

**THE INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE
IN SUPPORT OF FISHERWORKERS'
SEMINAR-WORKSHOP ON
THE CONDITIONS OF FISHERWORKERS
ON DISTANT WATER VESSELS**

A REPORT ON

The Immersion in Alabat Island and Gumaca,
Quezon, Philippines
January 27–30, 1991

ICSF International Seminar-Workshop on the Conditions
of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels
Manila, Philippines
February 1–3, 1991

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INTRODUCTION

This ICSF Exchange Programme held in Manila is an offshoot of the Bangkok Conference on “Global Fisheries Trends and Future of Fishworkers” held on January 22–27, 1990. One of the issues raised in that conference was about the operation of Taiwanese fishing vessels outside its territorial waters and the impact of such operations on small fishermen from the countries concerned. The presence of a Taiwanese fishworker as well as an NGO supporter contributed to an enlightening discussion as the former shed light on the sad plight of Taiwanese fishworkers who are the victims of such structural problems. This meaningful exchange between groups of fishermen, particularly Taiwanese and Filipinos, resulted in the plan of the Taiwanese delegation to have some Taiwanese fishermen visit the Philippines and immerse in fishing communities. This was believed to be a first step towards the gradual unfolding in both the Taiwanese and Filipino fishworkers of social consciousness regarding such a reality. Since one of the thrusts of the Collective for the next three years was an Exchange and Training Programme among fishworkers and their supporters from different countries, the Collective thought it worthwhile to take up the task of organizing such an immersion activity in the Philippines. This plan was expanded to include a three-day seminar/workshop.

As the Collective decided to embark on the exchange, the members of the Animation Team were cognizant of the fact that “we shall be moving into an area of contact with another segment of fishworkers with whom we are not familiar. We shall, therefore, constantly remind ourselves to exercise prudence while at the same time be open to issues that may emerge from such an endeavor.”

Upon the suggestion of the Fishermen’s Service Center of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the theme of the Seminar-Workshop was changed to: “The Condition of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels.” Its objectives were:

1. To look into the psycho-social, socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions of fishworkers on distant water vessels.
2. To surface the issues of recruitment patterns of fishworkers for distant water vessels and the problem of monitoring; and
3. To reflect on and discuss the implications of the above-mentioned realities to national policies and the challenges to fishworkers’ organizations and their support groups.

The Seminar design included two panel discussions, each of which were followed by a workshop in order to ensure a thorough discussion of the subject matter and to obtain maximum participation from the delegates. The first panel discussion focused on the main subject: “The Conditions of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels.” The second panel discussion was on the “Recruitment Patterns of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels and the Problem of Monitoring.”

The reflection of Fr. Carlos Oda, CS., on the Mission of the Apostolate of the Sea was scheduled in between the panel discussions.

One of the highlights of the workshop were the testimonies of fishworkers from Quezon regarding their first hand experience aboard distant water vessels. Moreover, the presence of Jean Vacher from Mauritius, Mung Hoo, a Taiwanese fishworker as well as Yvonne Mei Jung Lin and Kapi Chin from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, significantly contributed to the enlightening discussions on the subject.

CHAPTER 1

Immersion in Alabat, Quezon January 27–30, 1991

Following the intent of the Bangkok plan for the Taiwanese fishworkers immersion in the Philippines, the immersion objectives included the following:

To enable the Taiwanese fishworkers to have a broader understanding of the Filipino fishermen's situation in the context of Philippine development priorities; and for them to witness the implementation of the programme of the local Resource Management Council in Lamon Bay which was closed to trawlers through the Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 165, realized through the fishermen's solidarity and petition to the Department of Agriculture and Food. FAO 165 is also, in part, an implementation of the Fisheries Code, a bill drafted by small fishermen, presently being deliberated upon in the Philippine Congress.

The duration of the immersion was four days. The first day was devoted to the orientation phase which included, among others, the formalities of welcoming guests, setting of expectations by both the immersees and the fishermen-hosts and deciding upon the mechanics of the immersion. The second and the third days were set aside for the immersion proper, which lined up activities such as consultations, conducting interviews, meetings with individual fishermen, their organizations and other local officials in the communities as well as getting first hand information on the local fishing methods by actually going fishing. The last day was reserved for the immersion activity.

Three Taiwanese nationals - one fishworker and two supporters - took part in the immersion activity. They were fanned out in the areas of Alabat Island and Gumaca, a municipality located at the mainland of Quezon Province. Yvonne Mei Jung Lin and Mung Hoo stayed in Alabat Island while Kapi Chin proceeded to Gumaca, accompanied by Vir Cristobal of the Asian Social Institute (ASI). Aliou Sall, of Senegal, arrived on the 29th of January. He stayed in Perez, Quezon.

January 7 1991 – arrival and orientation

The three Taiwanese nationals, together with Nenita Cura, Betty Solleza and Vir Cristobal of the Asian Social Institute (ASI) arrived in Perez, Alabat Island Quezon shortly before lunch. They were given a very warm welcome by the government officials, headed by Magtanggol Villabroza, Mayor of Perez, officers of BIGKIS-LAKAS ng ALQUEREZ and the other fishermen representatives from different local organizations scattered along the coasts of Alabat Island. The reception hall was decorated with local materials resulting in a very festive atmosphere. A sumptuous lunch of local delicacies was served to the delight of the guests.

After a short nap by the immersees, the orientation began. It started with a short prayer delivered by a fisherman invoking the guidance of the Almighty for a fruitful and meaningful sharing that would eventually lead to a fostering of a relationship between the fishermen of

Taiwan and those of the Philippines. It was followed by a short introduction of the guests, the local government officials present and the fishermen representatives.

The welcome address delivered by Reynaldo Alpay, President of ALQUEREZ, amplified on the theme of the orientation: “The Bases of Our Existence,” underscoring the vital cord that connects the fishermen to the sea, through which lifeblood flows, sustaining the lives of sea-dependent people. The address lauded the Exchange Programme for its pivotal role in preparing a fertile ground for meaningful exchanges of people and experiences that, hopefully, would usher in a united front radiating and initiating supports to all endeavors that pursue changes in the fishing environment. Importantly, the address emphasized that where poachings and incursions by foreign fishing vessels consistently manifest a brazen defiance of political, economic, territorial and worse, of cultural boundaries in pursuit of some economic gains, the Exchange Programme could very well prepare the table for open talks with an end in view of bridging some obvious gaps.

Two sets of expectations were articulated. The expectations verbalized by the immersees were as follows:

1. To get an insight into the factors that precipitated the formation of ALQUEREZ;
2. To become acquainted with the process that sustain the organization, particularly the specific topics on the value formation or education process;
3. To get some information about some Taiwanese fishermen wading through the Philippine waters; and
4. To gain first hand knowledge on how local fishing methods are being used, specifically the hook and line method.

The fishermen, on the other hand, through the President of ALQUEREZ, expressed the following expectations:

1. For the immersees to see, feel and understand the situation of the subsistence fishermen and view this in the context of some structural imbalance at the national and global levels, and
2. That the immersion result in expanded interaction between and among fishworkers at the international level.

After the articulation of expectations, the discussion progressed to the sharing on the history of ALQUEREZ, its primary objectives, its activities and its achievements to date. The following information on ALQUEREZ was shared by its President:

ALQUEREZ was born amidst a convoluted web of problems, hardly comprehensible but easily perceivable because no matter how complex they were, these problems were always manifested in the apparent poverty that was fast spreading across the whole Alabat Island and in the gradual snapping of all signs of life in the sea. The very institutions that were supposed to arrest these disturbances and restore order had long succumbed to the hegemonic control of unpopular and unaccepted powers. The people, basically authority-oriented, gradually slipped into a lethargic state as they witnessed their guardians’ obsequious interaction with the “new powers.”

Confronted by the above situation, ALQUEREZ resolved to face the problems head on through a systematic and step-by-step process. It held pre-consultations and consultations in every village to raise the people’s awareness. Sustained consultations, meetings and trainings were carried out until the people developed a holistic understanding of the problems and a common perspective. It was only when a shared vision was drawn up that formal organizations

were formed in the villages. These organizations have been sustained and strengthened through trainings and other value formation activities. Topics included Ecology, an Understanding of Personhood, Community and Family, Community Organization, Leadership Through Values, and other topics that would aid in facilitating the restructuring of people's misdirected orientation. Meetings and mobilizations enhanced the strengthening process.

Realizing the need for effective technical back-ups, ALQUEREZ established collaborations with NGOs such as the Family Center, Asian Social Institute (FCASI), the local government units (LGUS) and the office of Congressman Oscar Santos of the fourth district of Quezon.

The unyielding spirit of the leaders of ALQUEREZ paid off with the following achievements:

1. The passing of FAO 165 which declares a certain portion of Lamon Bay closed to commercial fishing operations (such as trawlers and others) for five years;
2. The participation of the people in the on-going activities of the organization, indicating the gradual but continuous rise of the awareness of the people;
3. The virtual cleaning up of Lamon Bay of law violators through the Bantay-Dagat Programme (Guardian of the Sea Programme) which is manned by the fishermen themselves in coordination with local government authorities.

The achievements, however, are not the encompassing answers to the dismal condition of the subsistence fishermen and the sea. ALQUEREZ will continue to struggle and manifest its commitment until the people and the sea are liberated and the fishermen themselves take the lead role in charting out their future and that of the sea.

After this sharing, the open forum yielded the following salient questions:

1. In view of the fishing condition in the Philippines, specifically in Alabat Island, what can the ICSF do or extend to support the fishermen in their struggle?
2. What have been the response to or the participation of government officials in the struggle of the fishermen? Or, are they privy to the practices of unscrupulous fishing operators?
3. How do the fishermen respond to the slow response and sometimes apathetic posture of the government authorities?

In response, Nenita Cura, a member of the ICSF Animation Team, gave a brief history of the ICSF starting from the Rome Conference in 1984, to the birth of the Collective in Trivandrum, India in 1986 with the objective of monitoring global issues affecting the small fishworkers and helping to create space and momentum for the development and sustenance of alternatives in the sector of small scale fisheries. She mentioned the following programme priorities through which small fishermen organizations are assisted: Monitoring and research, training and exchanges, actions and campaign, and communication. She then referred to this immersion activity as part of the training and exchange programme of the ICSF.

The succeeding two questions were equally answered by the officers and members of the ALQUEREZ organization.

The day's activity ended shortly before dinner where the local fishermen, the Taiwanese immersees and other guests partook of a sumptuous meal hosted by the local government of Perez, Quezon, headed by mayor Magtanggol Villabroza and his councilmen.

January 28 and 29, 1991

In the early morning of the following day, the 28th of January, the immersees enthusiastically sailed to their respective areas of immersion. As mentioned earlier, Kapi Chin would proceed to Gumaca with Vir Cristobal and Yvonne and Mung Hoo would stay in the various barangays of Alabat and Quezon.

