



**INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE
IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS
(ICSF) TRUST**

22, First Floor, Venkatrathinam Nagar,
Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India
Tel: 91-44-2445 1216 | 2445 1217
Fax: 91-44-2445 0216
Email: icsf@icsf.net

**KERALA INSTITUTE OF
LOCAL ADMINISTRATION
(KILA)**

Mulamkunnathukavu P O
Thrissur 680 581, India
Tel: 91-487-2207006
Fax: 91-487-2201062
Email: director@kila.ac.in



**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PANCHAYATS (LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS)
AND THE FAO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES GUIDELINES**

Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur, Kerala, India

5th - 6th November, 2019

Preface

It was in 2014 that the SSF Guidelines were developed after participatory negotiations and were adopted by the COFI (Committee on Fisheries) of the FAO. This national workshop, organised by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was on SSF and local self-governments (known as LSGs or Panchayat Raj Institutions/Municipalities/Corporations in India). It could be one of the first national workshops looking at fisheries and the local self-governments (LSG) with participants from LSGs, representatives of state fisheries departments, fishworker organisations, civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) coming together in the country. The workshop is part of the efforts to raise awareness regarding the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines).

The workshop discussed the SSF Guidelines and how it helps to increase the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and nutrition. It also looked into the equity aspect of SSF – livelihood in relation to income, access to education, health, sanitation and also conflict in fisheries, threats from land-based and sea-based activities and sharing of resources with other sectors. In a country which has a three tier system of governance with the local self-governments playing a pivotal role at the local level, the role the latter could play in operationalizing the SSF Guidelines was discussed at length. The SSF Guidelines emphasise on the decentralised and Local Government structures and the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India provide the opportunity and platform to work through a decentralised way. In fact, the Constitutional amendments were aimed at ensuring local economic development and social justice which is similar to what the SSF Guidelines aim for.

Coastal areas are the most vulnerable to climate change. This is a major issue that needed to be addressed locally and globally. KILA had developed a methodology for a Local Action Plan on Climate Change (LAPCC) where the coastal panchayats worked further on how to develop an action plan better. However, climate change cannot be addressed by local actions alone. But understanding vulnerability, risk, coping mechanisms and adaptations,

was important. Considering the recent Conference of Parties calling for nature-based solutions for dealing with climate change, it is necessary to address local issues locally, while linking them to the global vision. Now that the People's Plan Campaign initiated in Kerala in 1996 has been taken to other states in the form of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), it provides opportunities for operationalizing the SSF Guidelines across the country through GPDP.

The workshop has come out with recommendations on how Local Self -Governments (LSGs) can contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland), how they can effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems and how can all stakeholders – LSGs, national and state governments and civil society – strengthen the participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance.

I take this opportunity to thank the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust for the initiative taken to organise this workshop and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for providing the support. My thanks are also due to the experts and participants, whose contribution to the workshop was very immense and very useful. My colleagues at the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) need special mention for the role they played in making this workshop a success. Thanks a lot.

We hope that the deliberations and the recommendations of this workshop will be paving way for an effective operationalization of the SSF Guidelines in the local governance arena and beyond.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A national workshop of local self-governments (known as LSGs or Panchayat Raj Institutions in India) was held on November 5 and 6, 2019, in Thrissur, Kerala, India, to raise awareness regarding the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). It was organised by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) Trust and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) and was supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The Objectives of the Workshop were to:

- Raise awareness about the SSF Guidelines and review the capacities of panchayat institutions to implement them;
- Review existing panchayat budgets and programmes for marine and inland fisheries and fishing communities and identify opportunities and gaps in local governance; and
- Highlight panchayat-level best practices on participatory decision- making; delivery of welfare and social services benefiting fishing communities; women's socio-economic development and equal representation; climate change adaptation and disaster risk management; and sustainable fisheries management and resource utilisation.

The Workshop was attended by participants from all coastal states (except Gujarat) and the island Union Territory of Lakshadweep. It included representatives from Fishworker organisations, Local Self Governments, State Governments, State Fisheries Department officials, Academics, Researchers, Community-Based Organisations, Civil Society Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations.

In the Inaugural Session, Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust said it was the fourth of a series of workshops organised by ICSF in India with the support of the FAO and was the first national workshop looking at fisheries and the Panchayati Raj Institutions. After highlighting the salient features of the SSF Guidelines, Mathew outlined the objectives of the workshop and listed a set of questions that could be taken up at the workshop. The Inaugural address was delivered by Joy Elamon, Director, KILA who said the objectives of the 73rd amendment were local economic development and ensuring social justice. Referring to the People's Plan Campaign of Kerala which had now been taken to other states in the form of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), he said there was a need to make use of the opportunities provided by the Panchayati Raj system. S. Venkatesapathy, Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala, made his opening remarks through a video presentation and said it was essential that panchayats contribute in devising projects and implementing them with the technical support given by the Fisheries Department to increase fishermen welfare and fisheries resources for a sustainable future. He called for panchayats to increase allocation for the fishing community during the Vikasana Seminar. Narendra Ramachandra Patil, Chairman, National Fishworkers' Forum, in his opening remarks spoke about the important contributions made by Kerala to marine fisheries over time. The keynote address was given by John Kurien, Managing Trustee, ICSF Trust. He pointed out the high variation in practices of the small scale fishers along the coast as described more than a century ago and said the neglect of small scale fisheries was worldwide. An assessment of the 'reality of neglect', he said, should be the first step in finding ways and means of altering our approach to the occupational and development needs of small-scale fishing communities.

The first session was on 'The Panchayati Raj System and the Governance of Fisheries in India'. Community Perspectives on LSGs were provided by Nalini Kant from Jharkhand, P. Celeena from Kerala and Alkesh Kashyap from Assam. G. Palanithurai spoke on the 'State of Devolution in India' and P.P. Balan discussed the 'Role of Panchayats in Decentralized Governance in India'. Palanithurai said it was essential to build leadership and provide training in handling power. Balan described the history of decentralisation and discussed the three important aspects that have to be undertaken in the GPDP planning for coastal areas that were discussed in a recent workshop. These included preparing a sub-plan for fisherfolk, a disaster management plan and a special gram sabha for fishermen on the lines of Kerala's Matsya Sabha, to be convened before the gram sabha.

