

ICSF INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR / WORKSHOP

The conditions of fishworkers on Distant-Water Vessels

Manila, Philippines, February 1-3, 1991.

Recruitment and working conditions

- International and national pressure be put on governments to control recruitment activities in their countries so that proper contracts are signed and employers' liabilities are clearly defined, wages, rights and obligations of fish-workers are clearly stated, and copies given to them and their families in the language that they understand.
- Governments put an end to illegal recruitment by private agencies and ensure that illegal recruiters are prosecuted in accordance with the law of the land.
- Countries adopt better recruitment policies, which should include providing fishworkers with training to enhance their skills help prevent accidents and facilitate encounters with other cultures.
- The basic right of every fishworker to have access to full information on the catch and to control its first sale be firmly upheld and crewmembers be informed about the real catch value as the basis of their earnings.
- 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 tonnage and value of the catch.
- Proper action 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 order to maximize their gain, divide the crew and avoid all legal obligation.
- The necessary steps be taken to ensure fishworkers proper and adequate accommodations, medical facilities, protective clothing and safety equipment while aboard DWVs.

National and international laws

- National governments be asked to implement existing ILO standards and other conventions pertaining to the safety of fishworkers S.O.L.A.S. and other conventions, such as a Tremolino.
- 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 be given due consideration.
- The Taiwanese government be pressured to take suitable action to stop inhuman treatment aboard Taiwanese fishing fleets and ensure that proper contracts are signed and honoured those responsible for violations of human rights aboard ships be punished; and proper compensation be given to families of those who are injured or killed at sea, be they national or overseas workers.
- To ensure a sustainable development, all governments be encouraged to regulate fishing activities so that proper management of resources may be established, and destructive methods like pacific gill-nets and abusive trawling be banned. Fishworker organizations be involved in designing, controlling and managing their marine resources.

Organizing fishworkers

- Wherever there are national fishworker organizations, they be encouraged to look into the conditions and problems of fishworkers aboard DWVs and carry out actions to remedy their problems.
- National fishworker organizations present DWV fishworkers' conditions to immigrant workers organizations and human rights groups for appropriate action.

- ICSF bring to the attention of recognized international trade unions like ITF and people's organizations the plight of third world fishworkers on DWVs.
- Linkages and exchange of information be established among fishworker organizations of different countries.

Social and legal services

- ICSF identify and involve professional groups, social agencies and lawyers interested in helping fishworkers.
- ICSF explore the possibility of operating funds for legal and emergency needs of detained fishworkers and their families.

Research and documentation

- ICSF begin to collect basic information on fishworkers and the DWV industry. This information which is already available in some institutions and organizations shall include the listing of industries, countries supplying/demanding labour, number of boats, systems of recruitment, accreditations, recruiting agencies, etc. This resolution also calls for an exchange of information among organizations.
- In-depth and continuing studies be conducted on the problems and conditions of fishworkers by national fishworker organizations.

Training

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

Communication/education

- 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 be arranged. Examples of these organizations are the Apostolate of the Sea and PCT Fishermen Service Center (Taiwan).
- An exchange of instructional, informational and training materials be instituted. These materials must include subjects on technical information concerning fishing, accident prevention, intercultural conditions, human rights, political situations, etc.
- A regular ICSF publication be put out.
- Education and information put emphasis on value formation especially with respect to human rights and the promotion of relationships among individuals, sectors and countries.
- Environmental concerns and conservation of resources be stressed in the education and training of fishworkers.
- Fishworkers be given more opportunities to reflect and express themselves in meetings, fora, outings and training sessions.