The two groups went through highly similar activities for the subsequent two days series of meetings, interviews, socialization and courtesy calls on local officials; going fishing aboard a local gear and using local fishing implements highlighted the Taiwanese immersion. Thus, this section focuses on the experiences in Gumaca. But it is pointed out that the sole difference was that it was only in Gumaca that the immersees were able to meet former fishworkers in Taiwanese distant water vessels.

On the 29th of January, Aliou Sall from Senegal, arrived and joined the group of Taiwanese immersees in Alabat Island. He, however, stayed in Perez where he met with and interviewed some fishermen leaders.

The Gumaca experience — as narrated by Virgilio S. Cristobal

A warm welcome by the fishing community of Villa bota, Gumaca, Quezon, started off the two-day exposure and set the tone of the ensuing activities. The rest of the morning was devoted to ocular visit of notable spots like the shoreline where several small paddled boats were anchored; the railways that cut across the center of the community; and the social hall where village assemblies were held. It was also an opportunity for Kapi Chin to meet the fisherfolks and their families.

The people highly appreciated the way Kapi Chin responded to their typical Filipino hospitality. He used Tagalog in greeting and thanking them. He was also very fond of comparing the Filipino language with his own and when he detected the similarities, he smiled and exclaimed that we really came from the same roots.

At the community center, some of the fishermen we met were busily preparing the stage backdrop for the orientation in the afternoon. There was a big poster depicting four significant aspects of their struggle.

1. The fishing gears used in the community and the different fish species that they caught;
2. The problems they were encountering and the impact on their lives and the marine life;
3. The responses/solutions to the problems; and
4. The vision, mission and goal of the Federation of Gumaca fishermen.

In one corner was a map of Lamun Bay where the closure designated by FAO 165 was depicted, including the towns within the pilot project. Near it were pictures of different activities from trainings to mobilizations and their socio-economic projects.

By just reflecting on the posters, maps and pictures, one could already have an understanding of the fishermen's struggle and gains of the organization. Kapi Chin congratulated the leaders present for their accomplishments.

At the house of Sammy Corong, the Federation president, native delicacies were served for lunch. The atmosphere resembled that of a fiesta because of the presence of the whole community, i.e., the mothers, the children and the old folks.

After lunch, the good news came that a fisherman had caught a big fish weighing 93 kilos. Hurriedly, the group went to the site where they saw the huge fish being carried by four fishermen. It was a “bigok”, the native name for blue marlin. There, we met the town mayor and he posed for a picture with Kapi Chin.

At 2 p.m. the orientation started, facilitated by the fishermen leaders. Almost all of the village officials were present, including their wives. About 400 to 600 people crowded the community center. The programme included the following: Opening prayer, National anthem, Welcome address – Village Officer/Town Mayor, Introduction of Participants, Presentation of the Objectives of the Exposure, Presentation of the history of the fishermen’s struggle in Gumaca – Problems, solutions, challenges, perspective; Role of support groups and the municipal authorities; Comments from the immersees; Itinerary/Programme of Exposure and Celebration.

In between the orientation activities, the fishermen’s wives presented beautiful native dances which added to the festive mood. And, as was the tradition in Quezon, the day ended with a celebration of life with their famous nipa wine or lambanog. Kapi Chin was so elated at the extent of cooperation of the whole community including the government officials. While he had some reservations about the government officials’ political motivations, he felt a deep sense of oneness with the fishermen, their families and their life struggle towards liberation that were gleaned from their presentations.

During the orientation, the government officials were visibly amazed at the heightened consciousness of the fishermen and their active participation in the closure of a portion of Lamon Bay through the Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) Number 165. It was hoped the somehow, this encounter with the fishermen had touched them to move with a concrete response.

For Kapi Chin, the unity of the fishermen was the key to their success but they should always be vigilant because the challenges could even be greater in the days to come.

The first day seems so short. The second day was equally significant. The group was in the middle of the sea at 4:00 a.m., casting nets five kilometers from the coast line. The local chapter of Pipisik Fishermen Organization arranged the fishing schedule. The mechanized boat was owned by Glady – a member who for 10 years tried to save money from being a hired fisherman until he was able to buy this motorized boat. Glady usually goes fishing with his wife so that the earning would solely be for the family.

Fishing is better when there is no moon but this time, the moon shone. It was already expected that catch would not be much. True enough, only a few kilos of fish of the smaller species were caught. The other members, who fished within a three kilometer distance from the shoreline had more catch. They shared some of their catch with the group. There was also the chance to watch fishing by hook and line and fishing near the “Payao” or a man-made fish shelter. Some of them had already caught demersal fish about three pieces corresponding to a kilo. Fishing with the use of nets was not as good that day as fishing by hook and line. From a distance, Kapi Chin was shown the surrounding towns of Perez, Alabat and Quezon, all of Alabat Island; then Lopez, Gumaca, Plaridel and Atimonan. It was already 8:00 a.m. when the group returned to shore.

After breakfast, together with Lito, Tito and Berting, the neighboring fishing communities with local organizations were visited. From Villabota Centro, the group proceeded to Balanga. Here, the members had a brief discussion with the local organizations about their fishing situation. The fishermen-members were very proud to belong to the local BIGKIS-LAKAS Federation and also for their efforts in protecting the sea. Likewise, another site of a local chapter, Alang-Alang was visited where members shared their situation and aspirations in life.

Kapi Chin again witnessed an abundant catch in this area. The people told him that he had brought “luck” to the area because in his two-day stay in Gumaca, they had been catching big fishes. Kapi Chin humbly responded: “God is in us.”

In the afternoon, a brief discussion was held with the fishermen of Calumanguin, where the long line method of fishing was used. It was different from the Taiwanese method because here the hooks were smaller and the line, shorter. According to Kapi Chin, in Taiwan, their long line could stretch up to 10 kilometers. He also noticed that the fishermen’s boats were small, and could only be used during good weather and for shorter distances only.

From Calumanguin, the group proceeded to Pipisik, where a strong women’s organization was based. About 15 leaders, both male and female, were present who were so eager to ask Kapi Chin questions about the fishing gears in Taiwan. But the most difficult question put across was on the issue of Filipino fisherfolks aboard Taiwanese vessels. He calmly responded by citing the objective of their coming to the Philippines, which is one big step in facilitating a better understanding between Taiwan and the Philippines on the issues of the fisherfolks. The local leaders accepted and appreciated his response.

The target of the trip was the local chapter of Tabing Dagat, also in Gumaca town proper. The group met fisherfolks who experienced life aboard Taiwanese vessels. Ten of them came to the meeting and one had just arrived from Taiwan. He was almost in tears relating the hardships and the exploitations they suffered in Taiwan. In coming home, he tried to bring with him another Filipino fisherman who became insane because of the maltreatment he was subjected to in Kaoshiung -the biggest docking port in Southern Taiwan. Moreover, he narrated stories about his trip home without a single centavo. His mother was also there to share the issue of the allotment which was always short of the amount stipulated in the contract. Those present each had their own sad stories to tell. Kapi Chin felt very sorry for them. He requested the group to provide him with all the necessary evidences and documents so that their Service Center could do something to stop these injustices and abuses of the fisherfolks. He also stressed the significance of writing to their Fishermen Center when they were on board Taiwan ships so that they could monitor the ships in mainland Taiwan. Those present were also assured that their problems will be discussed thoroughly during the workshop in Manila on February 1–3. Two fishermen were invited to the workshop to testify on the abuse and exploitations of fisherfolks aboard Taiwanese vessels.

The group left the village with a heavy heart. Kapi Chin was almost in tears, reflecting on the testimonies of the fisherfolk of Tabing Dagat.

It was our last night so the Federation scheduled an evaluation, a “Celebration of Life” and “Thank You” party. Again, the community center was fully packed. All local chapters were represented as well as the municipal council. The celebration started with a prayer of praise and thanks to the Almighty for the wonderful opportunity of sharing of selves.

The evaluation had as its basis Kapi Chin’s expectations which were focussed on the fishing situation, the fishermen’s responses to this situation and the alternative programmes for change. The major points of the assessment and evaluation are the following:

1. The people appreciated the way Kapi Chin related with them. His simplicity and sense of humor, his supportive presence as well as his identification with the cause of the fishermen, served as inspiration for the fishermen to continue their struggle.

2. The people likewise acknowledged with gratitude the support expressed by Kapi Chin, particularly to the fisherfolks who had boarded DWV's and other Filipino workers in Taiwan.
3. The people expressed their wish that Kapi Chin, together with other co-Taiwanese, would come and visit the place again – to renew friendship and to further deepen understanding and cooperation between these two countries.

For this part, Kapi Chin, visibly tongue-tied and very much touched by this show of affection, expressed in an extremely low voice, his heartfelt gratitude and profound appreciation. At that moment, he experienced in concrete the universality of mankind. This intercultural relationship cemented in the past two days, is now a beautiful reality for the two groups to nourish. Indeed, the opportunity extended to the immersees by ICSF was worthwhile because of its liberating dimension.

The immersee came to realize that people, while submerged in poverty, could change and effect change in their environment if given the opportunities.

Similarly, the immersee recognized the significant role of women – the mothers in enhancing the unity of the fisherfolks and in sustaining the strength of fishworkers' organizations.

The challenge posed by Kapi Chin to the Filipino workers are the following:

1. Land is a great natural resource which must be harnessed and developed to its fullest, as in Taiwan. Diversified farming was encouraged.
2. In fishing, the fishermen should begin to experiment on other fishing alternatives and methodologies to develop fisheries without losing the ecological balance and the rich cultural heritage of the people of Quezon.
3. Kapi Chin also supported the dreams of the municipal officials to experiment on other products that could be derived from coconuts and other local agricultural products abundant in Gumaca and Quezon in general.

For Kapi Chin, all his expectations were fulfilled. As a parting word, Kapi Chin promised to be back with some of his co-ministers in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan for another exposure/experience with the fisherfolks and come up with possible projects that will be beneficial to both groups.

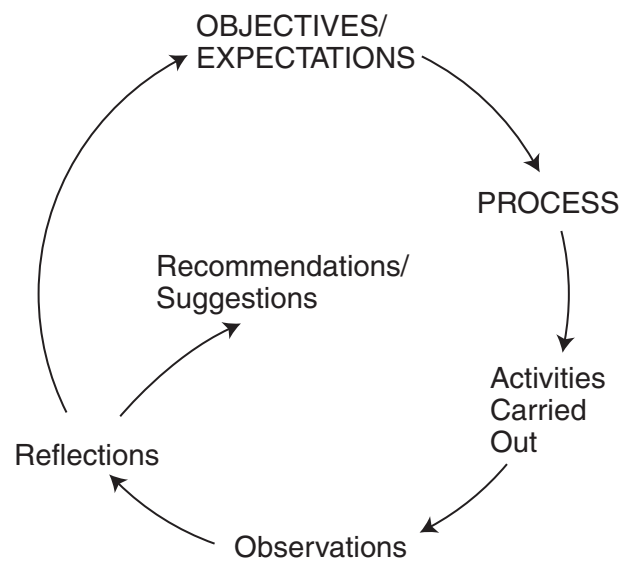
The activity ended with a Celebration of Life by the symbolic breaking of bread and the drinking of wine.

