

# Viewpoint

by John Kurien, Trivandrum  
(section titles by the Editor)

There is a well-known saying that it takes the water of many rivers to make a mighty ocean—a *samudra*.

And so it is with our Collective.

It has taken—and will continue to take— many, many numerous small initiatives by people all over the world before the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) becomes a force to be reckoned with in the realm of world fisheries.

Looking back, particularly over the last four years, I have no doubts about our ability to achieve this goal.

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## From springs...

I've often been asked how the initiatives that led to the formation of the ICSF all started. One answer is that the "rivers" have existed for ages, but have all flowed at their own pace and in their own direction without influencing one another. Some rivers were small and slow; some large and swift. In certain parts of the world the rivers had already flowed into small "regional seas". But it was when the idea of holding an International Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters (ICFWS) was first initiated that the possibility of merging all the "rivers" and "regional seas" into a mighty *samudra* became a dream capable of fulfillment.

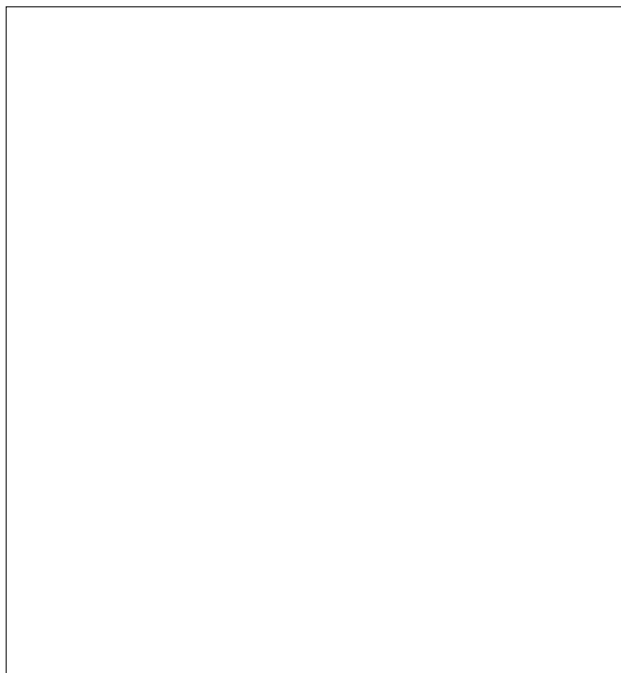
A planning meeting—held in Hong Kong in January 1984 to announce officially our intention of organising the ICFWS—was next step towards ensuring that as many "rivers" as possible would flow into a single ocean.

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## To rivers...

In July 1983, prompted by a letter from a person whose heart was with the fishworkers but whose feet were directed by international policy makers, I wrote to seventy-five people round the world who sailed these "rivers" and "regional seas". In that letter, I suggested the idea of the ICFWS. In two months I received fifty-seven lengthy replies— all but one enthusiastic about the idea and pledging support.

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## ...and confluents.

By June 1984 many more rivers" round the world who had been represented at Hong Kong, pledged their support in helping form the "ocean". All of this was done on the basis of a great deal mutual trust with only circular letters and telex messages evidence of our earnest. Two goals inspired us all to work together to a common end: a fairer deal for the men and women engaged in small-scale fisheries and greater participation by them in the issues affecting their lives; and a sustainable future for fishery resources.

