

WOMEN OF THE WATERS AND TIDES

20 demands of Small-Scale Fisherwomen



2022 - Regional Workshops
February 26, 2023 - National Fisherwomen Workshop
FINAL REPORT

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Organized by Liza Bilhalva Martins and Miriam Bozzetto
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20 Demands made by Small-Scale Fisherwomen

Gathered in a series of workshops, women of the waters and tides from all over the country revisited and acknowledged their experiences in order to systematize collective demands. In this important portrait of small-scale fishing in Brazil, established under a gender approach, they coordinate and strengthen their dialogues while demanding recognition of their proper role as women fishers and shellfish gatherers.

1 Respect the identity of fisherwomen

guaranteeing their rights as fishers rather than support workers at fishing activity

2 End of institutional violence

caused by the lack of knowledge and capacitation of governmental and non-governmental sectors that assist fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers

3 Guarantee and enable their right to access the commercialization chain

4

Creation of specialized health care programs for fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers

including emotional health and the fight against obstetric violence, with health professionals trained and skilled to assist fishing communities, extended to the entire fishing supply chain

5

Creation of programs to promote adding value to fishing products produced by them

in a traditional way

6

Streamline procedures to fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers to register on the General Register of Fishing Activity (RGP)

including the revision of current ordinances; modernization of procedures; and capacitation of those in charge of the analyses

7

Recognition by the Social Security Institute (INSS) of the occupational diseases resulting from women's work in fishing and shellfish gathering

8

Creation of programs to encourage financial independence and expand credit programs for women and LGBTQIA+ people

9

Creation of programs to encourage, capacitate, and empower woman to be fishing leaders

as well as their children

10

Guarantee their participation and rights in decision-making process and forums, such as councils, committees, working groups, among others

11

Recognition of their traditional culture and knowledge

including for purposes of research and other actions taken by government and research institutions

12

End of all forms of violations against women in fishing territories

13

Strengthen women's collectives and capacitation for those living in traditional fishing communities

14

Guarantee university quotas for fisherwomen

15

Extend the financial insurance due to fishing closed seasons to fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers

16

Guarantee visibility and recognition of women of the waters, fields and forests in the supply chain

17

Promote educational and pedagogical programs to combat prejudice

including all forms of racism, sexism or homophobia in traditional communities and government spheres

18

Provide access to social security rights, as pensions, sick payment, maternity leave and others

without the need for additional documents from men (husbands, sons, brothers, etc.)

19

Create a single database so that their historical activity is recognized without need for additional proof

including fisherwomen, shellfish gatherers or fishing industry workers

20

Guarantee protection and recognition of fishing territories

"I've been evolving at each meeting; each one has generated more knowledge. This flow can't stop."

Arlene da Costa, small-scale fisherwoman from Sergipe state





Context and Methodology

Small-scale fishing involves around 60 million people worldwide, 40% of whom are women working throughout the fishing supply chain (FAO, 2023). Some of them play leadership roles in their communities (Leitão, 2015; Alencar et al., 2021). However, they are invisible in public policies and fishing production statistics (Alonso-Población, 2018; Kleiber et al 2015). Studies conducted in South America and specifically in Brazil (FAO, 2015; 2016; Leitão, 2015; Alencar et al., 2021) reveal that women's labor has been erased and stress the need to produce information that can generate indicators to inform policy proposals and programs to support fisherwomen.

In Brazil, the small-scale fisherwoman worker category (*pescadora artesanal*) was officially recognized in 1978, when they were granted the right to join trade organizations (Leitão, 2015; Silva & Leitão, 2023), resulting in the election of Joana Mousinho from Pernambuco state as the first president of a local Fishers' Association in 1989. Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution expanded this right by guaranteeing the inclusion of women fishers on the General Register of Fishing Activities (RGP). Access to the Small-Scale Fishers' Closed Season Insurance (SDPA) was granted by law in 2003 (Brasil, 2003).

The 2009 Fishing Law - Brazil's current legal fishing framework - redefined small-scale fishing, including pre- and post-capture activities, which are known to be carried out

mostly by women, but the ordinance haven't established the small-scale fisherwoman category in any of its articles (Brasil, 2009).

As one of the consequences of this legal weakness, access to the SDPA insurance was denied by restricting the benefit to the fishermen category and considering women as fishing assistants (Hellebrandt et al., 2016; Brasil, 2017). This setback has strong adverse implications for fisherwomen's working conditions, social protection and visibility, and consequently for the income and resilience of Brazil's fishing communities, highlighting the risks posed by legislation that disregards the specific circumstances of socio-environmental contexts.

Fisherwomen do not assist in fishing; they do the fishing. They play leading roles in this activity as much as fishermen, since small-scale fishing is carried out by communities and not by individual production units. It involves women and men in supply chains - activities that are dynamic rather than fixed or rigid as usually interpreted. These women and men establish rules regarding fisheries' resources, spaces and times of, with varied practices, subjects and technologies (Diegues, 2004; Silva, 2022).