January 3, 1991 evaluation

This was the last day of the immersion process and had for a theme "A Journey to a Vision". It was devoted to the two groups' evaluation of the whole process. The framework used in the evaluation is represented by this diagram:

Everybody participated in the evaluation except Aliou who voluntarily counted himself out because of his short stay in the area. He, however, related some data about Senegal and its fishworkers' initiatives. He also offered additional information about ICSF.

The expectation by the Taiwanese immersees to have an insight into the problems prevailing in the area and how ALQUEREZ copes with them were to some extent met. Yvonne's expectation, however, to meet and interview fishworkers aboard distant water fishing vessels did not materialize. However, this was to be answered during the Seminar-Workshop in Manila on



February 1–3, 1991 where fishworkers formerly aboard Taiwanese fishing vessels gave testimonies about their experiences while on board the said vessels.

To demonstrate the active participation of both groups in the immersion, they made the following observations:

By the fishermen-hosts: the immersees displayed sincerity and related with the people well; they talked with the villagers and gave accounts about Taiwan; the fishermen were fascinated and amused with some points revealing the differences between the Philippines and Taiwan. The openness displayed by both the immersees and the fishermen-hosts signified a closer relationship between the two groups which they hoped could be the beginning of a better working relationship.

By the Taiwanese immersees: The seas was still in good shape and so were the other resources here, such as the land. However, agriculture was not that good – idle lots remained unattended to which could have been planted with rice. Roads were bad. Conservation efforts should continue. Issues and problems besetting the Philippines were similar to those of all other nations – there exists a common understanding among the fishermen about the problem; fishermen were aware that they were exploited, but there was very minimal support from the local government; fishermen, generally, do not own lands; they have low income; the use of passive gears not only limit their catch but small fishes are also being caught.

The following were the recommendation/suggestions by the two groups:

By the fishermen-hosts:

1. There is a need to continue the exchange program;
2. Put out manifestos and other informative materials calling for the fair treatment of Filipino crews aboard Taiwanese fishing vessels;
3. Learn new but appropriate fishing technologies;
4. Work for the provision of Social Security System benefits to fishermen;
5. Intensify advocacy and lobbying activities for the government to systematize implementation of laws against illegal fishing;

6. Continue the organizing work; and
7. Deepen studies on the specific needs of fishermen on the basis of their categories.

By the Taiwanese immersees:

1. Form more pressure groups at the local, national and international levels;
2. Develop a systematic marketing scheme controlled by the fishermen themselves such as the formation of cooperative;
3. Develop effective agricultural projects that would optimize agricultural outputs;
4. Continue the exchange programme Taiwanese immersees will invite other church leaders in Taiwan for an immersion in Philippine fishing communities;
5. Conduct in-depth studies on the following:
 - 5.1 socio-economic needs of the fishermen,
 - 5.2 indigenous skills and expertise in the country to avoid reliance upon foreign expertise, and
 - 5.3 the issue of Taiwanese and Filipino crews aboard Taiwanese distant water fishing vessels.

The discussion was temporarily stopped to give way to the dinner which was sponsored by the office of Congressman Oscar Santos of the 4th District of Quezon.

After dinner, the evaluation resumed, converging towards more animated discussions on fishing issues. A beautiful and colorful presentation rendered by the high school students from Alabat National High School took centerstage and served as a fitting set of activities to close the four-day immersion.

That the objectives of the immersion were achieved was clearly articulated. But the goodwill, meaningful relations and trust forged among kindred spirits involved in the immersion are difficult to pin down and enunciate in an evaluation. It is, however, doubtless that a bridge for international understanding and friendship has been laid out. The nameless mass of fishermen's faces were identified when fishermen related as individual persons; they will now reach out to each other across the seas and clasp hands to form a united front in the pursuit of a common vision of change towards a better quality of life for fishermen in all corners of the world.



CHAPTER 2

ICSF International Seminar/ Workshop on the Conditions of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels February 1–3, 1991 Manila, Philippines

A Three Day Summary Report

Day 1 — Opening ceremonies

Picking up from a fisherman's opening prayer and some fishermen's medley of songs, Dr. Mina Ramirez, President of the Asian Social Institute, welcomed the participants to the seminar. She was honored that they came to listen to the problems of Filipino fisherfolks, which were not very different from those all over the world since all were affected by similar global problems.

The consultation in Rome, the coming together and working as one on a global scale are indicators of unity in strength. She was glad that ASI could make a contribution to the worldwide efforts of nourishing a movement with a cause bigger than oneself: justice and peace.

The orientation to the seminar was an attempt to put in a perspective the formation of ICSF, its objectives and programme priorities. It also highlighted the current seminar's three phases, their objectives, and their mechanics.

The ensuing fishworker's address specified the Filipino fishworker's plight in distant water vessels on the one hand, and on the other hand, the lack of data about their sad conditions. However, the many concerns about the local fishworkers cut across racial boundaries, for many mysteries surround their circumstances. It was hoped that a fuller understanding of the situation could guide the group in addressing the problems in a holistic manner; that a development paradigm for fishworkers be drawn up which regards fishworkers across continents as victims of structural relationships between and among developed and developing countries. Needed are interlinkages at the global, regional and national levels, where, it was suggested, the ICSF can play a significant role.

Panel Discussion 1

A Situationer on the Conditions of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels

1. Taiwan's fishworkers and distant water fishing industry by: Yvonne Mei-Jung Lin

Taiwan's zealous economic policy and industrial development have had adverse effects on its marine resources, traditional and local in-shore fishing. These in turn transformed the fisher-

ies sector into a highly mechanized distant water fleet, controlled by big business concerns which have no regard for the value of human or marine lives. Consequently, abusive and unjust conditions for Taiwanese and foreign fishworkers have surfaced.

Profile of Typical Taiwan Distant Water Vessel (Dwv) fishworkers:

Majority of Taiwanese Dwv fishworkers are junior high graduates or new discharges from the country's mandatory military service. Over 62% have worked on ships for less than five years. There may be 600,000 total fishworkers.

A high percentage are aboriginal men, a small non-Chinese minority. Many are channeled into the worst jobs when they migrate to the cities, and are especially hired as fishworkers. But there is a growing number of foreign workers on Taiwanese Dwvs: Mainland Chinese, Filipino, Thai, South African and Mauritian. While the government now allows 30% foreigners, there are reports of 50–75% foreign laborers.

Over 60% of Taiwan Fishers work more than 12 hours per day. For trawler workers, fishing time takes between 5–6 hours per day with 12 hours required to bring in the nets and sort the harvest. Squid fishers work through the night with longer hours. Fishworkers sleep 4–6 hours a day and may not rest by turns.

The work requires monotonous and repetitive action, over a third of which does not require special skills, but produces boredom which increases the chances of injury. Additionally, inability to speak the same mother-tongue poses further safety problems; the presence of foreign fishworkers also complicates communication.

Taiwan ships are unsafe. The Kaohsiung Fishing Association reports that in the past 10 years, over 2,000 ships have been lost at sea and that more than 3,000 men have died at an average of 24 men each month, due to old boats, lack of safety equipment, life rafts, life preservers, etc.; the purchase of sub-standard vessels from Japan at cheap prices; officials' falsified inspection reports on the safety of ships; untrained crew.

Over the past ten years, over 6,514 fishworkers on Taiwan vessels have been detained in other countries. While the crew has no decision-making responsibility, they are imprisoned for operational inadequacies and are viewed as criminals while detained in jails with poor conditions. Then all family support stops. Because the voyage ultimately loses money, fishers return to port in serious debt to the company. There is no way to repay the boat owner except to sign up for another voyage.

The length of distant water voyages are between one and three years. Sometimes, the men are gone for as long as five years at a time. Fishworkers experience a great deal of loneliness and isolation during these long-distance voyages. Alcohol is often relied upon as a distraction. Tensions have a way of mounting among men on ship, especially when there is pressure to work harder and harder. Reports of fights, violence, mutiny and murder are increasing.

The economic factor

Only 7% of Taiwan Dwv fishworkers are guaranteed a fixed wage for their labor. The majority of fishworkers are as "partners" of the fishing company. The "bonus system" is deceptive where fishworkers take all the risks and the fishing companies take all the profits.

Monthly support payments are issued to the family after the ship leaves port. While these payments are supposed to total US\$400, investigation reveals that these payments are in fact a "loan".

At the end of the voyage, all expenses often calculated by the company at two or three times the actual amount, are subtracted from the sale of the catch. The company then receives 60–65%. What remains is divided among the crew of 17–20 men, with the captain and officers receiving two or three shares. If the fishworker's "share" of the catch is less than the total amount of family support payments, then he owes the company the balance.

Currently, there is a serious labor shortage on Taiwan ships. Many brokers are run by crime syndicates often in league with the fishing companies. They especially prey upon aboriginal youths, luring them onto the ships with alcohol, false promises of big money and women. Introduction fees range from US\$1,400 to US\$3,200.00.

These companies take the fisher's official name seal, ID card, fishing license and other important papers and turn them over to the fishing company. Boat owners have been known to take out loans using the fisher's documents. Using these papers, the company controls everything and the fisher never even sees the terms of his contract; 85% of all fishers never sign their own contract. The rest usually do not understand what they are signing.

A five-year study of the Fishermen's Service Center discloses that the current monthly income earned by fishers is between US\$260 to US\$300. Conversations with foreign workers docked in Kaohsiung reveal that they earn roughly half this amount, but sometimes are not paid at all.

The insurance of fishworkers is limited to risk at sea. Fishworkers may not obtain medical payment from labor insurance if the illness or injury does not occur in the course of a fishing operation. When fishworkers are ill or injured, they are often treated with patent medicines. Many fishworkers suffer irreparable handicaps because of postponing emergency medical treatment.

Retirement benefits are available but rarely received. A fishworker must work at least 15 years with the same company before receiving retirement funds, beginning at age 55. Under these circumstances, a fisher may receive between US\$14,000–US\$16,000.

Concluding remarks

The abuses in Taiwan's fishing industry occur because of the capitalistic greed of the fishing companies, lack of government regulation and failure of fishworkers to organize. Companies feel justified in using cheap labor, local or foreign, if it is profitable. They are allowed to do whatever they want by a government driven by the same capitalistic goals. Additionally, due to Taiwan's unique political isolation from the world community, there is little motivation to observe world standards of behavior.

There are also local Fishing Administrations located in Taiwan's major parts. The Kaohsiung Fishing Association, a non-governmental body, processes insurance and provides a limited number of services to fishworkers but is totally dominated by boat owners. When there is a complaint against the company by a fisherman, there is no tribunal where his case can be heard. If a company refuses to negotiate, it cannot be compelled by law to address the issue.