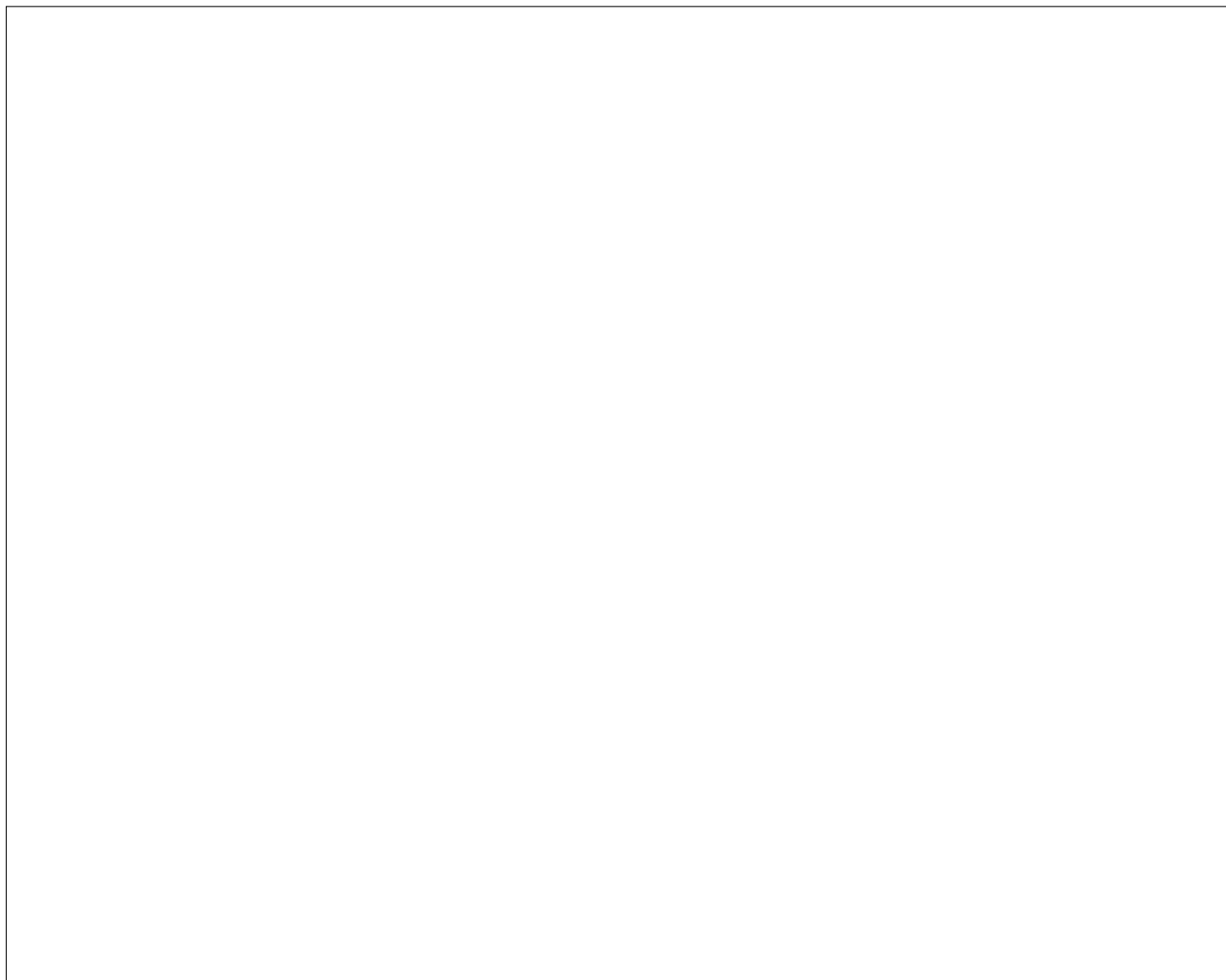
Minor differences of opinion as to how these objectives should be achieved proved no obstacle to wholehearted and enthusiastic collaboration.

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## A surprising exhibition

The best proof of the success of this approach was to be seen the exhibition organized at the ICFWS conference entitled "*The life, work and struggles of the Fish workers*".

From the coordinating office of the ICFWS in the little coastal town of Trivandrum in Southern India a poster proposing this exhibition was mailed to the fishworkers' organizations and the NGO's planning to attend the ICFWS. With no centralized planning, the success of the exhibition depended entirely on the exhibits brought home by the participants. The response was overwhelming models of fishing craft and tackle, posters, paper cuttings, slick working clothes, photographs and pictures of fish. The display all these exhibits around the foyers of the conference hall was electrifying and gave the whole of the ICFWS a special atmosphere.



Are capital investments geared towards the needs of small-scale fishworkers?

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## TOO MANY BAD RESULTS

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Multi-lateral and bilateral agencies rarely evaluate the impact of their development programmes; and if they do so, the reports are not meant for the public at large as the content is often too embarrassing for the agency or the government concerned. One important demand of the ICSF is therefore that more attention be given to the monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and that the results of such evaluations be made accessible to, interested members of the public.

The little evaluation work that has been done by multilateral and bilateral agencies indicates that the overall performance of fisheries projects has been poor and generally worse than projects implemented in other sectors such as agriculture. The bad performance has various causes, including the introduction of inappropriate fishing vessels and gear, over-investment in industrialized vessels leading to over-exploitation of fishery resources and the mis-management and diversion of funds by implementing agencies.

The only criterion applied by international agencies for evaluating their investment projects is the internal rate of return. This criterion takes no account of who benefits from

a given project and whose interests may be threatened by it. Such evaluation reports therefore fail to assess, for example, the impact of a programme to expand export-orientated industrial fisheries on artisanal fishermen or on local consumers of fish.

For effective monitoring and evaluation of fisheries projects; the ICSF needs the assistance of supporters and fishworkers organizations, and of the readers of SAMUDRA REPORT in general.

For this purpose, the ICSF Secretariat has given below a list of questions for those of you who are aware of the planning or implementation of fisheries projects which are likely to be damaging to the interests of fishworkers. Upon receipt of the replies, the Secretariat will approach the respective agency to obtain further information and clarification and, if needed, will attempt to halt such projects through the organization of public opposition on local, national and international levels.

In the forthcoming issues of SAMUDRA REPORT we shall report on the information collected in this manner and on the steps taken by the ICSF Secretariat to prevent programmes and projects contrary to the interests of fishworkers.