

SAMUDRA

FORTALEZA

INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS

Today's Agenda

- Labour Issues in Fisheries
- Aquaculture
- Fishworker Organizations:
- Emerging Concerns
- Concluding Session
- Dinner Party/Festa

Obrigado!

As we meet for the last day of the workshop, it's time to thank all those who have spent several months in preparing for this event.

We would like to especially acknowledge the staff of Instituto Terramar, specifically, René Schärer, Eluziane, Thiago, Jefferson, Soraya, Rosinha, and Giselta Maria. And we're not forgetting Michelle...!

Thanks also to the staff of SESC for their hospitality, great food, and help, particularly, Sadi, Alain and Faustino. A special word of appreciation for the translation provided by ITI Translation, Fortaleza.

For the sketches, many, many thanks to Surendra (India) and our very own Gunnar. And to InApp, as always, great work!

And now, *até logo, Boa viagem...!!*

A long and fruitful day

The penultimate day of the workshop witnessed some spirited discussion on a range of issues affecting small-scale coastal fishing communities

The first day's spirited discussions on responsible and rights-based fisheries, and what such an approach would mean for small-scale fishing communities, brought forth concrete examples from Chile and Peru of their experiences with management areas and artisanal fishing zones. These subjects were explored in depth and more specifically in the group discussions that followed. The pre-dinner panel discussion dealt with distant-water fisheries.

The level of enthusiasm set on the first day continued on Day 2, a fairly packed day that saw discussions ranging from the role of the FAO in alleviating the conditions of poverty in fishing communities to trade in fish and fish products and how coastal communities should prepare for natural disasters.

In an exhaustive presentation, Rolf Willman, Senior Fisheries Planning Officer, FAO, described the possible

strategies and policies that could be employed to allow small-scale fisheries to help alleviate poverty and contribute to food security. Small-scale fisheries are undervalued and deserve more attention in policymaking, research and fisheries information systems. They should be provided with greater rights and access to fishery resources, land, water, technology, knowhow and capital, Rolf concluded.

The session on biodiversity and the ecosystem approach featured an elaboration of the CBD process, how marine extractive reserves can serve as an alternative approach to participatory conservation, and the small-scale fisheries perspective on the ecosystem approach to fisheries and oceans.

The post-lunch session on trade in fish and fish products focused on the World Trade Organization and the role of trade in food security. There was also an analysis of how the French public re-

sponded to the film *Darwin's Nightmare* and the role of globalization in the trade of the Nile Perch. How ecolabels affect the small-scale fisheries in Latin America was also discussed. The panel discussion on disaster preparedness and coastal fishing communities featured a range of experiences and potential strategies to mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

The post-dinner screening of films rounded off a long and fruitful day, and hopefully set the tone for today, the concluding day of the workshop.

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More ups than downs

I am not generally a person who lives in the past, although I do look back at times to take stock of where I am going and why. When I was requested a reflection for *SAMUDRA for Fortaleza* on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of ICSF, lots of memories did come back, and one can say they range wide—from high moments to low, from very successful programmes to some mediocre ones, from very engaging and stimulating friendships to some broken ones, from serious and hard work to exciting, fun times, but always, very constructive discussion and debates that have contributed to ‘valorizing the coastal fisheries’. On average, the ups seem to outweigh the downs.

At the close of the Rome Conference in 1984, the fishworkers present suggested that the supporters continue to support the coastal fishers in their struggle for survival, while they themselves would create and strengthen their collective organizations, demanding their rights to recognition and survival. While the fishworker organizations maintained their autonomy and grew the world over, the ICSF that was created in 1986 sought to:

- build bridges between fishworkers in regions where their fisheries were linked through bilateral agreements;
- see that the coastal fishery and fishworkers found a place in the international discourse and decisionmaking in world fisheries; and
- provide inputs to fishworker organizations on macro-developments that affect them at the micro-level.

I may not be wrong in concluding that ICSF has made significant strides in these directions, and, from that point of view, these two decades have been well worth it.