2. Conditions of fishworkers on Taiwanese DWVs by: Jean Vacher, Mauritius

Though Taiwan's Fishing Industry has worked itself to the forefront of the world fishing industries, as one of 20 nations achieving catch totals over the 1 Min MT mark, its success in this sector has been mitigated by the sorry record of ill treatments meted out to the crew working on board its DWV's. Thus, this country is also in the forefront of Seamen's Rights Violating Countries, with a record pattern of violence and abuse, both physical and psychological

compounded by deliberately inflicted corporal punishments, wherever its DWVs ply their trades. They also provide the vehicle for satisfying men's sadistic tendencies.

Taiwan's DWVs are no longer safe working places as in their counterparts in other parts of the world. Taiwan's Labour Regulations in the fishing sector have not kept pace with its advance in the industrial fishing development.

Constraining factors faced by fishworkers

- a. Isolation. Total isolation between sea and sky on aircraft of approximately 285 sq. m. on the average with only 2/3 of that space, approximately 14 sq. m. available for movement. This is for a period of 105 days at least and 165 days at most.
- b. Work pressure. Work is almost always performed under pressure on board a DWV, such pressure being built up either directly by the workload (a large catch-volume) or indirectly by weak spots caused by slow or defaulting crew members in the work-line.
- c. Inadequate protective clothing. Inadequate protective clothing and apparels for the deep freeze and holds with a temperature below 12°C.
- d. Huge income gaps between the Crew and Officers but also the unequal salary scales afforded Taiwanese crew members and foreign crew members and between crew members themselves.
- e. Labor regulations governing work on DWV. Work on Taiwan's DWV is not governed by any labour regulations. Work relationships are some-what like the feudal system of Medieval Europe with the Master as the Lord and his Officers, the Sheriffs.
- f. The absence of fishworkers' collective willingness to organize into bonafide labor organizations to fight for their rights. Crew members on DWVs are not organized within any Labor Union. The main reason seems to lie with the fishworkers themselves caught in an unmanageable situation where fist violence is the only language spoken by all without any hope of improving the situation. Many simply work to get out and run away. Other reason are: (1) difference of nationality; (2) limited work locations; and (3) debt-laden conditions.
- g. On the social and cultural functions.
 1. Problems which arise among the Taiwanese themselves seem to come from the different cultural backgrounds of those seafarers originating from coastal and aborigine mountain regions on the one part, and between seafarers belonging to different mountain tribes on the other. Sometimes, it may even be a language-related problem as the tribes-seafarers speak in a way that attracts laughter upon them. But the main question is one of behavior and ancestral rivalry.
 2. Problems between Taiwanese crew and foreign crew members may feature the cultural bias to a minor extent, but seem largely to arise from the different racial morphologies and social values of the protagonists. Dark-colored and/or curly-haired people from South Africa and Mauritius are made the objects of jaunts which lead to fighting bouts. And since these people move as a collective, they constitute themselves into another tribe.

Filipinos, Thais and Burmese are not open to racist jibes but since they are pastoral rather than industrial-minded, they are unable to cope with the work schedule which brings them under fire. Naturally slow, these people with elastic time notions are always late and sleepy-like.

Further, this group also possesses the collective mentality; a problem which arise with one of them becomes the problem of the whole group.

h. Absence of Prior Job Familiarization.

Taiwan is not a signatory party to any of the 23 Maritime Labour Conventions now in force, nor does it give selected implementation to any of the seven Conventions not yet in force, or to the 23 Maritime Labour Recommendations designed to govern work on board ships.

This absence of proper working cadre and the lawless environment do much to foster abuse and violence on board Taiwan's DWVS.

3. Fishworkers in Africa by: Aliou Sall-Senegal

Artisanal Fishery in Senegal is very much developed accounting for 70% catch by fishworkers. But fishworkers in fishing villages have shifted to industrial fishing or deep sea fishing as part of technological invasion.

However, deep sea fishing is characterized by a lack of legal regulation which is aggravated by a drought that has pushed agricultural workers to the shores. Secondly, there is an interference between the two sectors of artisanal fishing and deep sea fishing.

The problem of deep sea fishing are many, among them, abuse and exploitation arising from the absence of laws to regulate work relations in this industry; a feeling of insecurity on the part of the traditional fishermen who have been pushed out of the sector to work for the deep sea boats that take and sell their catch while on the sea; inequality in pay for Senegalese and Japanese workers in Japanese-owned fishing vessels.

Moreover, the Senegalese artisanal fishworkers more recently have gone to work for foreign deep sea boats. Because of the depletion of fishes in the coastal sea, more and expensive equipment are needed to be able to catch fish. Without money, the traditional fishworkers take out loans from ship owners. This is done through an agent who gets a fat commission for money loaned or for Japanese equipment sold from the ships. The deal is effected on condition that the fishworkers' catch must be sold exclusively to the ship owners.

Before, two sectors were distinct in their way of selling fish; the fishworkers went to shore while the ships went to the harbor. Now that the fishworkers have become more and more linked with the ships they sell their catch at sea.

Fishing in ships happens this way. About 100 fishworkers who have been accepted to work for the ships are loaded aboard. They leave Senegal waters and reach the deep sea of outer Africa. They then fish from 20–30 days. While fish is costly, the price is never fixed since there is no written contract. After the fish is paid, the boat disappears, leaving the fishworkers behind. If fishing was done in unauthorized areas, they get caught and are imprisoned.

There has been no reaction to this practice on the part of the government but there had been confrontations between artisanal fishworkers fleet and industrial fleets.

A recent phenomenon is for the artisanal fishworkers to set ice boxes in their canoes so that they could go to the deep sea. This is to be able to compete with the industrial ships. But because they are inadequately equipped, there have been loss of materials and worse, accidents and deaths. The rate is increasing and has become frightening.

4. Conditions of fishworkers in South America by: Hector Luis Morales – Chile

Situation of Filipino and Taiwanese deep sea fishworkers mentioned here earlier are highly similar to those in Central America. There have been reports of fishworkers killed at sea by their

masters, the officers. Generally, ship owners are whites from Latin America and England and majority of those killed are blacks.

These sad facts from Central America are lower in South America: Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Peru. The four countries account for 10 million tons of catch. Therefore, the living conditions of fishworkers are very different. They have strong unions. Not only are industrial fishworkers unionized – artisanal fishworkers are, too. The two sectors are very much in contact with one another.

A letter of greeting and congratulations was sent to the ICSF seminar by the Union of Industrial Fishworkers. They are suggesting that ICSF join them to demand of ILO the improvement of the fishworkers' labor conditions since it is a body empowered to regulate the type of work done by deep sea and artisanal fishworkers and have their rights respected. The letter ended with a hope for ICSF's expression of solidarity with them.

They are sending documents to show that where fishworkers were unionized, interesting experiences take place: industrial fishworkers enjoy social security, work rules and enforced; new formula covers relationships. They would like to show different possibilities.

The sharing ended with these thoughts: it is apparent that in Taiwan, Latin America, Chile and the Philippines, dictatorial rule was used to crush human rights and freedom and the workers surely bear their share of the burden. Therefore, we must fight to defend human rights and promote democracy in our countries.

Of recent times, Japanese, Spanish and Korean companies operate ships in Chilean waters. They have discriminated against their workers, foreign workers -Filipinos, Taiwanese, Chilean, and other nationalities. Their pay is very low compared with what Japanese and Koreans receive.

Chileans now are moving from dictatorship to democracy – new laws will be enacted, rights will be protected. They are hoping for the best.

Open forum

It was observed that conditions of fishworkers everywhere are similar and are, therefore, similarly marginalized in most parts of the world. These are brought about by capitalistic greed, lack of organization among the fishworkers, and failure of governments to react.

There is a growing ecological degradation of the seas as evidenced by siltation and industrial pollution which spill into the seas. In Manila Bay, survey shows the impact of water pollution on the health and livelihood of fishworkers and all these will mean the further marginalization of the fishworkers.

Regarding the problem of fishworkers on board ships, Jean Vacher stated that he could not do anything as an individual. But as a member of the Apostolate of the Sea, he can do much for the fishworkers in whatever work location he is. As workers of AOS, when they meet problems, they go forward, do what they can and with God's grace, every case presented to them has been settled so far.

There were more specific instances cited regarding how, with interest and commitment, the fishworkers in trouble can be helped. The dedicated, sustained efforts of a single person can go a long way in responding to the numerous plights of fishworkers everywhere.

Coordination with concerned government agencies and NGOs were likewise seen as critical. Official as well as informal approaches to these agencies need to be taken discriminately as

warranted. The need to bring together all associations working in behalf of fishworkers was highlighted – this was a way to get their acts together.

The significance of documents and pictures to convey the message to the world cannot be underestimated.

Laws have to be enacted, amended and updated. But equally crucial is the proper and full implementation of existing laws.

Day 2 — Recap of day 1

The recapitulation of Day 1 was done in a very creative and participatory manner, through symbols and representations.

Multi-colored drawings depicting the substance of the previous day's discussions were shown to the participants, who were asked to react by stating what they see, the meaning they attached to the symbols and how they feel. Elicited were many observations, varied interpretations and significant insights.

This technique was well appreciated by the participants as it succeeded in bringing to a balance the affective as well as the cognitive aspect of the discussion process. Its liberating dimension has far outweighed its limitation in terms of time factor.

Workshop 1 written reports

Group I – Composed of representatives from Chile, Mauritius and the Philippines

Problems of fishworkers in the three countries were quite similar, with slight differences in degree according to situations obtaining in each country. Problems identified were the following:

1. Recruitment – Agencies overcharge placement fees since they are after the money alone. Thus, they recruit even the unqualified and unskilled for work in fishing vessels and those with experiences in other fields, e.g., farmers, miners. This gives rise to exploitation at work: salaries are not commensurate with the number of hours rendered – as when overtime work is not paid or holiday pay is not forthcoming.
2. Economic factor – Because of dire poverty in their countries, fishworkers are forced to accept abject working conditions and since their countries' marine resources have been depleted, artisanal fishworkers are constrained to find jobs with which to sustain their families, often on board foreign fishing vessels.
3. Fishworkers in particular and the public in general have a low level of consciousness regarding issues pertaining to working conditions in fishing vessels. They are mostly unaware of what is going on aboard them.
4. Fishworkers, except those in Chile and some South American countries are unorganized and are unlikely to do so for fear of being discriminated against by the ship owners. Moreover, getting organized required the payment of fees, amounts that are seen as reduction in income.
5. Working Conditions – Facilities are inadequate while protective clothing is almost nil. The former hampers work while the latter results in hazards.
6. Cultural differences between fishing operators or managers on the one hand, and the fishworkers on the other hand, stem from their varied social situations. For instance, eating

habits differ in terms of what, when and how to eat; fishworkers are forced to adopt what the operators are accustomed to. Differences in language cause communications gaps that serve as irritants and sources of conflicts. Besides, these other cultural variations come into play with the same negative results.

