

DOCUMENT

Workshop on Enhancing Capacities of Women Fishworkers in India

The report is available at <https://www.icsf.net/en/proceedings/article/EN/163-report-on-works.html?limitstart=0>

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This document is a report of a national workshop on ‘Enhancing capacities of women fishworkers in India for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines’ in Chennai, India, organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust on 21-23 November 2016.

There were 63 participants from the coastal states of India (except Gujarat). They were informed of the situation and role of women in India’s fisheries, as also the relevance of the ‘Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication’ (SSF Guidelines) to women in small-scale fisheries and the opportunities to improve their conditions. Located within a human rights framework, the SSF Guidelines devote an entire section to gender equality, and another to the value chains that acknowledge the role women play. The specific objectives of the three-day capacity building workshop were to reflect on the SSF Guidelines, especially looking at the women in fisheries component from the Indian perspective; to focus on providing information on existing policies, schemes and legal provisions for women, and how they are being currently used by women in the fisheries sector; to draw lessons and learnings from examples of actions that women have initiated in their respective areas; and to develop a holistic framework to life and livelihood in small-scale fisheries, with a critique on the existing fisheries development.

The workshop included presentations on specific topics related to women and SSF, visits to the local fish market and interaction with the women there and group discussions on specific topics. The workshop made certain specific recommendations. These covered,

broadly, recommendations for the small-scale fisheries sector; the need for fisheries platforms; the need for social welfare and the need for marketing support. More specifically, the workshop concluded that a single definition for SSF was very difficult. At least six criteria (area of fishing, distance from shore, depth, gear, craft and propulsion) could be used to determine SSF. The local variations, using a combination of criteria, must be codified, thus providing a contextual definition of SSF. It also concluded that awareness about SSF Guidelines, various rights and access to market resources must be created and information disseminated to all fisherwomen. Regarding the need for fisheries platforms, the workshop recommended that a national platform for fisherwomen must be formed and participation of women at the *gram sabha* (village) level must be increased; criteria for fisherwomen’s cooperatives should be changed to enable their easier formation; women’s groups must be registered; women from each state should form unions which should be federated.

The workshop recommended that social welfare schemes and provisions for fisherwomen must be implemented for which funds must be allocated. Accident insurance must be made available for women as well; anti-harassment committees must be formed at the *panchayat* (village) level to implement the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013; life in the community must be linked to life at sea; fisherwomen must be made aware of relevant laws and schemes; relief during the ban period must be provided for women fishworkers; titles or *pattas* for houses must be provided; drinking water supply in fishing villages must be improved; and small-scale fishing in national parks and sanctuaries should be permitted.

Finally, the workshop recommended that existing markets in the formal and informal sector should be surveyed and mapped; facilities such as restrooms, and water at fish markets should be provided; and fisherwomen should have the right to space for drying fish. ❏



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women

and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

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