'Panchayati Raj Institutions and Fisheries Management in Kerala' was the focus of the second session in which there were five speakers. J. B. Rajan's presentation was on local governance initiatives for fisheries in Kerala. He described how the People's Plan Campaign was designed in such a way that a change in the political milieu had little impact on the system and this had evolved into the GPDP. He explained the steps in the local planning

cycle and how it provided space to local people to become part of the process. M.S. Saju from the Kerala's Fisheries Department presented a case study of success stories in local body plan implementation in the four southern districts of Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha and Ernakulam, and said the involvement of representatives of the fishing community in the decision-making process at the panchayat level yielded significant achievements in both the number and coverage of projects. Abdul Jabbar from Valiyaparamba GP said the upliftment of fisherfolk should get more importance than all other sections of the people to bring them into the mainstream of the country. Vinod Malayilethu from World Wild Life Fund for Nature –India (WWF-India), spoke about the eco-labelling process for the short-neck clam fishery of Ashtamudi and the development of the three-tier council for management that had been replicated in the current amendment of the Kerala Marine Fisheries Regulation Act. Tulasi Bai, State President of the Gram Panchayat Association of Kerala said after spending nine months in preparing plans and just three months in implementation, the timeline is now *vice versa*. The GP Association ensured that decentralisation was not diluted and also participated and provided inputs while preparing guidelines for the preparation of projects.

The third session was on 'Panchayati Raj Institutions and the Socio-Economic Development of Fishing Communities'. P. Sivanandan compared the socio-economic indicators of the SC/ST and Fishing Communities in Kerala and wondered if its inclusion in a list would be beneficial. Amala Shaji from SEWA spoke about problems women fish vendors faced in markets and transportation of fish. She asked for the representation of women fishworkers in working groups in development seminars and all the planning processes. Anishkumar gave a detailed presentation of the activities of Kudumbashree especially in coastal areas and said that the coverage there, especially of fishing communities was not very good. V. Vivekanandan described the traditional governance systems of fishing communities especially at the Coromandel Coast and said ignoring active traditional governance institutions, erecting artificial entities to govern them instead and expecting them to respond the way the mainstream community responds was not the right move. A short video presentation was made by Nirmala from the Sakhi Women's Resource Centre. She said it was important to empower women in all possible ways and come up with new and relevant schemes as they played a great role in overall development.

'Panchayati Raj Institutions, Governance of Tenure' was the theme of the fourth session. Noorjahan Beevi from the Fisheries Department, Tamil Nadu spoke about the co-management initiative in Tamil Nadu through which fishermen had made the shift from using it as a grievance forum to discussing resource management. S.R. Nagraj from the Karnataka Fisheries Department described the initiatives of the department for inland fisheries including ornamental fish culture by women. Usha P.K. from the Kerala Fisheries Department described in detail the work that was being carried out by the Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) on the empowerment of women from the fishing community through the establishment of a variety of microenterprises including the Theeramaitri and Theeranaipunya programmes. K.C. Rajeev gave an overview of Matsyafed's activities that included subsidy provisions for fishing equipment, manufacturing nets and aquaculture linked with tourism.

Thaha Malika from Lakshadweep said there was no social discrimination in Lakshadweep but fishermen not only had catch fish but sell them as well, which entailed long hours of work. Arjilli Dasu from Andhra Pradesh said the present government had introduced village-level secretariats with one secretariat per 2000 population. He said half the powers had been shifted to the secretariats and felt that schemes should be implemented only at the panchayat level. A presentation was made on the restoration of the Kuttemperoor River by the Budhanoor Panchayat, by Harikrishnan, who is a Coordinator, of the Panchayat.

There were detailed discussions in all the sessions, with participants asking speakers pointed questions, demanding explanations and making suggestions.

In the last Session, S. M. Vijayanand, Chairman, Sixth State Finance Commission, Government of Kerala, delivered the valedictory address via video presentation. He suggested: holding a write-shop to develop an action plan for each state; developing a resource-cluster as a proof-of-concept; and localising plans for climate change and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He emphasised the importance of capacity building and suggested the establishment of a platform for advocacy to provide technical support and to bring agencies together to share their views regarding possible assistance to fisherfolk.

Three questions were discussed during the group discussion: (1) How can Local Self - Governments (LSGs) contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland); (2) How can LSGs effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems and (3) How can all stakeholders – LSGs, Union and state governments and civil society – strengthen the participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance. Following discussions spanning over two hours, the four groups came up with recommendations that were presented to the participants by the group rapporteurs. The recommendations from the workshop were presented by N. Venugopalan during the valedictory session.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Area Development Society
BP	Block Panchayat
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCRF	Code of Conduct of Responsible Fisheries (FAO)
CDS	Community Development Society
CIFT	Central Institute for Fisheries Technology
CMFRI	Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute
CRZ	Coastal Regulation Zone
CUSAT	Cochin University of Science and Technology
DME	Development of Micro Enterprises
DOECC	Department of Environment and Climate Change (Kerala)
DoF	Department of Fisheries
DPC	District Planning Committee
DPR	Detailed Project Report
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FAO-TCP	FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme
FFC	Fourteenth Finance Commission
FIMSUL	Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods
FYP	Five Year Plan
GO	Government Orders
GP	Gram Panchayat
GPDP	Gram Panchayat Development Plan
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers Trust
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IMD	Indian Meteorological Department

JLG	Joint Liability Groups
KILA	Kerala Institute of Local Administration
KSBB	Kerala State Biodiversity Board
LAPCC	Local Action Plan for Climate Change
LGDP	Local Government Development Plan
LGI	Local Government Initiatives
LGI	Local Government Institutions
LSG	Local Self Government
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
ME	Micro Enterprises
MFRA	Marine Fisheries Regulation Act
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MKSP	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MoPR	Ministry of Panchayati Raj
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPEDA	Marine Products Export Development Agency
NCDC	National Cooperative Development Corporation
NHG	Neighbourhood Help Group
NPMF	National Policy on Marine Fisheries
OBM	Outboard Motor
PPC	People's Plan Campaign
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
SAF	Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCSP	Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHG	Self Help Group
SSF Guidelines	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Poverty Eradication
ST	Scheduled Tribe
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSP	Tribal Sub-Plan
WCP	Women Component Plan
WWF-India	World Wide Fund for Nature-India
ZP	Zila Panchayat

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NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PANCHAYATS (LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS) AND THE FAO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES GUIDELINES

Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur, Kerala, India

Tuesday, 5th November 2019: Day 1

INAUGURAL SESSION

Chair: V.Vivekanandan, Trustee, ICSF Trust

The session opened with the Chair requesting Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust, to give an overview of the workshop.