7. Government policies are inadequate and do not cover every aspect of the fishworkers' needs to render him amply protected. Moreover, existing policies are not fully implemented and operators easily circumvent the law.

In authoritarian governments Chile, Mauritius, and the Philippines, then – there exists difficulties in improving policies governing fishworkers in distant water vessels e.g., there are a few voices raised against the existing recruitment schemes and they, therefore, remain uncorrected.

Recommended responses

1. Apply pressure on:
 - 1.1 Ship owners to adopt standards and abide by international conventions, resolutions and laws, like those promulgated by the International Labor Organizations;
 - 1.2 Third World Countries' policy makers to adopt better recruitment policies, e.g., providing fishworkers with skills training which could result in enhanced work skills and accident avoidance or reduction;
 - 1.3 First World Countries to comply with international conventions, recommendations and standards. In this regard, ICSF could contact international organizations so that they could lobby and help apply pressure on these sectors.
2. The matter of organizing fishworkers poses dilemmas of how to do this since fishworkers are not ready. A possible strategy may be gleaned in the practice of Mauritius and France of organizing through women or organizing women themselves: fishworkers' mothers and wives. It seems crucial to work with them since they are so affected by their husbands' situations.
3. Raise the level of consciousness regarding fishworkers, plight through education, training and the mass media.
4. Manage the problems that arise from the conflict of interests between the wealthy and poor countries, e.g., the North and South countries, the European Economic Community against those of Asia and Africa; between debtors and creditors; the rich and poor; between those with technology and those without.
5. Restructure the educational system regarding fishing, working conditions on distant water vessels and the basic technical qualifications of seafarers.

The groups discussion ended on the note that when fishworkers are organized, they begin to have control over resources, production, marketing and hopefully, consumption patterns.

Group II – Comprised of representative from Belgium, Philippines, Senegal and Taiwan

Discussions here were mostly focused on the experiences of the Taiwanese fishworker present in the group who works on board Japanese or Korean deep sea fishing factory ship. He shared information worse than what were revealed earlier.

1. He lost his right eye on board but did not receive proper medical care nor any due compensation. Now he has to wear a false eye.

2. Due to dreadful working conditions, tensions abound that eventually explode into mutinies. Shocks from this violent experience last long.
3. Difference in life style result in conflicts.
4. The knowledge that the promises of the recruiting agency are not to be fulfilled cause deep, suppressed anger, which later may be projected on to other nationalities.
5. The absence of a common language drives fishworkers to form cliques with fellow countrymen, cutting them off from other fishworkers in the vessel.
6. Many Filipinos and Taiwanese, without the needed skills, have difficulty coping with their work.
7. The 12 hours work schedule provides neither respite nor recreation in between work. If one is unable to keep pace with the long hours and falls asleep from exhaustion he is awakened by the manager's beatings. Managers are uneducated and use force to express themselves.
8. The lust for money pervades over everything.

The Philippine problems raised were:

1. The Japanese fleet operating in Philippine waters;
2. Employment of children in the fisheries sector;
3. The use of pyro-technics (explosives) and poison in fishing;
4. Filipinos seek employment abroad due to the impoverished economy of the country. They accept any terms in any contract. So when they encounter adverse trials, they want to return home soonest and find other employments. Therefore, it is difficult for them to get "organized".

What can be done:

1. Abolish the scheme of recruitment through agents – they are the culprits behind many evils.
2. Some fishworkers dream of organizing fishing cooperatives to acquire fishing boats. Yet, it was recognized that at this point in time it was not difficult to get these cooperatives organized.
3. Establish a link between Taiwan and the Philippines immediately for common endeavours.
4. Publicize the difficulties encountered by fishworkers to discourage the acceptance of a job abroad under any condition. However, an observation made was that the Filipino would admit the difficulties of others before him, but would like to believe that he may be luckier and will, therefore, get employment outside just the same.

Open forum

It seemed there were no Japanese laws that regulate labor relations on Korean and Japanese factory ships.

A reaction was expressed to the reports' negation of the possibility of organizing fishworkers. It could perhaps be done by starting properly i.e., organize fishworkers by country and then put together the country organizations.

A question was put before everyone: If cultural differences were a source of conflict, how does one explain the fact that there are less problems in French and Japanese vessels (with cross-cultural fishworkers) and the numerous conflicts in Taiwanese vessels (with fishworkers of various cultures also)?

Political pressures must be applied at the national level and not at the international level since often what is involved is the proper implementation of laws and the commission of graft and corruption at the national level.

Chairman's final comments

We have listened to witnesses, some studies and commentaries of people from three continents, this is a wealth of information. The task ahead is to enrich and disseminate this experience that we already have through the network of the Collectivity—increase the exchanges and solidarity;

We must not be frustrated that we have not seen all the sides of the problems. We have started to exchange and to analyze the problems of the fishworkers.

We must take into account the different circular levels of understanding situations, the center of which is the value of each human being and his basic human rights which are internationally recognized inspite of differences in nation, religion or culture, these comprise the inner circle upon which we can base our analysis and understanding.

The second circle deals with all the problems presented today – psychological disturbances, suffering, pain. To be recognized and respected are our human rights – the right to proper food, medical care; the right to the respect of the integrity of the human body, and to a correct psychological environment.

We must not take lightly the beginning answers given by existing organizations, like the Apostleship of the Sea -assistance to persons in danger may seem like a charitable act but it is an important step that cannot be overlooked.

The next circle refers to the educational and cultural links at the regional and national levels. Here, the NGOs and states have a role to play. Responsibilities have to be established. As was correctly pointed out, unless properly organized, fishworkers will never be respected and will remain as objects. But it is crucial that they become subjects – active agents in their own development and changing of situations. Here, organizing at the local level cannot be overlooked – it is a very important step.

The last, but not the least, circle is at the international level, for international volitions. It was aptly highlighted that there are rich and poor nations – North and South. The North has resources, advance technology, markets demanding fish. The South with some resources, often has poor technology and huge debts. Managing this difficult situation is like navigating in rough seas -trying to find the proper way. If Japan, Russia and some European countries have come to fish in the South, it is because they need fish and profit; and the South has accepted them without having seen the imbalanced relation. Neither have the people of the South resisted nor tried to discontinue the likewise unjust relationship.

The Apostleship of the Sea—getting aware together: by Fr. Carlos Megumi Oda, C.S. Manila, Philippines

The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) operates through clubs able to offer seafarers moments of relaxation and sources of information and culture which are not normally available to them at sea.

Recently, there was considerable concern in AOS about the uncertainty prevailing in the maritime sector, the exploitation by manning components of seafarers in their efforts to get employment, and within that employment the “black market of people”, lack of social security, delayed salary payment, dishonest work contracts, and many instances of undue distinctions on the basis of rank between different sections of individual crews concerning food, wages, holidays and permission to go shore side when in port.

A plea was made that governments be urged to adopt ILO Conventions and Recommendations leading to better national legislations governing the conditions of seafarers. It was noted that some governments in the developed world had a poor record in this regard.

The AOS is still at the beginning stage in dealing with fishermen’s matters, but problems posed by the fishing industry as distinct from the merchant crews are now duly considered and links with other NGOs and government agencies contemplated.

Panel discussion 2

Recruitment patterns of fishworkers on distant water vessels

1. The Philippines’ recruitment patterns and the problem of monitoring fishworkers on DWVS: by Crescendo M Siddayao, represented by Julito Habuc

The dramatic increase in overseas employment of fishworkers from 140% in the last three years is an indication of the viability of the fishing industry and the acceptability of Filipino fishermen on board overseas fishing vessels.

As of December 1990, some 3,075 fishermen were registered with the Manpower Registry Division (MRD) and a total of 37 Manning Agencies were accredited to recruit and deploy fishermen.

The procedure followed is the accreditation of foreign principals as local agencies. This is similar to that of manning agencies which deploy seafarers.

The basic documents such as manning agreement and Special Power of Attorney are submitted. The manning agreement includes the stipulation of the number of vessels, the flag of registry, the positions to be filled, salary and other arrangements, e.g. overtime pay or catch bonus.

Under the open registry, those recruited are supposed to be experienced fishermen with at least one year sea experience on board domestic fishing vessel of 100 gross tonnage.

Applicants under category are exclusively classified as Overseas Fishermen and are issued Seaman’s Service Record Book (SSRB) by the Philippine Coast Guard. Subsequently, they are registered with the MRD and the corresponding Seamen Registration Cards (SRC) are issued to qualified applicants as fishermen for overseas employment. These are required before acceptance by the manning agencies.

However, in the light of critical shortage of qualified fishermen, the recruitment policies and procedures have been modified to allow manning agencies to recruit their own manpower requirements with less or no sea experience under C3 category. Under this scheme, the conduct of recruitment and selection by most agencies is done through the barangays or mayors of coastal town who know bonafide fishermen in their localities.

More often than not, actual selection is made on the basis of the applicant’s physical attributes and ability to withstand the rigors of work. The latter criterion is one of the recruitment methods

under C3 category which generally conforms to the criterion or preference of most principals/employers.

Applicants belonging to this category are issued employment contracts by agencies concerned so as to facilitate the issuance of the SSRB, registration and processing of documents. Usually, the employment contract with a transmittal letter from the Manning Agency is submitted to MRD. Verification of the documents is done essentially to determine the qualification of the person being hired. A personal interview is part of the process, but is usually not done except when deemed necessary. MRD registers the applicant if he possesses the required SSRB and submits the verified documents to the Contract Processing Division for the purpose of checking the availability of positions to be filled and the processing of the contract.

However, if the applicant does not possess the required SSRB, the Contract Processing Division prepares a formal endorsement to the Philippine Coast Guard for the issuance of the SSRB. Hence, the usual registration and processing of contract is completed at Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA).

POEA memorandum Circular No. 60 Series of 1989 specifies the following terms and conditions on temporary arrangement which form part of the Standard Employment Contract for Seafarers:

1. Duration of Contract – Not more than 12 months. Any extension of contract period shall be subject to the mutual consent of the parties.
2. Minimum Wage – Shall not be less than US\$250.00 per month effective upon departure from and up to his arrival in Manila.
3. Catch Bonus – Shall be at the following rates:
 - a. Purse seiner/trawler – the fisherman's wage plus US\$ 1.00 per metric ton per man.
 - b. Long line – the fisherman's wage plus 30% of the basic rate.

Prior to departure, the hired fishworker must undergo the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar in order to apprise him of the nature of the job, and the terms and conditions of the contract.

During the tenure of Filipino fishermen's contract overseas, monitoring of their employers' compliance with the terms and conditions stipulated in contracts is difficult for government agencies. This is particularly as regards the maximum number of hours of work, medical attention, living and working conditions and treatment by the vessels' managements. Welfare cases are only monitored whenever complaints are filed with the Welfare Assistance Division by offended parties during or after the term of contract. Timely preventive measures could not be carried out effectively since the job sites are on board foreign-owned fishing vessels operating beyond Philippine territorial waters.