Numerous scientific studies point to the relevance of women's work in fishing for food security, resource management and environmental sustainability (Alencar et al., 2021; Silva, 2022).

However, socio-environmental, political and economic factors affect fishing territories, promoting substantial changes in fishing work and access to resources. The continued invisibility of these professionals, combined with the lack of recognition of what they do, reinforces gender obstacles. That has a major impact on their lives, especially with regard to income, access to the health system, protection of fishing territories, information, and their full social, environmental and legal rights established by Brazil's Federal Constitution.

PATHWAYS

Throughout 2022, Oceana Brasil held 10 regional workshops that brought together small-scale fishers from all over the country to discuss, propose and collectively build a new national fisheries policy. At the same time, 10 workshops were also held exclusively with women representing various social movements such as the Fishers Pastoral Council (CPP), the Movement of Small-scale Fishers (MPP), the National Coordination of Fisherwomen (ANP), the National Commission for Strengthening



Extractive Reserves and Coastal and Marine Extractive Peoples (Confrem), the Brazilian Confederation of Fishing and Aquaculture Workers (CBPA), and the National Confederation of Fishers and Fish Farmers (CNPA).

In addition to gathering and connecting 66 fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers, researchers and the Oceana team, these workshops provided an environment conducive to sharing their experiences and then defining their own demands by highlighting inequalities, invisibility, and lack of rights and recognition.

The National Workshop for Collective Construction of a New Fisheries Policy was held in Brasília on February 23-26, 2023, bringing together 40 delegates from each of the five Brazilian regions. They unanimously pointed out the need for recognition, visibility and respect for the identity of fisherwomen in a new Fisheries Law in Brazil.

The leading roles played by women and young people in this national construction should be highlighted, as well as the interruption of historical disrespect for women's voices and roles in the socio-political construction processes of small-scale fishing. Nevertheless, a new meeting was held and resulted in the National Workshop of Fisherwomen. Held on February 26, it brought together 19 women, who were recognized as political leaders representing thousands of small-scale fisherwomen of the waters, fields and forests from all over Brazil.

The meeting was facilitated by consultant Liza Bilhalva Martins and Oceana campaign analyst Miriam Bozzetto, using participatory methodology. It aimed at promoting exchanges between delegates and coordinating previous dialogues in order to further explore 20 specific demands of fisherwomen in the world of small-scale fishing. This report is the result of that work, which serves not only to support the technical work of those involved but also as a crucial political instrument in the fight for the rights of the women of the waters and tides.

METHODOLOGICAL SCRIPTS

The participatory methodology adopted to prepare this document was divided into two acts:

- **“Getting to know each other and revisiting the trajectory”:**

welcoming participants and initial activities for introduction and contextualization. According to most narratives, the first regional workshops for women still generated doubts and hesitation, especially because, over time, they had been prevented from participating and/or silenced in management and decision-making forums. However, as they interacted and shared their problems and experiences, they gradually realized that this was a unique, formative, constructive and political moment that guaranteed them a place of speech, power and fight. Therefore, the maturation of the process through respect and care became clear, ensuring the occupation of discussion spaces as a path to education, knowledge and strengthening of their fisherwomen's identity, as well as guaranteeing their rights.



- **“Collective construction of fisherwomen’s demands”:**

systematization of the demands listed during regional activities. Despite the diversity of participants’ backgrounds, the problems recurred, with emphasis on the lack of recognition of fisherwomen and their social, legal and political invisibility. Thus, it was demonstrated that they are more violently impacted by socio-environmental conflicts than fishermen.

Therefore, the demands listed address these main shared problems. After revisiting, further discussing and organizing the points experienced and raised by the 66 small-scale fisherwomen from the five Brazilian regions, the 19 delegates made a socio-environmental, gender-focused assessment of the demands, summarized in 20 core demands.

Conclusion

“I’ll never leave a space that I think I should occupy.”

Viviane Machado, small-scale fisherwoman from
Rio Grande do Sul state

The 20 demands highlighted and revisited by the women of the waters and tides establish a socio-environmental assessment of the problems and forms of conflict resolution, asymmetries, invisibilities, lack of recognition and violence that impact fisherwomen’s lives, bodies and rights throughout their existence.

In addition, it becomes an instrument of struggle and knowledge for the purpose of creating public policies and actions before political agents and institutions.

The Regional Workshops and the National Workshop of Fisherwomen broke with the idea that women do not see themselves as political beings.

According to Alencar (2011), lack of belonging is related to the fact that fisherwomen have been historically excluded from decision-making and, consequently, their demands have not been included in the agendas of fishers’ movements. This leads to the idea that their work in fishing is not as important as men’s work and that their ability for organization is not valued.

The fisherwomen present at the Workshops broke with this idea. They made it clear that it is necessary to join forces, occupying political spaces for education, decision-making and resource management in an organized way. Oceana, mindful of the principle of gender equity and equality, set a 50% participation of fisherwomen in the meetings – in which they spoke about their knowledges, practices, stories, invisibilities, exclusions, struggles and demands.