Welcome and Overview of the Workshop: Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust

Welcoming the gathering, Sebastian Mathew said the workshop was jointly organised by KILA and ICSF. It was the first national workshop looking at fisheries and the panchayati raj institutions with participants from panchayats, representatives of state fisheries departments, fishworker organisations, civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). There were participants from all the coastal states except Gujarat and Lakshadweep. This was the fourth of a series of workshops organised by ICSF in India with the support of the FAO. The three earlier workshops dealt with the marine fisheries policy of the Government of India (GoI), the draft inland fisheries policy of the GoI and gender and fisheries in India in the context of the SSF Guidelines.

Mathew explained that the SSF Guidelines were developed after participatory negotiations and were adopted by the COFI (Committee on Fisheries) of the FAO in 2014. Considering that the three tiers – the union, state and local governments - were very important in discussions about the small-scale fisheries guidelines, this workshop would look at the SSF Guidelines and LSGs. The main objectives of the SSF guidelines was to increase the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and nutrition and look at the equity aspect of SSF – livelihood in relation to income, access to education, health, sanitation and also conflict in fisheries, threats from land-based and sea-based activities and sharing of resources with other sectors. The objectives also aim at achieving sustainable utilisation of fisheries resources through responsible management and conservation of fisheries resources. While the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries talks about the Ecosystem Approach to Management, the SSF Guidelines takes them forward by looking at the social dimensions.

Highlighting the salient aspects of the SSF Guidelines, Mathew said they applied mainly to marine and inland small-scale capture fisheries and did not include aquaculture. They promoted a human rights-based approach and recognised key principles such as equality and

non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law, including issues of transparency and legislation. They emphasised the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women, tribal communities, fishers and fishworkers in the informal sector, who were not organised into cooperatives or trade unions. They focused on social development, decent work, social protection and social security, among other things.

The SSF Guidelines also paid attention to decentralised and Local Government structures. The Panchayati Raj Act of India was in line with this kind of approach. In this context, we need to work with small-scale fishing communities to develop knowledge and skills to support co-management arrangements and greater devolution of power to communities and local governance. Mathew said the guidelines looked at several elements of the local economy such as the contribution of small-scale fisheries to local economies including nutrition from fish. They also viewed aspects relating to respect for traditional and local knowledge of fishing communities, local norms and practices, representation of SSF in local professional associations and fisheries bodies, recognition of local cost-efficient technologies, local innovations and culturally appropriate technology transfers; they also looked at the role of Panchayats in resource management, for example, in SSF across the country.

Mathew said the basic objective of the workshop was to raise awareness because of the lag in information flow from top to bottom. The objectives were to:

- Raise awareness among key LSG stakeholders about the SSF Guidelines
- Examine the status of fisheries-based programmes—livelihoods, conservation and sustainable use—under LSGs and to secure access to resources and markets of small-scale fishing communities (coastal, marine, and inland) (SDG 14B)
- Examine the status of social development services in relation to education, health, housing, sanitation, etc., and social protection under LSGs and how they target and benefit fishing communities (SDG1)
- Review the nature of participation of men and women from fishing communities in decision-making structures at the local level of consequence to their life and livelihood (SDG 16), and
- Contribute to building capacities of LSGs to implement relevant sections of the SSF Guidelines to benefit SSF communities (SDG 1)

The expected outcome of the application of the SSF Guidelines was to provide a fillip to panchayats to pay greater attention to conservation and sustainable use of waterbodies in their territorial area (coastal, marine and inland) and give an impetus to social development for the benefit of local marine, coastal and inland fishing communities.

In this context, Mathew listed a set of questions that could be taken up at the workshop. The general questions were:

- How can LSGs enhance the contribution of marine and inland SSF to food security and nutrition?
- How can LSGs work towards greater social development of SSF communities and removal of their poverty?
- How can LSGs assist conservation and management of fisheries resources, prevention of pollution and protection of waterbodies?
- How can LSGs build capacities of small-scale fishing communities to enable them to participate in decision-making processes?

Questions specific to the panchayats were:

- Can panchayats at the three-tier level identify fishing communities living in poverty and target resources and basic services such as water and sanitation to help them out?
- Can panchayats create jobs and raise incomes of fishers and fishworkers, and build resilience of fishing communities to shocks and disasters?
- Can panchayats use healthcare services and schools to identify and tackle child malnutrition in fishing communities?
- Can panchayats identify and tackle barriers to school attendance in fishing communities?
- Can panchayats reach out to the vulnerable and marginalised individuals in fishing communities and ensure they have access to education and training?
- Can panchayats improve the quality of water through environmental protection and sustainable solid waste management with an emphasis on reuse and recycling? Are they promoting participatory management of water and sanitation by fishing communities?
- Are panchayats identifying gaps in access to ICT and the internet in fishing communities and taking steps to bridge them?
- Can panchayats guarantee the right to housing to the poorest in fishing communities?
- Are panchayats regulating activities within river basins that can affect oceans such as discharge of sewage or industrial wastes into rivers? Are they promoting construction only in suitable areas of the coast?
- Can panchayats identify and tackle violence and harmful practices against women in fishing communities?
- Are panchayats identifying children at risk of child labour and working to ensure they attend school? Are they working towards improving the working conditions of men and women in the informal fishing sector and providing social protection?