2. Rights of fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels by: Rolando G. Talampas

Relevant to the present discussion is the International Labour Office Publication on Conditions of Work in the Fishing Industry (ILO Studies and Reports No. 30, 1952) which brings to light the postwar good standing of men, especially from developed countries who were engaged in deep sea fishing. Between then and now, spans a period of time that has made the intervention of international agencies such as the ILO, clear as regards rights that should be enjoyed by fishworkers.

ILO instruments on fishworkers

On the positive side – and relevant to the question of rights of fishworkers, seven important ILO documents may be cited for the purpose of information and possible guidance.

1. Recommendation No. 7 – Hours of work (fishing) recommendation, 1920.

Hours of work for all workers in the fishing industry shall be set to the standard of “eight hours a day or a forty-eight hour week”. It calls on member-countries to enact legislation, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the fishing industry in each country.

2. Convention No. 112 – Minimum age (fishermen) convention. 1959.

Article 2 expressly states that children below 15 years shall not be employed on fishing vessels. They may, however, still be engaged on fishing vessels provided it is not prejudicial to their health or normal development, to their school attendance, and is not intended for commercial profit.

3. Convention No. 113 – Medical examination (fishermen) convention. 1959.

Qualifications for employment in any capacity in a fishing boat shall require a medical certificate, valid for a period of one year or until the end of a voyage. attesting to the individual’s fitness for service at sea and absence of danger to the health of others on board.

4. Convention No. 114 – Fishermen’s articles of agreement shall detail, among others, the name of the fisherman, relevant personal data, the capacity to which he is employed, the name of the fishing vessel, voyage or voyages to be undertaken, the scale of provisions to be supplied to the fisherman, amount of wages or share and method of calculating such share, or any agreed minimum wage, and the conditions for the termination of the agreement.

5. Convention No. 125 – Fishermen’s competency certified convention. 1966.

Parts II and III of Convention No. 125 deal with certification and examination, respectively, of the fishing vessel’s skipper, mates and engineers, specifying their age and sea service qualifications, and training and knowledge requisites for admission to work. Part IV empowers national laws to penalize violators of this convention, namely those who cause the engagement of uncertified officers or those who forge their certificates of competency.

6. Convention No. 126 – Accommodation of crews (fishermen) convention. 1966.

The very specifics of sleeping rooms, mess rooms and sanitary accommodation are treated in detail.

7. Recommendation No. 126 – Vocational training (fishermen) recommendation. 1966.

Aimed at improving the efficiency of the fishing industry and the encouragement of suitable persons into the fishing industry, the ILO recommends that particular attention be paid by national governments to the matter of fishermen’s education and training in terms of planning and coordination, financing, training standards, training programmes, course offerings and methods of training, among others. This may be done in developing countries through international cooperation.

Shipowner’s liability is fishworker’s right

Chapter IV of the Conditions of Work in the Fishing Industry gives us a glimpse of owners’ legal liabilities involving cases of sickness, injury or shipwreck.

Liabilities of vessel owners from countries such as Belgium, Chile, Denmark, France, Iceland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom tell us that sickness, accident injury

benefits received by fishworkers working on distant waters include medical care/hospitalization that lasted the minimum of the time upon reaching ashore to four months after termination of services or determination of permanent incapacity (in which case other social security provisions applied). Dependents of deceased workers received benefits due them under national laws such as the Industrial Accidents Act of Netherlands. Chile provided for a widow's pension of 30 percent of wages of the deceased worker until re-marriage and an orphan's pension until the age of 15.

On repatriation/termination of the worker, these vessel owners of those bygone years were good enough to pay wages until after a minimum of seven days to a maximum of four months from termination/repatriation.

Personal effects lost during shipwreck also fell under the category of liabilities, the payment for which was covered under various schemes, including a welfare fund set up in British Columbia Pilchard and Herring Fisheries under a collective agreement between workers and vessel owners' association.

Certain amounts of the so-called family allowances of workers were provided by owners in three countries.

The trend should have been for the betterment of workers' conditions in the last years. But since most practices in the fishing world were governed more by tradition than by law, it appears that the formal laws have not served the fishworkers well during the intervening period of the eighties.

Rights of fishworkers under captivity

In fact, the Philippine fishermen who sailed on April 5, 1988 into international water (204 kilometers northwest of Kota Kinabalu) were charged with crossing to the Malaysian side of the waters near Palawan, Philippines. Forty nine crewmen of Jasmine, Ranger 16 and Ranger 17, owned by top grossing Frabal Fishing Corp., were thrown into crowded cells with hardened Malaysian criminals and fed with one-half cup of rice and kangkong with sand in it. The 22 year old engineer died while in prison. If found guilty, it was reported, the crewmen were either to pay a fine of US\$381,000 or serve two years more in prison, both of which were indeed dark forebodings.

The boat's fish haul was auctioned at US\$17,500 while the boats were allegedly cannibalized. After about three months and terse warnings from the Philippine government, the 38 crewmen were flown back from Kota Kinabalu to Manila to their anxious families.

And again in November 1989, 11 Filipino fishermen on board F/B Echo Gulf which was swept toward Indonesian waters at the height of a storm were also arrested by eventually released in January the following year. With no complaints about food and detention, the crewmen suffered loss of income owing to unwarranted arrest.

It has become clear that maritime disputes among several Asian nations over territorial waters and island groups in the South China Sea have led to incidents such as these, including threats of war. And immediately, fishworkers face the dire consequences of imprisonment and death.

International law covers these affairs and governments ought to act decisively and effectively in its own national interest and the interest of its people.

3. Some observations on the plight of filipino fishworkers on board DWVs: by: Engr. Zotico R. Reamon

Filipinos are among the best seafarers in the world. This should not be a surprise because they live in an archipelago with over 7,100 islands from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi. By force of circumstances, they have to adapt themselves to the sea and know its dangers.

Through the centuries, they have maintained this reputation so much so that shipping companies in many parts of the world have developed a special liking for Filipino seamen. Unfortunately, such reputation as an expert seafarer or fisherman has been tarnished in the recent years.

Filipino seamen have brought dollars to the country. But ironically, the seaman sector has been one of the most neglected sectors in the national work force.

The present problems confronting this sector may be categorized as follows:

1. Education and Training – Many schools are diploma mills so much so that seamen have haphazard or no training at all in the basics of seamanship;
2. Licensing – A lot of anomalies have been reported in the board examinations and licensing of seamen in connivance with the Philippine Regulatory Commission and unscrupulous centers;
3. Pre-employment – Manning agencies and recruitment agencies are known to have victimized seamen with their exorbitant placement fees;
4. During employment – Many Filipino seamen on inter-island vessels have poor training and are therefore not able to finish their contracts. Many are maltreated by their superiors. While many seamen get high salaries and allowances, the majority are underpaid and do not get social benefits.
5. Post-employment – Those who finish their contracts do not always end successfully because they are not able to save during their employment. Their families who are wholly dependent on them also suffer due to poor money management. The disabled, sick and retired seamen do not get the desired benefits mandated by law.

Many seamen hired as fishermen by foreign employers face some problems, too. Despite warnings from authorities, many are still victimized by illegal recruiters. In their desire to earn a living, some accept low salaries. Apart from this, they work for more than 20 hours. Since they are mixed with seamen from different cultures, there exist so much miscommunication, maltreatment from superiors and constant quarrels, including physical contacts among seamen.

About two days ago, it was reported in the papers that 70 fishermen, all Filipino citizens, were deported by the Taiwanese government for not carrying any travel documents.

In the face of all these problems confronting Filipino seafarers, the government must provide them the protection they deserve. There must be proper coordination with national governments where the seamen are to work. The POEA must exert all efforts so that illegal recruiters are put to jail and all seamen are properly warned through the media, print, broadcast and billboards – about the dire consequences of dealing with these illegal recruiters.

Testimonies of fishworkers on DWVs, implications to policies. Challenges to fishworkers and support groups

Leonardo Aquino, Jr. - Gumaca, Quezon

Alberto de Leon - Perez, Quezon

Daniel Labaco - Perez, Quezon

Noel Omali - Gumaca, Quezon

The content of these testimonies had a uniform message to tell:

- The four young men were motivated to accept the job in DWVs as fishworkers in their desire to earn an honest living. They had heard some disquieting information about the difficulties of life in such vessels but they all needed money and this seemed a certain way to earn some.
- All had to pay an exorbitant sum for the application fee, processing of papers, acquisition of passports and visas. Each did not have the finances and had to scrounge around for loans.
- They were not totally clear about conditions of living in countries where they were going, but hoped for a decent treatment in their new locations. If they had a pre-departure orientation, it was inadequate.
- While relations with ship officials were smooth initially, this worsened soon after setting off on the voyage.
- There were long hours of work especially during fish hauling. Inhuman treatment suffered were verbal and physical abuse e.g., scoldings, insults, beatings on different parts of the body.
- Food on the ships were strange to their palate but they were forced to eat whatever there was – they had no other choice if they wanted to stay alive.
- It was pathetic, and to say the least, frightening, when their companions were jailed for different reasons. Common reasons for imprisonment were entering a country with fake passports and visas; getting into fights when they could no longer put up with insults and beatings or cope with tensions in their relations with the vessel superiors and co-workers, often from other nations.
- Terms of their contracts were not complied with. They were overcharged for application and processing fees; they were short changed in their salaries, if they were ever paid at all.
- They were at a loss as to where to seek help when they were in trouble. It was doubtful if the government agencies were truly interested to at least understand their situation so as to be able to respond meaningfully.
- It was the NGOs, e.g., AOS, that sought them out or offered to help through referrals. Good news travel fast even in a strange land. Two of the four were housed and fed at the AOS Center in Mauritius for months and additionally their fare homeward was shouldered by this organization.
- Till now, they need help in collecting their due pay; two need legal assistance for cases filed by their employer.

Open forum

The testimonies of the four fishworkers satisfied an articulated wish of one seminar-participant to hear from an actual fishworker what had been discussed so far by the participants.

Mung Hoo commiserated with the Filipino fishermen and asked them to be patient in looking for solutions to their problems. He had undergone the same trials – wage discrimination, physical abuse, the captain’s refusal to certify to his injury at work and instead forwarding the “fact” that he got hurt through a brawl; inability of the government to help; unscrupulous, illegal recruitment practices. So if a national could be treated this way, how much more a foreigner? But they must continue to fight their cause.

It was clearly evident that these young fishworkers were hardly aware of their legal rights and what services they could avail of to find justice.

Two fishermen were charged in court by their employer for breach of contract -whereas all along, they were shortchanged in overtime pay, salaries, vacation leaves. They had been asked by their employer to wait for a recall after they disembarked for repairs of the ship. They were never recalled and were instead charged in court for breach of contract.

