

## Letters/ Uganda

We are grateful for the concern of Nalini Nayak, a member of ICSF, regarding our aim of getting into industrial fish processing, and the interest she has shown in cautioning us of the dangers and implications which might befall us if not checked.

The women of Katosi fishing on the Lake Victoria had very high hopes of venturing into the fish processing industry one day after an insight from one of the potential donors. While we were still excited by the idea and planning for the same, there was a ban on fishing in Uganda due to the use of poison in the fishing industry. The poisoned fish was causing illness among the consumers and some deaths were reported. The poison was also killing all the other living things in the water. The activity had to be put to a standstill to stop the use of poison and net the culprits.

While in this situation the women of Katosi and the whole community were hit and suffered immensely. Our fishing community depends on the lake to catch fish and then sells the fish to buy food, medical care and all other necessities. So there was no fish so no money and no food in families. The women were most hit, as they have to cater for the feeding of the family and general maintenance especially in sickness of the children. In our association it was usually discussed in our fortnightly meetings.

It was during this period when trying to find a solution to the catastrophe which had befallen us that we even looked into our idea of venturing into fish processing. Already the fish processing factories were not getting enough fish. Agents of fish processors used to find us on the lake to buy our fish. They were no longer waiting on the landing site due to the high demand. The women who were engaged in the fish processing were all already out of business due to the scarcity of fish (all is bought and taken by factories for processing) and the high prices for the fish available where by in the end the women are not making any profit after processing.

With this in mind, we the women of Katosi, all together in our meeting we have put on hold the idea of processing fish by our organization. We feel there are some issues that need to be addressed first, like the rate at which fish is being harvested in the lake, which if not checked, may lead

to the depletion of fish resources in the lake Victoria. We have realized the need to protect the fish resources and the interests of the community and to look not only at the profit nature of the business. Some one has to come out and take over that responsibility, and also to be an example to the community that the fisheries resource if not protected can be depleted.

With that in mind we the women have now come up with a way of diversifying our activities. The land is there and not cultivated. We want to utilize the land by growing food so as to reduce the pressure on the lake and our demands for fish. We want to protect the lake taking on the motherly role of nurturing. Much emphasis is going to be put on using proper fishing gears, stopping destructive fishing and being a living example to the community for the need to protect our fish, which is our source of income.

From the WFF meeting in France I came to learn from P. Balan, Advisor/ Co-ordinator of Penang Inshore Fishermen Welfare Association of Malaysia, of how they are cleaning the ocean, which has helped reduce the jelly fish and improve the quality of aquatic animals in the ocean, and from Peter Parravano President of Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association - USA, of how they use hooks which do not injure the fish so that if the fish caught is not of the right size it will be put back in the water. These ideas benefit the community and the future generation. We feel our association would copy them in our daily work as recently we were engaged in the cleaning of the landing site but now we can take on the lake too.

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