- Are panchayats integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation into local planning to increase resilience to environmental shocks among fishing communities? Nets used, boats possessed, paint used on boats etc. can be revisited.
- Are panchayats facilitating community-based participation and management in marine and coastal biodiversity conservation? They can interface with the Biodiversity boards at state and district levels.
- Are panchayats developing coherent policies to address the multiple challenges of poverty reduction and sustainable development, inclusive of vulnerable and marginalised fishing communities?
- Can panchayats manage waterbodies and riparian areas to improve fish production and promote local food chains? Can panchayats reduce water pollution and ensure protection of the environment? First meet local needs and then move to outside areas.
- Can panchayats manage fisheries resources, introduce tenure reforms – who can access fish, how long, where – in internal water bodies and marine waters- and protect the rights of fishing communities to resources and markets?

Mathew concluded his presentation quoting from the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), (its forerunner was the International Municipal Movement of 1913): ‘*Local governments are policy makers, catalysts of change and the level of government best placed to link the global goals with local communities.*’ He said the distance between ‘global’ and ‘local’ was not much, and panchayats were best suited to connect people locally to the SDG, which were actually knitted closely to the SSF Guidelines to see if local bodies could be used to draw attention to the fishing communities.

Inaugural Address: Joy Elamon, Director, KILA, Thrissur

Joy Elamon welcomed the gathering to KILA and Kerala and said the theme of the workshop was important as such themes were often sidelined. Referring to the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian Constitution, he said that the 73rd amendment aimed at ensuring local economic development and social justice, but somewhere down the line, the most vulnerable populations had always been left out and these included fishers. He said the SSF Guidelines, like other UN documents, appeared to contain a lot of jargon, names and terminologies such as equitable development, human rights approach, sustainable use of aquatic biodiversity and natural resources. However, they all have meaning and are of importance if read and interpreted in the correct manner. Local governments become important in discussions about local governance structures and co-managing ecosystems. Local government is an excluded terminology in itself because though discussions are held about 73rd amendment and Panchayati Raj, it is important to know how it takes place in the country.

Elamon said whenever panchayats were discussed, knowingly or unknowingly, they were actually being excluded. Panchayats were treated as outsiders in the questions that were raised. The use of terminology like help and support lent credence to the idea that panchayats were outside the communities and that was the problem of the governance system. The

elected groups and offices had mistaken notions regarding the panchayat, forgetting that they part of the community itself. There were structures within the community like the panchayat elected group, officers and others. One could actually start utilising this platform, and these structures, understand their potential and possibilities, dream, innovate and incubate and see that it was mainstreamed. The Panchayati Raj system provided the nation with opportunities. Elamon pointed out that the objectives of the 73rd amendment were local economic development and ensuring social justice. The use of certain words like ensuring livelihoods and poverty eradication, he felt was a reductionist kind of approach. For him, these were elements and components of a larger vision of domestic human and social development, including upward social mobility. He said the use of the term panchayat was problematic; for example in Kerala, there were 106 fishing panchayats and nine municipalities and corporations in the same area. Hence, the term local government was more appropriate. He also pointed out that many urban areas always neglected one portion of their corporations or municipalities which were always outliers; always excluded, always marginalised.

He said the 73rd and 74th amendments provided a lot of opportunities by way of Schedules 11 and 12 and while planning for the panchayat or municipality, equal rights of the fishing community and the people living there should be ensured rather than considering the former a separate group to be given only what was left. This had happened to the SC and ST communities where only portions of the money earmarked for STs and SCs was to be used for them, as if they were not part of the main population and provisions of the general funds were not applicable to them. This was not the case and in fact, additional funds were provided to mainstream such communities. Going by the 11th Schedule, it was up to the state government to clarify which subjects were to be devolved and the way forward. But from the panchayat or LG point of view, nothing prevented them from getting into these areas because the overall objective was social justice and local development. Elamon felt civil society organisations that had been working in the field had failed to understand these opportunities to support and facilitate local governments in conceptualising these ideas, taking them forward and implementing them.

Till the election, the candidate was part of the local community, came from it and was supported by it. Once elected, treating the candidate like an alien was incorrect. Instead, it remained to be seen how civil society could work with panchayats to address these questions. Also, the capacity of communities and local governments had to be developed in these areas to go forward.

Citing various examples outside the fisheries sector that had reaped dividends, Elamon said in Kerala's context, there were participatory fora and suggestions on how these things could be taken forward. They had been trying to see if, at least in the local government, it was possible to have another vehicle like (Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan) SCSP and TSP (Tribal Sub-Plan) for the fishing community. Since in Kerala, the transfer of funds to local bodies was dependent on a comprehensive formula where the backward class, the population, the SC, ST and other things were considered, KILA had suggested considering the fishing community as part of the formula also, to get an advantage. But, he said, it had to be evidence-based. There were also suggestive proposals and guidelines on holding Matsya Sabhas in fisher areas in

Kerala. While it was not mandatory and hence few held it, it could be used if communities went there with evidence-based arguments.

Coastal areas were the most vulnerable to climate change. He said climate change was a major issue that needed to be addressed locally and globally. KILA had developed a methodology for a Local Action Plan on Climate Change (LAPCC) where the coastal panchayats worked further on how to develop an action plan better. However, climate change could not be addressed by local actions alone. But understanding vulnerability, risk, coping mechanisms and adaptations, was important. Referring to the recent Conference of Parties calling for nature-based solutions for dealing with climate change, Elamon said it was necessary to address local issues locally, while linking them to the global vision. He concluded his address with a reference to the People's Plan Campaign of Kerala which had now been taken to other states in the form of the GPDG stating that the opportunities provided by the Panchayati Raj and Local Government system to India needed to be availed. Assuring KILA's support to ICSF, he said recommendations from the workshop should be taken forward and should not remain as mere recommendations.