But this does not preclude the fact that these years have also been tumultuous. While change is inevitable, I do not think any of us foresaw the speed or

manner in which the entire equations of international relations and the mindset of development would change. In a way, capitalism and neoliberalism triumphed, shattering our organizational struggles against that twin ideology, shattering the strength of the organized working class by atomizing and ‘unorganizing’ it. The socialist option was rendered outdated, although the ‘rights perspective’ gained ground in the new global village, where the most powerful still call the shots.

These changes have affected coastal communities, fishworkers, fishworker organizations and all of us in so many ways. While several have been pauperized and rendered redundant, the surviving segment has got overcapitalized and has joined the race to chase the last fish. So has our definition of the ‘coastal fisher’, the ‘artisanal fisher’, the ‘small-scale fisher’ changed? By the very fact that we have worked mainly with fishworker organizations, the base that we relate to has continued to be those fishers that have survived.

But here again, there have been several catches: these are generally male fishers, and this has been one of the main reasons that women have got a back seat and probably one of the reasons why the feminist perspective within ICSF has not evolved to the extent it should have. This does not discount the work done and achieved in this regard, because ICSF has played a significant role in spreading a feminist and gender perspective and awareness among women from fishing communities, which has been the basis for them to organize and thereby expand the horizon and canvas of the coastal fishery.

The other disturbing happening has been the divisiveness in the fishworker organizations themselves, at a time when the world economy is converging as never before. While ICSF spent long years building bridges and understanding between fishworker organizations of the North and the South, East

and West, great mistrust and divisiveness developed when the organizations themselves took the lead in linking up globally. Moreover, the management of power within the organizations themselves has highlighted that alternative forms of organization have not sufficiently evolved to create workable options at the base. Here again, I would venture to add that patriarchal forms of leadership and vision have contributed to this shortcoming.

How we in ICSF have dealt with these changes, has been the challenge, keeping the rudder of the boat firm to weather the storm, while, at the same time, being responsive to the demands of those who keep their heads above the water. The brunt has been borne, in the most part, by the ICSF Secretariat, which was the institution created in 1991 when the Members realized that the demands made on them, and the need to respond to various issues locally, regionally and globally, were beyond the abilities of voluntary service.

But, in a way, the creation of the Secretariat—and an efficient one at that—has resulted in the decline of voluntary participation of the ICSF Members.

Forging a strategy aimed at the future is, therefore, going to be a greater challenge. But given the fact that the ocean resources and the coastal zone continue to be focal points for development, and the fact that there still remains so much energy among the old and young to continue to struggle against overpowering destructive development, I feel certain that new and positive strategies can be crafted to forge ahead.

For me personally, the experiences as a Member of ICSF have led to widening visions, on the one hand, but to great humility regarding the role of a support network, on the other. For this, I am most grateful to all those who have made this possible. 

Nalini Nayak (tom_nalinin@sancharnet.in) is a Founding Member of ICSF

Sound Bites

from South Africa

On the workshop:

We hope this could be an opportunity for representatives from fishworker and other organizations to come together and critically reflect on the gains that have been made for artisanal and small-scale fishers since the Rome Conference. This is also an opportunity to look at how the organizations can network collaboratively to address some of their concerns. It is also a chance to enhance the general understanding of fisheries, particularly in Latin America.

On fisheries in South Africa:

Southern Africa is fairly complex, and South Africa is fairly unique in southern Africa. South Africa has a highly industrial and capitalized commercial fishery, while most of the other countries are not as industrialized. The issues facing the region do certainly differ, even though all share some fish stocks.

The last 100 years saw the rapidly industrializing fishery dominated by four large white-owned companies. Those companies managed a strong stranglehold on the fisheries industry, and, during the apartheid regime, they were able to consolidate their position. In that period, many artisanal fishers lost their rights in the sense they were not allowed to fish on their own right.

With the transition to democracy in 1994, there were lots of hopes and expectations that the locals would be given rights, but that did not materialize at all. On the contrary, they were left out of the legislation and are not legally recognized at all as a sector.

Subsistence fishers are recognized, but this category involves those who fish to put food on the table — they are not supposed to sell the fish. Therefore, the key issue facing the sector is the lack of recognition and the resulting exclusion. It is ironic that

this has happened in this last (post-apartheid) period.