They seemed to be in the losing end of the court case and when they went to POEA for help they were informed that they had to pay their employer P/30,000. They did not return to POEA anymore; they felt lost and did not know where to turn for help. It was pointed out that the Seafarers' Union attends to the welfare of its members. But it also assists fishworkers and might be able to help in this case.

It was likely that these young fishworkers were illegally recruited since they did not possess all the required papers for overseas work. And not having passed through POEA, it could not have prevented the non-compliance with the terms of the contract. It was stressed, however, that whether legally or illegally recruited, these fishermen were citizens and deserved help from the government. Coordination with other government offices, like the Department of Social Welfare and Development, could be done to include assistance to their families.

More discussion led to the fishermen's appointment with Mr. Habuc for a further investigation of their cases that might lead to an appeal for reconsideration. It appeared that filing cases in court was a strategy to harass fishermen and discourage them from taking the legal courses themselves.

Likewise, an appointment for Jean Vacher will enable him to bring up before the POEA the more than 240 cases of abuses on Filipino fishworkers and some imprisonment in Mauritius. Links will be established for faster action on the cases experienced in that country.

It was also suggested that for problems of fishworkers in Mauritius, NGOs could write to the government and the AOS would take care of media coverage and appeal for support as well as the eventual fishworkers' return to their respective countries.

Asked if after undergoing the harrowing experiences they were still willing to go aboard DWVs as fishworkers, there was uniform "YES". They would be more careful, however, in the choice of fish vessel or the terms of their contracts.

These are truly Filipino responses, indicating a persistence in improving one's life and that of one's family. It underscores the resilient spirit of the Filipino that refuses to be stilled or suppressed in spite of some months' sufferings and setbacks. Like the bamboo swayed by the stormy winds, these Filipino youth will sway with the demands of their time and family needs. The Filipino in them will bounce back to life and push on.

Dialogue with the Philippine government representative

He said that "it was nearly next to impossible to monitor the treatment of fishworkers while on board a foreign ship that is out at sea". The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) could physically inspect the vessel to observe what is actually going on. But if it is a foreign ship that is involved and it is on a foreign water, the POEA official, in most likelihood, will not be allowed to board. Or, the office could be sent some correspondence during the tenure of a fishworker's contract. However, this does not happen. The communication or complaint almost always comes after the contract is over. By then, actual monitoring is no longer possible.

In the Philippines, overseas workers are considered the new heroes of this period being the sixth dollar earners in the country. But protection of their rights comes very slowly. Coordination with countries concerned is done through the Department of Foreign Affairs. To draw up an international system of monitoring, it has to be structured through diplomatic channels. Then, too, the Philippines has to ratify the ILO Conventions covering fishermen.

To date, there is no government policy that governs the Filipino seafarers. Thus, anomalies arise even from the signing of contracts. This ICSF seminar could press the government to act on the bill authored by Congressman Adaza and Senator Maceda creating the National Seaman's Authority. This body will cover the protection of fishermen's rights, too. It is intended to be a "one-stop shop" to increase coverage and efficiency in looking after the welfare of the fishermen. Interest was expressed to study and support the bill.

Category 3 of POEA's recruitment procedures refers to a principal agent. He may be the ship owner who is at the same time the captain who knows how to catch fish. It may likewise be that the owner hires an operator who manages the boat; here, the fishworker and owner do not even get acquainted.

Doubt was expressed over the way the contracts were signed where parties concerned do not know each other, and where the contrary is stated under oath in the contracts. Furthermore, blanks are left for the owner to fill up after the contracts have been signed. This specially happens where there is an intermediary for the owner, i.e., a recruitment agency.

Problems are likely to surface when a fishworker leaves the country as a tourist, then decides to board a foreign vessel to work aboard. Without having registered with the POEA, there is no way of monitoring what transpires – unless he or the government of a concerned country informs it about any untoward incident that befalls a fishworker.

Moreover, matters get complicated if he boards a ship with illegal papers. In this case, he gets into further trouble with the government of a foreign country and is almost without protection.

It was suggested that recruiting agencies be totally abolished and that recruitment be nationalized. But this had been tried before when the government was given the authority to totally regulate recruitment of overseas workers. And this arrangement was seen as untenable and one sided since an individual or foreign company could not sue the government in case of conflicts. Besides, POEA is an executive body and does not possess judiciary powers.

Day 3 – Recap of workshop II

A. New Insights:

1. Recruitment is a big problem that lead to more serious problems. The fishworkers are neglected and relegated to a very low category of workers; therefore, they are even more discriminated against. They are generally exploited in so many ways since they have no protection at all.
2. Many people work on distant waters due to poverty. If the fishworkers are exploited, their families are also exploited. Money goes to rich people only but never to the poor people.
3. There is an increase in the number of fishworkers coming from the rural areas whose levels of education are lower and, therefore, are unable to read contracts and other pertinent papers. This fact has implications for training and education.

4. Fishworkers in one ship come from within one nation but different cultures. This results in struggles among themselves. Add other nationalities and there is greater diversity. But unity among workers must be achieved for easier achievement of work goals. A proper cultural orientation is significant. That includes the laws of the country where the ship comes from and what flag it carries.
5. Fishworkers in distant waters are away from home for long periods of time deprived of communication with loved ones. Furthermore, communication on board the ship is limited to talking with co-workers.
6. Many DWV fishworkers have little knowledge or information on what they are going to do. They lack skills and understanding about the job of fishing and about the living standards as well as the culture of the places they are bound for -
 - there is not enough appreciation of the high demand for teamwork in fishing. That everyone is a part of a chain of activities which cannot be broken. No one may stop until the work is finished.
 - there are no job distinctions among fishworkers on a vessel. All are contributors to a common effort to catch fish.
 - work exerts an extremely high pressure on board the fishing vessel. For as long as there is fish to catch or haul, the fishworker's duty is to work. Hence, the saying: die you may, work you must. Fish must be caught.
7. There are no specific policies for distant water fishworkers. If there are any laws they are not implemented and remain as promises. Some governments are unable to help DWV fishworkers, particularly the illegally recruited. Government agencies and the government as a whole seem to be abandoning their responsibility of protecting fishworkers instead of doing something about their situation. Systems are defective. For example, bureaucracy results in corruption; for monetary considerations unskilled workers are allowed to work on distant shores.
8. NGOs are better able to help fishworkers than the government, e.g., Apostleship of the Sea. Fishworkers must have a network of organizations to look after their interest. Moreover, there is a strong felt need in the Philippines – as in many other countries for a lead agency that will take charge of the protection of our fishworkers and their families.
9. But in this point in time, the bottom line appears to be: No laws can protect the fishworkers when they are out in the sea. There exist only the arrangements between the operator and the fishworkers. Working on distant waters is like going to hell.

Concrete steps that may be taken

A. By an individual:

1. Each person must study and raise his level of consciousness; everyone can serve as an agent for increasing the level of consciousness of others in the community.
2. We have to organize ourselves, locate social agencies that can help the fishworkers; then put pressure on the government.
3. Continue the relationship; conduct seminars, conferences, trainings to raise awareness or consciousness about the situation. Document problems encountered by fishworkers. Play a significant role in transmitting and disseminating issues.
4. More determination and commitment should prevail in each one.

B. By organizations:

1. Put pressure on your own governments through petitions and other means for them to:
 - 1.1 Apply existing ILO conventions and request ILO to defend better fishworkers' rights;
 - 1.2 Come up with policies that will help fishworkers and their families;
 - 1.3 Handle issues confronting fishworkers;
 - 1.4 Work with other sectors for a sustainable development, organization of cooperatives and trade unions;
 - 1.5 Fine heavily illegal recruiters responsible for the abuses encountered by fishworkers recruited for DWVs;
 - 1.6 Disseminate information on patterns and levels of spending in different country destinations of fishworkers, especially where there are higher costs of living.
2. Launch a sustained action; rally all legal forms of struggle to arrest the problem; carry on dialogues.
3. Write down issues affecting fishworkers in your own organizations; exchange information with other organizations in simple, understandable and, therefore, effective language.

C. By the Collective:

1. Strengthen linkages at the international level. Form networks that can help fishworkers cut across territorial limitations.
2. Help create or strengthen women's organizations to assist DWVs fishworkers' wives and families to defend their rights.
3. Media support and network – exchange programmes and documentations of experiences.
4. A more extensive distribution of SAMUDRA in three languages: English, French and Spanish, with documentation and reports on DWV fishworkers' problems and organizations.

Open forum

To lessen the problem of communication among fishworkers of different nationalities, new fishworkers must be told by their respective governments before embarking on ships to learn, study and respect the culture of each country that one will be relating to. A language barrier may initially exist, but of one takes time and makes the effort to understand other languages, he can learn.

An exchange of fishworkers among organizations will give the fishworkers a chance to be exposed to other cultures.

It appears that communication plays a big role in work on fishing vessels and understanding what conditions exist therein. But since many fishworkers are illiterate, the pictures displayed during conference will make applicants know what life awaits them on a fishing vessel. Pictures may be used, too, for information campaigns and lobbying.

The dilemma of organizing fishworkers was echoed several times. Its difficulty is recognized. But if an organizer can board a vessel and live with the fishworkers, he can probably succeed in organizing some fishworkers.

ICSF is not a big organization. On the contrary, it is a movement with few members (40 persons in 28 countries) and limited resources. But strength lies in its link with groups and network of organizations in different countries which can be put together for this common cause.

1. Among these, is the Apostleship of the Sea. We have to define clearly how we can work together and what commitments can be made towards the improvement of the fishworkers' lot.
2. Other important networks to relate with are the International Trade Unions of the industrial section, in particular the International Transport Federation (ITF), which has a section for fishermen. Its facilities and services in harbours are open to fishworkers, not only to the union members.
3. A third network worth relating with are the NGOs in Europe and America. They may be requested to set aside funds, say, for the publication of materials on experiences in dealing with fishworkers in the different countries of Collective members. A project study could be made in this regard.

Recommendations

I. Recruitment and work conditions

1. International and national pressure should be made on governments to control the recruitment activities in their countries so that proper contracts are signed and employers' liabilities are clearly defined; wages, rights and obligations of fishworkers are clearly stated; copies given to them and their families in the language that they understand.
Governments should put an end to illegal recruitment by private agencies and assure that illegal recruiters are prosecuted in accordance with the law of the land.
2. Countries should adopt better recruitment policies which include providing fishworkers with training to enhance their skills, help prevent accidents and facilitate encounter with other cultures.
3. The basic right of every fishworker to have access to full information on the catch and to control its first sale must be upheld firmly. Crew members are to be informed about the real catch value as the basis of their earning.

We ought to denounce the injustice done to fishworkers who are supposed to be paid their overtime work by percentage of the catch but are never informed about the catch, its tonnage and value.