Opening Remarks: S. Venkatesapathy, Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala (through VIDEO presentation)

Congratulating ICSF and KILA for organising a national-level conference, S. Venkatesapathy appreciated Kerala as their choice of venue as the state was both strong in Panchayati Raj and fisheries. The effective participation by panchayats had made it possible to amend the Kerala Marine Fisheries Regulation Act and the Rules. It was because of the action taken by the Fisheries Department and the support given by LSGs that there had been an increase in fish production in both the marine and inland sectors, despite disasters. He said panchayats had a major role to play as most of the waterbodies fell under them. It was essential that panchayats contributed in devising projects and implementing them with the technical support given by the Fisheries Department. Both institutions had to function simultaneously to increase fishers' welfare and fisheries resources for a sustainable future. Referring to the Munambam Harbour, he said, it was one of the best managed harbours because every single comment from the local community to the panchayat members was heeded and managed accordingly. He said committee and community participation at the panchayat-level was taking place even though they were not getting sufficient inputs as it was a new concept. While some comments were very positive, critical comments were important in enabling improvement. However, because each region was different, the Munambam model need not be universally applicable. While panchayats had been contributing regularly on smaller issues, they had to be pushed to the bigger concerns that affected marine fisheries.

Venkatesapathy said there should be an optimum level of policy making. For this, at every panchayat level committee meeting attempts were being made to get a fisheries-level management committee at the fishing village level. It may comprise one or two revenue villages, sometimes a combination of two or three panchayats. Once their comments come in regarding an issue, the district level discusses it in the presence of the district collector and others. Next, the state-level committee comes into the picture, looks at every single aspect

and comment given by the panchayats. These become crucial factors in devising action plans and future plans.

He agreed that there were challenges with regard to participation by fishing communities in the panchayat. That was why they were trying to first educate them. While giving inputs about goals, they were sensitised about regional differences due to geography, the type of fish available, the type of landing and the type of consumer. Thus, every input from the panchayat-level would have members from the concerned panchayat. For example, if a fishing village has two revenue villages, and a combination of two panchayats, or some part of one panchayat and some part of another, then both panchayat members are taken into account. In this way, it is possible to compensate for differences and overall if one verified the inputs coming from different areas, the central theme is always kept. Therefore, the onus to collaborate in every aspect and bring it up falls on the panchayats. However, he said there were challenges to be taken up in future. Panchayats had specific budgets and were answerable to the entire community residing in their area. . The Fisheries Department had a specific set of communities to handle. The problem arose when sufficient allocation was not available for a particular group of people in a particular ward in a panchayat. At such times, the Fisheries Department chipped in as it had in several projects like medical missions and educational loans, scholarships, health check-ups etc. So the Department compensated in a manner that ensured that the optimal value of inputs reached the fishermen. He said that the panchayat had a major role with respect to social indicators. Considering the fact, that barring scheduled tribes, fishermen were the most backward, he felt it would be more acceptable if Panchayats allocated more resources for the fishermen community. This could be done during the Vikasana (development) seminar by increasing the allocation to fisheries.

Calling for greater resilience to the impact of climate change, Venkatesapathy said since Kerala had been following a more traditional approach to development, there were still good quality forests, wetlands and other resources. It was time to remove encroachments and enable the natural movement of water. Fishermen were being provided training in disaster management at the Goa's National Institute for Water Sports to enable them to reach out to people at sea when they ran into problems. They were given licences for speed boats, and certificates for CPR, first aid and sea rescue. The Department was trying to get them as sea rescue squads, exclusively from a disaster management perspective.

With respect to women, he said the Department had a Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF), a group similar to Kudumbashree but exclusively oriented towards fisherwomen in coastal areas which carried out different kinds of activities. For example, under the *Suchitwa Sagar* (Clean Sea) project, SAF had carried out the collection of plastic wastes and ghost nets from the sea, pelletising and utilising them for road-laying and other purposes. They were also being encouraged to enter into aquaculture. The problem with women's groups was in getting them together and raising awareness. Women's groups were known for the prompt repayment of loans.

Regarding the role of panchayats in resource conservation, he said they were becoming increasingly sensitive to resource scarcity, especially with reference to marine fish. In the

past two decades, there was a continuous stagnation or decline in marine catch and fishermen were being forced to go further away from the coast to catch fish. Fishermen and panchayat members both understood the dangers of over-exploitation. Citing the hefty increase in the price of sardines indicating resource scarcity as an example, he said that it was necessary to set a limit in the interest of sustainability. Panchayats also had a role to play in encouraging diversification through mussel and oyster culture as well as multi-trophic aquaculture. Venkatesapathy concluded with the hope that the workshop would indicate the areas in which the panchayats could easily integrate with the Fisheries Department to maintain the welfare of the fishing community.

Opening Remarks: Narendra Ramachandra Patil, Chairman, National Fishworkers' Forum

Patil began with the importance of Kerala, especially in marine fisheries and how it was from this state that technologies, techniques and advice on fisheries had emerged because it had a high concentration of institutions working on fisheries. The SSF guidelines were brought out by FAO and were a comprehensive set of guidelines to help small-scale fishers in community development, poverty eradication, education, health etc. The panchayats can certainly play a very important role in improving the lives of fishermen in many of these aspects. They have a very big role in inland fisheries and inland fishing communities. Sharing information on various institutions and their functions in Maharashtra, Patil said fishermen's cooperatives were very strong and well-established in every village and provided very good services to fishermen; the gram panchayats were also active in providing various services. Traditional panchayats were also active and multiple institutions were working together to provide benefits to fishermen. There was a role for all these organisations and they had to work together and ensure the development of the fishing communities.. There was a large amount of funding available under the GoI scheme (Neel Kranti/ Blue Revolution) for fisheries development. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and individual fishermen could access funds to improve their fishing activities. He lauded the suggestions made by Venkatesapathy advising committees in every village to opt for planned actions and the mobilisation of all panchayats to work on fisheries. He said these suggestions should be taken to other states. He also appreciated the role played by the ICSF over the last thirty years in providing various inputs that enabled fishing communities to take them up in the past. He was also happy to note the role played by KILA in providing good training and felt that this was something that could also be done on a much bigger scale for the fisheries sector.