There are many issues facing fishers in South Africa, like enabling the fishworkers to speak for themselves, supporting them in organizing their own groups so that their voices are heard... The South African NGOs have often spoken for, and on behalf of, communities and it is really important that they advocate for their rights.

There are a number of other issues that have come up after the new policy. The small group of fishers that did get the right to fish, ironically, include some women because of the government's commitment to gender equity.

Women were encouraged to apply for rights and they have done so. In some communities, where the man is the traditional bona fide fisher, his partner is being offered the right, and he is now left out or excluded. The people are now going to court against the government because of the failure of the fisheries department to recognize artisanal fishers.

The biggest challenge is to be aware that the government does need to shift the racial profile of South African fisheries, which has, till now, been dominated by the whites. To that extent, they have to bring in new entrants, South African entrants. This is often at the cost of those talented artisanal fishers who have been there for many years. Therefore, the government must do a very fine balancing act.

On Masifundise Development Trust:

Masifundise is a South African NGO founded by a group of black activists, who started with adult education and adult literacy during the apartheid era, and who wanted to support and extend education to the blacks who were denied tertiary education.

In 1994, after the opening up of democracy, the organization went through an effort to re-strategize, and tried to focus on the poorest of the poor, which then led them to the coastal communities and the fisherpeople living on the coast. Now the focus is largely on coastal

developmental issues, mainly integrated coastal area management.

Much of Masifundise's focus is on building capacities in the coastal communities. Another task is to document the impact of the quota systems on people's rights and on traditional forms of harvesting and organizing, since quotas have already started to split the community.

— *These are excerpts from an interview with Jackie Sunde of Masifundise, by Neena Koshy*

from Thailand

On the workshop:

This conference has widened my perspective on what is happening at the international level, which has been useful, since I have been mainly concerned with issues facing fishing communities at the local and national level in Thailand. This meeting is an ideal opportunity for all participants to articulate the key issues facing small-scale fishing, and for ICSF to advocate and lobby at the international level. This meeting has also been a good networking space to engage with other NGOs in different countries and continents.

On fisheries in Thailand:

There are 412 fishing communities in Thailand, and 60 per cent of the communities were affected by the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The organization I work for, Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), in co-operation with a network of NGOs, has been working in the six provinces along the Andaman Sea.

In these provinces, 40 fishing communities were severely affected by the tsunami, and SDF has seen the post-tsunami rehabilitation process as a means to establish an alternative to the top-down approach. It has been advocating the rights of the communities in areas where the "middlemen", in collaboration with government officials, wanted to move

(...contd. Page 5)

20 years of ICSF

1986 was an eventful year for me. It started with the completion of the painful restructuring of the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) as a three-tier co-operative. Soon after, I was struck by Bells Palsy and needed to take a month off for physiotherapy.

Then came my first trip abroad to attend a workshop at FAO in Rome. It was some kind of a consolation trip organized by Rolf as I had missed out on participating in the 1984 Rome Conference due to the unfortunate loss of my passport while it was in transit for my Italian visa.

The FAO visit led to an impromptu visit to the UK at the invitation of ITDG. Brian organized a most interesting exposure trip, including visits to the Grimsby fisheries harbour and the Fisheries College in Hull. The year end saw me saddled with new responsibilities. I got married! To this list of important events in my life needs to be added the meeting at Trivandrum in November that led to the formation of ICSF. By virtue of SIFFS being a co-sponsor of the meeting, I was an automatic invitee and became—by default—a Founding Member of ICSF.

Looking back, I can say that my initial career as an ICSF Member was somewhat lackadaisical. With seniors like John Kurien and Nalini taking a keen interest in setting up the new organization, I was quite happy to be a passenger, focusing my energies on SIFFS, which was still struggling to establish itself. Still, my closeness to Nalini, John and Pierre Gillet ensured that I had a ringside view of the development of ICSF from its early days.