4. Proper action ought to be taken to curb the unjust salaries given abusively to third world workers, taking advantage of their numbers in the labour market; the desire of fishing companies to include in their crews different nationalities in order to maximize their gain, divide the crew and avoid all legal obligations.
5. We have to take the necessary steps to insure fishworkers' proper and adequate accommodation, medical facilities, protective clothing and safety equipment while aboard DWVs.

II. National and international laws

1. That national governments be asked to sign and implement existing ILO standards and other conventions pertaining to the safety of fishworkers, SOLAS and other conventions like Torremolinos.
2. Each country be urged to pass a fisheries act and fisheries code, taking into account the interest of all inland fishworkers and sea-going workers. The welfare of fishworkers and their families must be given due consideration.

3. The Taiwanese government be pressured to take suitable action to stop inhuman treatments aboard Taiwanese fishing fleets, insure that proper contracts are signed and honoured; those responsible for violations of human rights aboard ships are punished; and proper compensations are given to families of those who are injured or killed at sea, be they national or overseas workers.
4. To insure a sustainable development, all governments be encouraged to regulate fishing activities so that proper management of resources may be established, destructive methods like pacific gillnets and abusive trawling are banned. Fishworkers' organizations must be involved in designing, controlling and managing their marine resources.

III. Organizing fishworkers

1. Wherever there are national fishworkers' organizations, they should be encouraged to look into the conditions and problems of fishworkers aboard DWVs and carry out action to remedy their problem.
2. National fishworker organizations should take DWVs fishworkers' conditions to immigrant workers' organizations and human rights groups for appropriate action.
3. ICSF should bring to the attention of recognized international trade unions like ITF and people's organizations the plight of third world fishworkers on DWVs.
4. Linkages and exchange of information should be established among fishworkers' organizations of different countries.

IV. Social and legal services

1. That ICSF identify and involve professional groups, social agencies and lawyers interested to help fishworkers.
2. That ICSF explore the possibility of operating funds for legal and emergency needs of detained fishworkers and their families.

V. Research and documentation

1. That ICSF initiate the collection of basic information on the fishworker and the DWV industry. This information which is already available in some institutions and organizations shall include the listing of industries, countries supplying/demanding labor, number of boats, systems of recruitment, accreditations, recruiting firms, etc. This resolution also calls for an exchange of information among organizations.
2. That in-depth and continuing studies be conducted on the problems and conditions of fishworkers by national fishworkers' organizations.

VI. Training

1. In-country and out-of-country training programmes be drawn up by governments and institutions in areas pertaining to the development of fishing skills including cultural, economic and political circumstances the fishworkers are likely to encounter.

VII. Communication/education

1. Extensive harnessing of media and other communication systems be promoted. Specific groups and institutions that are already actively involved in communication work be

identified and linkage with them should be arranged. Example of such organizations are the Apostleship of the Sea and PCT-Fishermen Service Center (Taiwan).

2. An exchange of instructional, informational and training materials be instituted. These materials must include subjects and technical information concerning fishing, accident prevention, intercultural conditions, human rights, political situations, etc.
3. A regular ICSF publication be put up.
4. Education and information must put emphasis on value formation especially with respect to human rights and the promotion of relationship among individuals, sectors, countries.
5. Environment concerns and conservation of resources be given stress in education and training of fishworkers.
6. Fishworkers be given more opportunities to reflect and express themselves in meetings, fora, outlets and training sessions.

Closing ceremonies

John Kurien, ICSF Coordinator of the Animation Team, preferred to make continuing, rather than concluding remarks, believing that from the present seminar-workshop, there will be a forward move to something which can be quite different. As in the past conferences each meeting of minds initiated a series of actions. And this is possible because the workshops were always based on linkages that already exist in the field. The conferences have been a coming together of people, who, in reality are living through the problems of the fisherfolk and the questions that had been raised. This is what gives the meetings a certain life and spirit to continue.

It seems that ICSF members have come to realize that if anything is to change all those involved have to come together, whether they are laboring in the office, on a banca, or a DWV. The important thing is that through their work – whether intellectual or manual – they are creating value and resources. There is a commonality in all this process of creation. And the coming together will create a force which will change things in this sector of the world.

It is important for people to realize that this is what they are moving towards: a vision that people need to change the situation. They search and move toward the vision. For each vision is different in each country, conditioned by realities in each situation.

Of some significance is that people are trying to rectify their relationships (which are one of exploitation) between man and man, between human beings and nature. For it is only then that other relationships can change.

This coming to the Philippines means renewing the search for the vision to be able to move forward. For this new ICSF inter-sectoral involvement could be a very big step. But ICSF has taken the first small step. And before making the big leap, John thanked Nenita and all others who made the conference possible, providing all its necessities and thus contributing much to the process. It was a pleasure saying the last word.

Fr. Pierre Gillet was happy with the seminar-workshop which ended successfully and acknowledged the collaboration of a great number of people. He expressed special thanks:

- for the initial exposure programme in which a number of people were involved in village immersions, allowing some participants to know many fishworkers;
- to the Asian Social Institute, especially the Family Centre staff. The hardest day was the one before the seminar when the staff and fishermen did all kinds of preparations singing

with the guitar, writing, making posters, readying all kinds of papers and trying to see that everything was alright;

- to the delegation of Taiwan – Mung Hoo for his presence and candid participation; Kapi Chin and Yvonne for their role as translators and for sharing their experiences in the Fisheries Service Center. Additional thanks where for Taiwan’s suggestion of this year’s theme;
- to John Vacher, for generously sharing his accumulated worthy professional, voluntary and union works. Without his dedication and the wealth of information that he preferred it was not possible to enter new areas;
- to Filipino fishworkers who came to share their experiences on DWVs and who could have shared more if there were more time;
- to the seminar participants for their steadfast participation and seriousness with the seminar. In some gatherings such as this, everyone is everywhere except where the speaker is speaking;
- to Louie Tabing, member of the team, who stayed for the three three days and lived with them;
- to Vir Cristobal, artist, who sang and danced with the group and drew beautiful posters and comics;
- to fellow workers in ICSF, for their concern for fishworkers. Each one gave his own professional involvement and contribution;
- to Nenita who took care of all the preparations for this workshop. We were at peace, knowing that everything will work out;
- And last but not the least, to Nina who has been sleepless in order to consolidate all the proceedings for an early final report. The typist did her share in the production of documents during the seminar.

So much has been heard about the Philippines’ people’s movement and people’s power. Everyone is proud of what Filipinos have done. A wish conveyed was that the fishworkers and their supporters would continue to struggle together.

ICSF International Seminar/Workshop on the
Conditions of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels
February 1–3, 1991
Manila, Philippines
Programme of activities

Date	Time	
Feb. 1		Moderator: Hector Luis Morales
		Registration
	8:00 – 9:00	Opening Ceremonies Invocation – Cornelio Casipit “Maligayang Pagdating” – CALARIZ Fishermen Welcome Remarks – Dr. Mina Ramirez, President Asian Social Institute Introduction – Hector Luis Morales Orientation – Dr. Nenita M. Cura Address by a Fishworker – Sofronio Balagtas
	9:00 – 11:00	Panel Discussion A Situationer on: The Conditions of Fishworkers on Distant Water Vessels Paper Presentors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jean Vacher – Mauritius • Yvonne Mei-Jung-Lin – Taiwan • Dr. Aliou Sall – Senegal • Dr. Hector Luis Morales – Chile
	11:00 – 12:00	Open Forum
	2:00 – 4:00	Workshop. I
	4:00 – 4:30	B R E A K
	4:30 – 5:30	Plenary Session – Sharing of Workshop Results
	6:00 – 7:00	D I N N E R
Feb. 2		Moderator: Aliou Sall
	8:00 – 8:30	Workshop Recap
	8:30 – 9:00	Apostleship of the Sea: Getting Aware Together by: Fr.Carlos M.Oda,CS
	9:00 – 10:00	Open Forum
	10:00 – 10:30	B R E A K

10:30 – 11:00	Recruitment Patterns of Fishworkers on DWV by: Mr. Crescendo Siddayao – POEA (Government) represented by Mr. Julito Habuc Mr. Rolando Talampas – A representative from the human rights group Marine Engr. Zotico Reamon – President, fishworkers/seamen union
11:00 – 12:00	Open Forum
12:00 – 2:00	L U N C H B R E A K
2:00 – 4:00	Workshop II
4:00 – 4:30	B R E A K
4:30 – 5:30	Plenary Session
5:30 – 6:30	Testimonial of F.W. on D.W.V., Implications to Policies, Challenges to Fishworkers and Support Groups
7:00	D I N N E R

Feb. 3 Moderator: Louie Tabing

8:00 – 8:30	Workshop Recap
8:30 – 9:00	Group Discussions: Formulation of Recommendations Presentation of Recommendations and Comments from the Floor
9:00 – 10:00	
10:00 – 10:30	B R E A K
10:30 – 12:00	Revision of Recommendations
12:00 – 2:00	L U N C H B R E A K
2:00 – 4:00	Approval of Recommendations Closing Ceremonies: John Kurien Closing Remarks: Fr. Pierre Gillet
4:00	M E R I E N D A

Participants

Name	Country
1. Alpay, Reynaldo	Philippines
2. Carlos, Delfin	Philippines
3. Casipit, Cornelio	Philippines
4. Cura, Nenita	Philippines
5. Gillet, Pierre	Belgium
6. Kapi-Chin	Taiwan
7. Kurien, John	India
8. Mei-Jung Lin, Yvonne	Taiwan
9. Megano, Rodolfo	Philippines
10. Morales, Hector Luis	Chile
11. Mung-Hoo	Taiwan
12. Oda, Carlos (Fr.)	Philippines
13. Sall, Aliou	Senegal
14. Sambajon, Rodolfo	Philippines
15. Tabing, Louie	Philippines
16. Vacher, Jean	Mauritius

ICSF Animation team

Hector Luis Morales	<i>Chile</i>
Pierre Gillet	<i>Belgium</i>
John Kurien	<i>India</i>
Amporn Sugandhavanij	<i>Thailand</i>
Francisco Gutierrez	<i>Colombia</i>
Aliou Sall	<i>Senegal</i>
Nenita Cura	<i>Philippines</i>

ICSF Seminar/workshop planning committee

Nenita Cura
 Louie Tabing
 Virgilio Cristobal
 Sofronio Balagtas
 Cornelio Casipit

ICSF Seminar/workshop documentation and publication committee

Monina Manapat
 Virgilio Cristobal
 Nanette Tandoy
 Nilo Brucal
 Angelo Llorin

“It seems that the ICSF members have come to realize that if anything is to change, all those involved have to come together, whether they are laboring in the office, on a banca, or a DMV. The important thing is that through their work—whether intellectual or manual—they are creating value and resources. There is a commonality in all this process of creation. And the coming together will create a force which will change things in this sector of the world.”

“Of some significance is that people are trying to rectify their relationships (which is one of exploitation) between man and man, between human beings and nature. For it is only then that other relationships can change.”