Keynote Address: Implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines in the Context of Local Governance: John Kurien, Managing Trustee, ICSF Trust

John Kurien began by thanking KILA, especially Joy Elamon and Rajan for their support in holding the workshop. He said it was significant that the meeting to discuss SSF guidelines with respect to local governance was being held in Thrissur. Parts of the coastal areas of Thrissur District today were in the erstwhile Malabar District of Madras Presidency, of British India. The first Department of Fisheries of British India was initiated in 1907 and a very significant share of its activities was conducted in the Malabar District which was

known for its marine fishery wealth and the presence of skilled fishermen. Thus its contributions went back a long way. Malabar became the testing ground for many new ventures in fisheries which were started by the British. These included many local-specific activities such as fish curing yards, fish oil extraction units, cooperatives for fishers and fishery schools for children of the community. Much before 1920 these activities were carried out in Malabar and were spread across different villages of the district under the supervision of local officers. A post called the petty yard officer in Kerala was responsible for the fish curing yards that continued till the 1970s.

Another very important initiative undertaken by the Department of Fisheries of the Madras Presidency was the study of small-scale marine fishing boats and fishing gear. The most famous of these studies was conducted by James Hornell, a marine biologist, which actually covered the entire coast of India and was published by the Asiatic Society in 1920. The most important revelation of Hornell's study was the phenomenal diversity and local-specific nature of marine fishing boat designs in India. He observed that there were different boat designs and fishing communities with very specific characteristics at virtually every 50 kilometres along the coast. There was a close relationship between the physical oceanographic conditions, the nature of the fishery resources in the sea and the design of the boats and nets. Hornell had a vast appreciation and regard for the skills and knowledge of the fishing communities, their boats and gear. He advised caution in introducing new fishing technologies from Britain and he was not in favour of introducing trawling into Indian waters.

However, after Independence, a sub-group of the National Planning Committee, comprising Indian fishery scientists, was tasked with the responsibility to plan marine fisheries development. It declared that all the existing, small, artisanal, traditional fishing technologies 'were primitive' and that fishing communities 'were largely ignorant'. The Committee advocated the need to introduce standardised fishing technologies from Europe and elsewhere to modernise Indian fisheries. In that Committee, the fishery advisor to the Government of Travancore, the well-known marine biologist Dr C.C. John strongly opposed this view. He submitted a dissenting note in which he said that if India was to develop a good fishing industry, then it must start with what already exists and build upon its strengths. But his opinion was not heeded. That was the beginning of the rejection and neglect of small-scale fisheries in this country.

India was not the only country which took this route and adopted western, industries-oriented marine fisheries. Most developing countries had the same orientation towards development: reject the traditional for the modern; move from small-scale operations to the large-scale; encourage centralisation of activity over de-centralisation; promote standardisation over diversity; move from an informal economy to a formal economy. This was not only the approach in fisheries but also in agricultural and industrial development.

Kurien said today, over seventy years after that fisheries planning committee set the trend for fisheries development in India, it has been seen that despite all neglect, the small-scale fishing sector in this country has continued to survive. In fact, it is the hidden backbone of the

fisheries sector. There are over 200,000 small non-motorised and motorised crafts which fish from over 3200 fishing villages along the 5400 kilometres coastline of the Indian mainland and in the southern states, they still account for a quarter of the total marine fish harvested. At the all-India level, the total marine fish harvested was about 3.5 million tonnes in 2018. In the inland capture fisheries sector the total harvest is about 3.2 million tonnes and here the small-scale fishery dominates.

The FAO SSF Guidelines endorsed by 176 countries across the world was really a very late recognition by governments that their fisheries development philosophy was not correct and that SSFs (Small-scale Fisheries) indeed continue to be too big to ignore locally and globally. The Guidelines provide the moral basis for reviving support to SSFs. However, if this task is to be undertaken seriously, and although the policy making for this orientation may come from the national or state level, the concrete action of support is largely meaningful at the level of the local self-government (LSG) institutions. This is because the attributes which Hornell noticed in 1920 are still largely valid today. Although SSF has adopted many modern techniques in the last two decades, it is still very local-specific, highly diverse, very traditional-knowledge intensive and greatly decentralised. Kurien emphasised that it was very crucial to understand that the knowledge-base still existed. He said in the discussions over the next two days, participants must reflect on the important measures of support which SSFs require at the LSG level. They would need to examine the inspiration and moral backing that was available from the FAO SSF Guidelines, the kind of legal support required as a result of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution and the Panchayat Raj Acts of respective states and the type of support the Departments of Fisheries could provide to give technical support for the process.

Pointing out one important reality about small-scale fishing communities and the LSG institutions – panchayats, municipalities, corporations, Kurien suggested taking any LSG in India in which small-scale fishing communities (marine or inland) were an important section of the voting population to make a small sample assessment of some of the following factors: their employment numbers; the capital stock (boats, nets etc) they own; the amount of fish they harvest; the ancillary employment they create for women and men in a wide variety of activities; their contribution to foreign exchange earnings etc. Following this, he suggested examining the development expenditure of the LSG to see how many of the schemes were oriented specifically to the needs of the fishing population. The other option was to take any general social development scheme meant for all communities and examine their implementation among fishing communities. He felt the findings would indicate that the development benefits provided to fishing communities were not commensurate to their contribution to the economy of their LSGs. Stating that fishing communities were outliers in the national development discourse and that this discrimination started at the level of the LSGs, Kurien said it was therefore at this level that the initiative to correct this historical neglect must be taken. He also felt that it was also the task of the small-scale fisher organisations such as the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) to make more demands regarding local issues, highlight them and not remain pre-occupied only with national policy matters.

He called on KILA and ICSF to make an assessment of this “reality of neglect”, with the support of fisher organisations, taking a sample of LSGs in Kerala and other parts of India. This, he felt, should be the first step towards finding ways and means of altering the approach to the occupational and development needs of small-scale fishing communities.

Finally, he explained how such an assessment could draw inspiration from the FAO SSF Guidelines, a very comprehensive document which touched on all major aspects of the occupational, socio-economic and cultural development needs of small-scale fishing communities all over the world. He said a unique dimension of these Guidelines was that they were developed in the most participatory bottom-up process and hence their implementation should also be undertaken in a similar manner. This was his reason for stressing on the LSGs as the starting point for implementation.

