

LETTERS/ India

Dear readers,

Reading through Yemaya 3 has been extremely interesting. I would like to share some of the concerns that arise in my mind on reading the articles.

The first relates to the Katosi Women's Fishing Group. Margaret Nakato, congratulations on your collective activity and sense of organization. It is also great that you can 'think big' for the group and have a perspective of export and value-addition. I only want to caution you on some of the 'unintended effects' that may arise if you are not sufficiently cautious when realizing these dreams.

From what you say, by the fact that you are fishing with 'limited equipment' and supplying to big freezer boats, you are actually regulating the catches. Smaller catches can mean more employment (of a decentralized form for more women) and greater sustainability of the resource.

If and when the co-operative goes in directly for processing and export, the economies of scale will begin to operate. Within a short period you will find that you will be forcing your members to catch more fish to keep your processing unit going. Therefore, this has to be done with great forethought. What processing techniques and infrastructure do you intend to use and what are the implications of these for employment? How decentralized will it be? How will you ensure fish also for local consumption? Export markets are constantly fluctuating: how will the co-op cope with this?

While it is imperative that women do think big, we should not fall into the trap of the existing logic of centralized and high technology. There would be more cost-effective and appropriate ways of going ahead and I guess you will think more about this and interact with other groups who have explored alternatives before you start.

Cornelie's article on the life of an old fisherwomen in Zontkamp indicates that the modernization of the European fishery and the marginalization of women is not such an old phenomenon. The depletion of the resources has been very rapid only in the last 3-4 decades. How short the human memory is which forces us to think that all this change is inevitable. It puts us off from fighting back and so the so-called 'progressives' always win.

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