The start of an exciting initiative in West Africa, the launch of *SAMUDRA Report*, the various international meetings and studies, the setting up of the Madras office, etc. come to my mind. The 1990 Bangkok meeting and the 1994 Cebu meeting were part of my early exposures to international fishery issues.

Subsequently, I became a member of ICSF's Animation Team and my involvement became more intense. The participation in the FAO's Code of Conduct process and visits to Brazil and Canada added to my understanding of fishery issues. Still green in my memory is the meeting I attended in the Maritimes with Mike Belliveau, in which wharf representatives of the Maritime Fishermen's Union discussed the pros and cons of a six-inch escape hole for juvenile lobsters in their lobster traps. This was my first exposure to a co-management system.

I can safely say that ICSF has given me great opportunities to learn and widen my fisheries understanding, which influences my work in SIFFS and the Indian fishery in many ways. But for the international exposure I received through ICSF, I would have remained a frog in the well, incapable of relating to entirely different contexts. ICSF has also given me a wide range of contacts internationally and helped open doors that I did not know even existed. Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of being an ICSF Member is the wonderful comradeship that it automatically entitles you to and the warm personal relationships you develop with individuals across the world.

ICSF has clearly developed over the years into an organization with a strong presence in the fisheries world, and has a larger-than-life image disproportionate to its small size and budget. This is clearly the result of the dedication and creativity of many ICSF Members and the professional staff who run the Brussels and Madras offices. Looking back, one can say that ICSF has made an impact in areas that were not foreseen and hardly any in areas that were the original priority. I had assumed that ICSF would, in some way, catalyze the growth of national organizations of fishworkers across the globe. This would perhaps have been through providing inspiration and critical support to individuals who worked with the fishing communities and through capacity-build-

ing support to fledgling fishworker organizations. ICSF's West Africa intervention seemed to be consistent with this course of action. Somehow, we were unable to stay the course, and West Africa remains an exception or even an aberration.

Another area that we had great hopes was in research that would help ICSF play a prophetic role in the fisheries sector, setting the development agenda in favour of the small-scale sector and sustainable fisheries. Shrimp aquaculture was still in its infancy as a global industry and its negative impacts hardly understood. ICSF decided to be an early entrant in this arena and provide sage advice that might have avoided all the subsequent troubles. Unfortunately, the early bird did not catch the worm! Very obviously, we were naïve in assuming that an international organization could be run just on the basis of voluntary work by members who had their own jobs to do and lives to lead.

The areas that ICSF finally made a mark in are in lobbying at the international level and providing valuable information on the fisheries sector. This is the result of the change in the external environment and the skill profile and inclinations of the full-timers who joined the Madras office. When ICSF was set up, the issues facing small-scale fishermen were similar but the actions required were at the national level. The vision was, therefore, a network of members in the Third World who were active at the national and local level, supporting the fishworkers on these issues. The First World Members would, in turn, support these local and national struggles in their own way. However, the start of the Madras office coincided with the fall of the Berlin wall and a new world regime based on entirely new principles started emerging.

While national-level actions remain essential, action at the international level

V. Vivekanandan (vivek@siffs.org), Chief Executive of the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS), is a Founding Member of ICSF

to protect the interests of the small-scale fishermen (even if many are not so small anymore!) and fishing communities has become a new requirement. ICSF was best placed to play this role and it has realized its potential in this regard. Apex organizations (structured as apex or otherwise) operating at higher levels have greater relevance in a globalized world. Local action increasingly needs to be supported at higher levels through networking and federating. Providing timely information on the decisions taken at the higher levels and equipping the local organizations to influence these decisions, as well as to prepare for their consequences, have become important. The formation of the World Fishworkers Forum (WFF) and the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP) need to be also seen in this light. As an organization of supporters, ICSF now has additional channels to reach the fishing communities and to enter into a dialogue with them. Documentation and information dissemination have obviously become key requirements, and ICSF is doing a great job in these areas.