He suggested that a trio of LSG representatives, fisher organisations and Civil Society Support Groups represented at this workshop, with the collaboration of the Department of Fisheries, should start by examining the Objectives, Nature and Scope and Guiding Principles of the SSF Guidelines found in Chapters 1, 2 and Chapter 3. It is important to understand that the Guidelines are based on the principles of human rights and dignity and that they are not addressed to only the fisheries sector or the state. This realisation should form the foundation for correcting the wrong and the neglect which has been inflicted on small-scale fishing communities. Next, Chapter 11 on Information, Research and Communication could be used as the basis for making a start and undertaking the assessment mentioned above. The results of this assessment should then become an important document to take up Capacity Development of all concerned mentioned in Chapter 12 – local self-government officials, of gram sabhas and other groups. The easier way to get into this would be to look at the issues of Social Development, Employment and Decent Work found in Chapter 6 of the Guidelines and while undertaking these programmes, the aspect of Gender Equality elaborated in Chapter 8 must become central to the implementation process. These were not for fishery guidelines alone but for overall social development. The next step could be to consider the ancillary employment of activities such as Value Chains, Post-Harvest and Trade which are found in Chapter 7, following which the local-level manifestations of Disaster Risks and Climate Change discussed in Chapter 9, one of the major existential threats to fishing communities, could be discussed.

John Kurien said the agenda of Governance of Tenure and Resource Management detailed in Chapter 5 cannot be done by starting at the local level as it requires support from the national level. The land dimension and the sea/water dimension are both contentious, complex and require great commitment and political will for effective implementation. Change in these realms would require careful and strategic actions and for this, guidance in Chapter 10 on Policy Coherence, Institutional Coordination and Collaboration and also the Relationship with Other International Instruments in Chapter 4 would be useful. He reiterated that at every step in this process: Implementation, Support and Monitoring found in Chapter 13 were the key to making a continuous assessment on whether the movement was taking place in the right direction, while ensuring that there were course corrections at every step.

John Kurien concluded his address by calling on the participants to consider this workshop organised by KILA and ICSF only as a first step in the long journey ahead. He hoped that the participants would use this brief meeting to get to know each other and to commit individually and collectively to examining what could be done at the local level, through LSGs, to achieve the objectives and reach the goals of valourising small-scale fisheries and fishing communities towards a brighter future.

The session came to an end with the Chair, V.Vivekanandan thanking the speakers.

SESSION 1: THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM AND THE GOVERNANCE OF FISHERIES IN INDIA

Chair: J.B. Rajan, Associate Professor, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

The Session began with a round of self-introduction by the participants.

Next, Rajan welcomed the speakers for the session and said that the community perspectives would be followed by presentations by the experts.

Community Perspectives on LSGs

1. Nalini Kant, Jharkhand

Nalini Kant said his perception of the Panchayati Raj was to democratise, strengthen and ensure participation of all communities and involve them in the decision-making process. From this perspective, he tried to explore the history of management of waterbodies and fisheries, especially in the context of Bihar and Jharkhand. He said efforts to create and preserve waterbodies had been going on for thousands of years. Buddhist monks devised the concept of *ahar pyne* (traditional flood water harvesting systems also known as *Chaur*), an irrigation system where water coming from seasonal rivers was diverted into a big pond. During the dry season, the pond was used for agriculture as the soil was excellent. This system helped in the formation of the first state in India, the Magadhan Empire with the surplus economy created by agriculture. This concept was adopted in most of the south-east Asian countries where Buddhism spread over the course of time.

Nalini Kant said Bihar had several types of waterbodies: river, pond, *ahar pyne*, *chaur* and oxbow. Earlier each pond was linked with the river in its catchment area and finally joined the main channel of the Ganga. *Chaur* and lakes were created by rivers and because of their meandering nature and heavy silt flow causing shifting of courses. It was popularly believed that *ahar pyne*, *chaur* and ponds were sons, the river, their mother and the sea their father. So there was a close visible relationship between waterbodies. The conservation and maintenance of waterbodies was done by the community. During the annual festival of Jude Sheetal when the water receded, the entire community participated in cleaning the river. There was no tradition of introducing fish seeds in pond as the waterbodies were interconnected. Every region had special kinds of fish and villages or localities were named after them like Catla. The ponds served as flood absorbers during flood flow in rivers. This year's flood in Patna was due to the disappearance of the *ahar pyne*. Patna is encircled by

three rivers. There are *mohallas* [neighbourhoods] in Patna which bear the name of the *ahar pyne* that used to exist.

Bihar was the first state that enacted Panchayati Raj, but it also brought in the Fisheries Act of 2006 that totally debarred panchayats and abolished their role. District-level committees that look after fisheries at the local level are headed by Collectors as Chairmen, Assistant Commissioners (Fisheries) as Vice Chairmen and one public representative, a vague term. It is not clear whether this person belongs to the fishing community or not, and whether he has any say in the committee, if he does. An action plan has been prepared for Bihar. It states that it has a target plan of 2.4 lakh (one lakh = 100,000) tonnes for fish production and is focusing only on five varieties whereas there were over 300 varieties of fish in Bihar earlier. With reference to Panchayati Raj, Kant was very critical and stated that the way they were going about the blue revolution appeared to be a replica of the green and white revolutions and it looked like they had not learnt from earlier experiences.