Women of all ages and from various environmental or fishing backgrounds were at the discussion table, alongside fishermen, researchers and Oceana’s team, in a participation that is essential to change the scenario of socio-environmental injustices as well as social, political and legal exclusion.

The workshops have resulted in collective, formative, educational, political and transformative spaces. Fisherwomen from the five regions of the country have been occupying spaces previously considered exclusively male, and they have made a difference.

By resisting and combating obstacles, and being present in public and private spaces, they inspire and become models of female leadership in small-scale fishing, encouraging other women to engage in the political struggle.

Collective action – that is the only way to reverse a historical process of exclusion and discrimination in which society and the State play a decisive role by ignoring and failing to eliminate these differences and injustices.

As a result, society changes and fishermen learn, along the way, to also change their behavior, joining fisherwomen in the fight to defend small-scale fishing in Brazil and preserve the oceans and life as a whole.



Protagonists in the process

- Adriana Maria da Silva (Rio Grande do Norte)
- Ana Beatriz Baptistone de Oliveira (Rio Grande do Sul)
- Ana Ilda Nogueira Pavão (Maranhão)
- Ana Maria Silva de Sales (Rio Grande do Norte)
- Arlene Maria da Costa (Pernambuco)
- Arlene Oliveira da Costa (Sergipe)
- Camila Batista Silva Gomes (Ceará)
- Carmem Silva Moreira Garcez (Santa Catarina)
- Celia Regina Nunes das Neves (Pará)
- Cleusa dos Remédios Rocha (Rio de Janeiro)
- Dulcineia dos Santos Vieira (Rio Grande do Sul)
- Edna Maria Ramos de Souza (Maranhão)
- Eliana Gomes Diniz (São Paulo)
- Eliane Matias Paulino (Alagoas)
- Elionice Conceição Sacramento (Bahia)
- Elisabete da Cruz Marinho (Bahia)
- Enilde Lima Oliveira (Pernambuco)
- Gicleia Maria da Silva Santos (Pernambuco)
- Gisele Silvia Ramos (Santa Catarina)
- Izabel Cristina Chagas (Alagoas)
- Jadeir Regina do Nascimento Dias (Rio Grande do Norte)
- Jamile da Silva Garcia (Amapá)
- Jeane de Jesus Sacramento (Bahia)
- Joana Rodrigues Mousinho (Pernambuco)
- Joelma Pinheiro da Silva (Bahia)
- Josana Pinto da Costa (Pernambuco)
- Josiane dos Santos (Espírito Santo)
- Juliana Oliveira da Silva (Santa Catarina)
- Kathiuci Taler da Cruz (Bahia)
- Katia Regina Aroucha Barros (Maranhão)
- Lilian Santana Santos (Bahia)
- Luana Cristina da Silva (Maranhão)
- Lucila da Rocha Lopes (Espírito Santo)
- Maiara Fernandes Marinho (Bahia)
- Mara Teles Lima (Bahia)
- Marcia Pereira de Souza (Rio Grande do Sul)
- Maria Celeste de Souza (Piauí)
- Maria das Graças Oliveira do Nascimento (Maranhão)
- Maria de Lourdes Souza dos Santos (Pará)
- Maria Dione Ramos da Silva (Amazonas)
- Maria do Socorro Pereira Aguiar (Pará)
- Maria Eliene Pereira do Vale (Ceará)
- Maria Helena Galvão (Maranhão)
- Maria José Silva de Lima (Pará)
- Maria Lidercira dos Santos Borges (Pará)
- Maria Odete de Carvalho Martins (Ceará)
- Maria Regina Meura Passarela (Santa Catarina)
- Marizelha Carlos Lopes (Bahia)
- Marly Lucia da Silva Ferreira (Pará)
- Mary Jane Costa Fonseca (Maranhão)
- Mônica da Silva Correia (Bahia)
- Nataline Galvão (Bahia)
- Raimunda Célia Ferreira de Souza (Amazonas)
- Raquel de Sousa Silva (Piauí)
- Rosangela Silva do Nascimento (Rio Grande do Norte)
- Rosineia Pereira Vieira (Espírito Santo)
- Sabrina Correia Pereira Moreira (Rio de Janeiro)
- Salomar Silva do Canto (Rio Grande do Sul)
- Sandra Regina Pereira Gonçalves (Pará)
- Sidneia Lusía da Silva (Ceará)
- Silvia Lafaiete Pires (Espírito Santo)
- Valmira João Gonçalves (Santa Catarina)
- Vanda de Oliveira Felizardo (São Paulo)
- Venina dos Santos Moraes (Rio Grande do Sul)
- Vitória Milhomem Melo (Maranhão)
- Viviane Machado Alves (Rio Grande do Sul)



*"We build and we undo the knots, we build bridges
and we destroy walls."*

Marly Lúcia, small-scale fisherwoman from Pará state

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