The limited base of fishworker organizations and the limitations in their form and functioning continue to limit the effectiveness of ICSF in bringing real change at the grass-roots level, despite great successes in the international arena. Very clearly, the early vision of ICSF promoting fishworker organizations across the globe is not a feasible one. Now that the limitations of the 'fishworker' type of organization have been realized, other

forms of fisherfolk organizations are also required, but not much consensus exists on this. Despite useful contributions like *Conversations* (an ICSF publication), conceptualising fishworker and fishing community organizations remain a major weakness in ICSF. Our strength, largely based on the skill set of the full-timers, is 'sectoral' rather than in 'communities' and 'community organizations'. The theme for the 1998 Trivandrum General Body was chosen in recognition of this, but we could make no headway in developing intellectual capital on the theme of organizing fishworkers and communities.

While we can still discuss the best way to promote fishing community organizations, we should make the best use of our strong points. Our international lobbying and the Documentation Centre activities are best complemented by a vigorous capacity-building programme for community leaders and potential NGO staff. Our limited foray into this territory has shown good results, and we need to significantly scale up this activity, and hope it will result in more actors at the grass roots taking up the challenge. However, this will require significant scaling up in terms of human resources, and one wonders about the sustainability of ICSF at a higher level of overheads. This is something that requires creative thinking at the Fortaleza General Body Meeting.

My salute to all who have contributed in making ICSF what it is today!



Enigmas by Pablo Neruda

*I want to tell you the ocean knows this, that life in its jewel boxes
is endless as the sand, impossible to count, pure,
and among the blood-colored grapes time has made the petal
hard and shiny, made the jellyfish full of light
and untied its knot, letting its musical threads fall
from a horn of plenty made of infinite mother-of-pearl.*

*I am nothing but the empty net which has gone on ahead
of human eyes, dead in those darkneses,
of fingers accustomed to the triangle, longitudes
on the timid globe of an orange.*

*I walked around as you do, investigating
the endless star,
and in my net, during the night, I woke up naked,
the only thing caught, a fish trapped inside the
wind.*

— Translated by Robert Bly

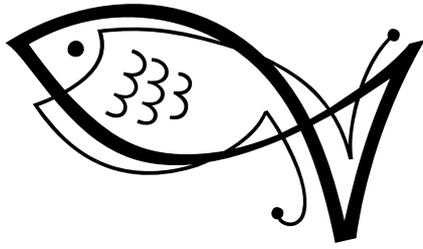
Sound Bites (...contd. from Page 4)

the communities to establish resorts. SDF intervened, believing that the community had the right to the land.

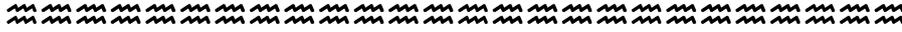
On SDF:

The main goal of the organization is to advocate for community rights in the form of access and management of natural resources. At the micro-level, it concentrates on awareness-raising campaigns, networking and presenting alternatives to managing natural resources. At the macro-level, it lobbies support from other organizations on emerging issues, and campaigns for these issues to be articulated in public policy. Some of the macro-level campaigns focus on aquaculture in coastal areas; a community right law, where communities are fully consulted in any decision-making process; the decentralization of the formal sector into the informal; and, in the post-tsunami phase, human-rights approach in rehabilitation. SDF has a strong gender perspective as it believes that women are often the most vulnerable in fishing communities.

— From an interview of Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk, Director of SDF, Thailand, by Moenieba Isaacs of the University of Cape Town, South Africa



Gunnar's Album



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Conference Secretariat

Salao de Eventos 2 (adjacent to Conference hall)

Registration/Travel

SESC Reception (Tel: 55 85 3318 6000)

Money Changing

SADOC (Cambio e Turismo, Fortaleza. Tel: 3219-7993)

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Police 190
Ambulance 3433-7373

SESC Address

Colônia Ecológica Sesc Iparana
Praia de Iparana S/N Caucaia
Ceará
Cep: 61.605-600
Tel: 55 85 3318 6000
Embratur: 20.03.612.122/0004-70
Site: www.sesc-ce.com.br

“

Conservation should be 80 per cent negotiation, 10 per cent common sense and 10 per cent science.

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— Antonio Carlos Diegues



SAMUDRA FOR FORTALEZA is a special publication brought out by the SAMUDRA Team for ICSF's 20th Anniversary Meet at Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil