fishing of juveniles. These areas will be opened up after a period of three to six years to the use of larger mesh nets.” Says Marie, “In my view, fishers must constantly struggle for their rights and to get the fisheries recognized as an economic sector that provides employment. It is the artisanal sector that must be defended at all costs to cope with tomorrow’s food problems.”

Regarding her contact with the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), Marie says, “It was in the year 2000 that I was invited to Locudy in Brittany. I joined WFFP and so I became a spokesperson for the Martinique fisheries sector. Despite the language barrier, and despite all the difficulties, it is a highly enriching experience. I am discovering other countries and I see that there are huge difficulties to overcome. I am able to provide support and to help redress the grievances of women and of small artisanal fishers in all these countries.”

On gender equity, Marie observes: “Indeed women need to struggle to ensure that certain rights are applied and that other rights are recognized. There are still too many men who don’t recognize the role of women”.

What about the Bangkok conference? Says Marie, “The most important message I take from Bangkok for the fishermen of Martinique is this. They are already enriched by being able to work freely; to already have the means to stake their claims through the representatives of small fishers in Bangkok. I support artisanal fishing for its sustainable use of marine resources, for its contribution to poverty alleviation, and for providing food security for each of us. Small-scale artisanal fishing allows fishers to look after their families. This form of fishing does not take away resources from the poor.” ■