



LiNES



Newsletter of the Conference 'Forging Unity: Coastal Communities and the Indian Ocean's Future'

FYI

- ◆ This is the last issue of LINES, which was published especially for the *Forging Unity* conference. We hope you have enjoyed reading the newsletter as much as we did bringing it out each day for the past five days. Please let us know if you found it useful. You can email your comments and criticism to icsf@vsnl.com.
- ◆ The official conference web site has been up and running since Tuesday, the day the conference began. Please check out <http://www.icsf.net>
- ◆ Special thanks to the following persons for supplying photographs, posters and other display material: Andrew Johnston, Albert Napier, Simeao Lopes, Hassan Maniku, Pisit Charsnoh, Ventje Semeul and Souparna Lahiri.
- ◆ ICSF's interactive CD *Indian Ocean 2001* will be distributed (one per organization) today. Please contact the Conference Secretariat.

Today's Agenda

09:00 : Plenary:
Adoption of the Conference
Vision Statement

11:00 : Valedictory session
and Presentation of the Vision
Statement

11:40 : Vote of Thanks

A vision for the future

The Conference ends today with the adoption of a Vision Statement at the plenary session

The discussions and deliberations over the past four days reach a culmination today with the adoption of a Vision Statement.

At the plenary session, to be chaired by Nalini Nayak, Founder Member of ICSF, the participants of the Conference are expected to discuss the Statement at length before it is finally adopted. The adopted Vision Statement will then be read out to the

audience by Chandrika Sharma, Programme Associate of ICSF, at the valedictory session, chaired

by Pierre Gillet, another Founder Member of ICSF. Also addressing the valedictory session are Prof. R. Natarajan,

Director, IIT Madras and P. Rajendran, Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department, Tamil Nadu.

The Statement is expected to suggest possible solutions to the issues raised during the Conference.

These range from ecosystem approaches and international instruments for fisheries management to trans-border movement of fishers and illegal fishing. ◆

Fishers' day out

A field trip to two fishing villages gave the Conference participants some insight into the issues that dog the sector, as Beatrice Gorez of CFFA reports

After three days of meetings within walled rooms, several of the Conference participants were more than happy with the prospect of visiting fishing villages around Chennai. But this quickly transformed into a sad feeling when, in the two villages we visited, Chinna Neelangerai and Injambakkam, fishermen and fishermen's wives told us, "There is no fish left for us. Five years ago, we had enough to feed our families and sell the surplus. Today,

what we fish is hardly enough to feed the household. There are no jobs anymore in fisheries for our children." The situation has reached the point where a lot of the fishermen have now to find some work in neighbouring industries. Around 20 found a job in a shoe-making company. The future seems very bleak and the differing points of view, between the villagers and the administration, about why the fish has left and what should be done, give

little hope for finding a solution acceptable to the whole community.

One of the reason for the poor state of the fishery and fishing is the fact that there hasn't been any monsoon rain for the last three or four years. Another reason is the activities of trawlers, which have precipitated the disappearance of the fish. A former representative of the Tamil Nadu administration, P. V. Ramamoorthy, who accompanied us on the trip,

Change is a slow process

*Dr Faathin Hameed of the Ministry of Fisheries, Male,
Maldives in conversation with Nalini Nayak of ICSF:*

Do women participate in the resource management committee in the Maldives?

The management committee is linked to the administrative system. Each island has an Island Development Committee and one Women's Empowerment Committee. The Atoll Development Committee is an elected body at the atoll level. The resource management committee (RMC) gets representatives from all these three committees. So although there are women on the committee, they are fewer than men.

What kind of issues do women bring up at the RMCs?

They talk about the resource conflicts that occur when other islanders come to fish in their waters. They are also concerned about reducing illegal fishing.

Don't they make demands for access to the fish resources for processing?

You see, fishing is a family enterprise. While the men fish, the women process the fish – drying, smoking and salting it. This is a home-based employment. And that is where the problem lies. As it is home-based work, it is not reported as an 'employment' in our

statistics. On the other hand, as it is the men who load the processed fish on to the boats and take it to the main island market, they are the ones who register the income from the sales in their names. So both the catch and the income are

Each island has an Island Development Committee and one Women's Empowerment Committee.

recorded in the men's names. Yet, it is the women who maintain the accounts. Hence women's work and labour are totally invisible. We are trying to get these things changed in the system of data collection. As only men's work gets reflected in the statistics, all State subsidies go for their work. Moreover, women are so socially conditioned not to assert their rights.

So what do you do in the women's empowerment committees?

We do try to build awareness. We also help the women improve their processing techniques to get better quality products, and we provide micro-credit for home-based activities. But change is a slow process.

Don't your women work in the tuna canneries?

Yes. There are a few women at the supervisory level who are from our country, but the shopfloor workers are migrant women who come in on annual contracts through labour contractors. They are generally from Sri Lanka. We have only one cannery, the Maldives Industrial Tuna Fishery, which is government-owned. This cannery is exclusively located on one of the islands. The workers live on this island too, in accommodation provided by the plant. This is another reason why local women do not like to work in the cannery, as they will have to travel far from home. Earlier, this cannery employed over 120 workers but now it is much less. In fact, tuna processed in the Maldives is not competitive as tuna from Thailand and the Philippines is cheaper. As our cannery is located on a separate island, it has to bear all the costs of electricity and water generation, housing for the workers, etc. and, subsequently, the canning costs are high. ♦

Souparna Lahiri works with the Centre for Education and Communication, Delhi.

Zoning in on the coast

There is clearly a case to be made for the small-scale Indian Ocean fishing communities to clean up their own backyards, says Brian O'Riordan of ICSF

The fisheries acts and other formal fisheries norms of several countries have provisions for reserving coastal fishing zones exclusively for artisanal or small-scale fishing. In many cases, the origins of such norms are lost in the mists of time, but they are often seen by the small-scale sector as an inalienable right. With the development of intensive and larger scale industrial fishing, these so-called "exclusive artisanal fishing zones" or "reserved areas" have taken on an increasing importance.

The FAO Conduct for Responsible Fishing (Article 6.18) refers to "the important contributions of artisanal and small-scale fisheries to employment, income and food security," and recommends that "States should appropriately protect the rights of fishers and fishworkers, particularly those engaged in subsistence, small-scale and artisanal fisheries, to a secure and just livelihood, as well as to preferential access, where appropriate, to traditional fishing grounds and resources in the waters under their national jurisdiction".

If such traditional fishing zones are to provide a refuge for small-scale Indian Ocean fisheries from the onslaught of intensive and large scale

fishing activities, experience from several other countries shows that some concerted action is needed.

In Chile, the 1991 General Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture makes provision for a 5-mile zone reserved exclusively for artisanal fishing. However, in

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all but three of the fishing regions, the Government of Chile has passed resolutions that permit access to the industrial fishing sector. In the south of the country, the extensive and rich fishing grounds around the numerous islands are being invaded by intensive salmon aquaculture enterprises, to which the government has granted concessions. The artisanal fishermen of Chile are being squeezed out of their traditional fishing grounds.

In Madagascar, a 1922 decree established that "no towed

gears should be used within 2 miles of the coast". Yet, in 1971, another government decree states that all trawlers issued with licences are allowed to fish in the 2-mile zone, making a mockery of the area reserved for traditional fishing. According to reports, over 60 per cent of the industrial prawn catch comes this 2-mile zone. The zone is further threatened by a major 5-year programme financed by the French that seeks to allocate exclusive fishing areas to the French shrimp industry. In Mozambique and South India, trawlers fish with impunity in the 3-mile limits reserved for small-scale fishing.

In such a context, there is clearly a case to be made for the small-scale Indian Ocean fishing communities to clean up their own backyards before venturing off in Sri Lankan-style "multi-month" fishing boats into other countries' waters. ◆

...Fishers' day out

thinks that "the resource is not there where the artisanal fishermen are fishing. The resource is further out at sea, so the solution is to provide the fishermen with bigger, more powerful boats, and better technology, so that they can go farther out to where the fish is." But the women thought differently. First of all, given the desperate state they are in, they were quite angry that we asked a question like "What are you planning to do?" They finally told us: "We know very well what should be done: Keep all these trawlers away and the fish will come back". ◆

Distant voices

This note recounts the long march of the Malagasy fishermen, based on information provided by Felix Randrianasoavina, Executive Secretary of the Collective of Malagasy Maritime Organizations

When Lestin Rasamoelina, a traditional fisherman from Madagascar, requested a visa to attend the World Forum of Fishworkers' meeting in France last year, it was immediately refused. According to the administration, a visa can not be issued to an "unemployed" person. Traditional fishing is not a recognized profession – either by the French or the Malagasy authorities! The 100,000 traditional Malagasy fishermen are almost completely invisible in the eyes of the authorities: no attention is given to them in any government programmes, whether for primary infrastructure needs (roads, sanitation, etc.) or for protecting their traditional fishing zones from the shrimp trawlers.

These trawlers, owned mainly by French and Japanese interests, but flying a Malagasy flag, are spoiled by the authorities. Even the European Union (EU) and French public funds for development aid are being poured into this sector.

One of the problems is that these trawlers destroy the gear of the traditional fishermen during their incursions into the coastal zone. Until recently, any complaint made by a traditional fisherman was like a voice crying in a desert.

But, since 1998, thanks to the efforts made by a Malagasy NGO, the Collective of Malagasy Maritime Organizations (COMM), traditional fishermen are beginning to get organized,

learn that they have rights and how to defend them. Three weeks ago, after a shrimp trawler once again destroyed some traditional fishermen's gear, they went to the Antananarivo tribunal in the capital city, submitted a complaint and organized a press conference to make their case known. That was widely reported in the national and international press, and the Malagasy administration is now ready to take action.

Thanks to efforts made in the last three years, a dialogue has begun between traditional fishermen and the fisheries administration. Since 2000, through campaigns led both in Madagascar and in Europe, COMM has been looking at ways to influence the EU to reconsider its support to the trawler sector. The traditional fishermen are also analyzing and following closely a government programme of co-management, to make sure traditional fishermen are properly consulted. ◆

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To have any chance of succeeding in our endeavours to preserve our oceans, we will have to bridge something even larger than the oceans: the gulf of resources, understanding and trust that divides us.

*Elizabeth Dowdeswell
Executive Director, UNEP*

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Helpline

Should you need help of any kind, please contact any of the following :

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Foyer, Hall 1
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Pamela Gordon/ICSF
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Taramani Guest House
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