P. Celeena, President, Alappad Gram Panchayat, Kollam District, Kerala

Celeena is the president of the Alappad gram panchayat in Kollam district where the Indian Rare Earths Ltd. and Mata Amritanandamayi Math are situated. Ward 16 of the gram panchayat is located in a 17.5 km long island located between the sea and the backwaters. This is one of the panchayats affected by the (Costal Regulation Zone) CRZ dispensations. It is well known for its movement against sand mining. The Matsya Sabha (fisher assembly) in the gram sabha is conducted four times a year. The fund allocation by the government is sector-wise. Agriculture is the first sector. The panchayat has taken a decision that 10% of the agricultural fund allocation for development is to be spent for fishworkers. Among various projects for fishworkers, one is related to treatment of elderly fishers and provisions for nutritious food and cots for them. In the field of education, laptops are provided to students. Hi-tech classrooms exist in all the schools in the panchayat. Solar lamps are given to fishworkers. These are not limited to fishworkers, but are available for all sections from the general funds. The difference is that 10% of the agriculture funds are restricted to fishworkers. Thyroid and Cancer detection camps and health camps are organised for them. Anganwadis are active. Almost every service to be delivered to them is given. 10% of the funds are for development of women. 625 volunteers from this panchayat have gone to different parts of Kerala for relief work during floods as the only people who can carry out rescue operations in floods are fishermen. The panchayat is supported by Matsyafed and Fishermen Cooperative Societies. At present, the Kerala government allots funds to LSGs under three heads: Development Fund, Special Component Plan for SC and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP). Since the fishing community faces a lot of problems as it is highly impoverished and debt-ridden, and its development needs are also very high, the government should allot separate funds for its development.

Alkesh Kashyap, Assam

He referred to the importance of micro-level planning, the emphasis laid by the Prime Minister on the blue revolution and the importance of marine resources to be exploited in a sustainable manner.

State of Devolution in India: G. Palanithurai, Professor (Retd.), Gandhigram Rural Institute, Tamil Nadu

Palanithurai began by saying that it was important to examine how well decentralisation has worked for the marginalised people worldwide. In India too, over the last two and a half decades, decentralisation has worked effectively in rural areas especially in the households of the marginalised. According to him, India has the best Constitution and laws to protect the marginalised in the whole world. There are more than 2000 development schemes to develop the marginalised as per World Bank records. The rights revolution in this country: right to information, right to food, right to work, has been coupled with outlays. However, despite all this, the marginalised are still marginalised and excluded. In that context, literature shows that India is a communitarian society with community leaders and institutional structures for governance. But there is no synergy between governance and community structures. The perception among people in this country is that the state takes responsibility for their development and that they are beneficiaries who should be given doles by the government. The Constitution mentions responsible citizenship but the government has never told the people, to take responsibility and that it will work 'with' them. The message has always been that it will work 'for' them. Palanithurai pointed out that as a voter, people were consumers and beneficiaries and if benefits were not reaching them, they were only petitioners. Thus, one is not a responsible citizen if one questions authority. It is the local body that provides an opportunity to the people to raise questions.

He said Indians are institutional democrats and not behavioural democrats as the core values of democracy are not practiced at the community level. Even political parties vested with the role of democratising the community, were not doing so. Decentralisation has to be viewed from this context. There are central, state and local governments. Words like synergy, cooperation or dove-tailing remain mere words as they are not in practice. There are more than 37 departments in the government with budgets and schemes for the community. But they do not work synergistically with the community. A major issue is that the country does not have the capacity to handle power. That capacity has not been built up despite the presence of various kinds of training institutions, which mainly impart do's and don'ts. A leadership school is essential because a leader in a democratic country has to work with the people and hence needs to know how to behave like a leader and not in an authoritarian mode.

Decentralisation provides an opportunity for real democracy. At the lowest level there is a forum legitimately created to practice democracy – the gram sabha. But unfortunately gram sabha members have not been trained on how to develop a discourse. Only Kerala has created awareness among gram sabha members. There are islands of decentralisation successes in India such as uplifting dalits, empowering women, water conservation and management and natural resource management. Analyses of success stories show that their achievements have

taken place because of the leadership they have acquired over a period of time. One such was a fisherman from Goa who faced a livelihood problem because of the Du Pont Company in his Panchayat. When his resolution in the gram sabha and plea to the district Collector did not work, he filed a case in the Supreme Court which passed a judgment validating the decision of the gram sabha, and the company had to leave that Panchayat. He was able to achieve his objective because of leadership and not the power centres. The same power is vested with all the panchayats.

Palanithurai called for creating awareness among people by preparing a people's version of the Constitution of India. Few states have a manual for panchayats, therefore panchayat leaders are subservient to officials, without knowledge or leadership and are mere spending institutions. He suggested training one volunteer fisher from each of the 109 panchayats in Kerala, on the schemes and opportunities available under those acts to protect the marginalised; the volunteer would become an asset for the community and would work for it. This suggestion was based on the training they had provided to women federations, dalit federations and such. They had found that providing information to one passionate individual went a long way. Palanithurai said training institutions were training only panchayat leaders who were politicians following their MLA and MPs.

He said there were three movements: democratisation, decentralisation and globalisation. The last was a silent revolution-killer. These three were initiated simultaneously in the world. In 2000, only 40 % of the countries followed democracy; today it stood at 80%, though the quality of democracy could take many forms. Democratisation and decentralisation have to work for the poor. It depends on how to handle power centres. Handling them is tricky. Leaders who performed very well did not work on assigned functions. They assumed functions and discharged responsibilities.

Palanithurai spoke about a recent experience where a few youth who happened to be engineers came during a Jallikattu agitation from Chennai to the Kamboor village in Madurai district. Looking at the Panchayati Raj website of GoI, they discovered an account for that particular village and were shocked to find a claim that Rs 6.5 Crore (One Crore = 10,000,000) had been spent in a four year period in that panchayat. They downloaded all the expenditure statements and showed it to MGNREGA workers and a women's SHG. In the next gram sabha meeting, there was an agitation asking where the money had been spent.

According to him, three essential activities have to be carried out by the panchayat: economic development and social justice and they have to be effected through participation. This is the essence of decentralisation in India as per 243 G of the 73rd amendment. But literature shows that all the core functions have not been performed by the panchayats in India. Palanithurai concluded saying that if the marginalised were to be helped, passionate individuals would have to be trained to work with them. What was required was a total transformative process at the village level.

Role of Panchayats in Decentralised Governance in India: P.P. Balan, Consultant, Capacity Building, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India

Balan began by saying that the passing of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts was a landmark in development history. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj was formed in 2004 to advise and handhold the states. Seven round tables were organised in different capital cities, 150 resolutions were passed and a compendium of resources of what the states could do was prepared. To begin with, a Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) was put in place. Around 200 backward districts were taken into consideration and this scheme was introduced; there were few coastal districts included at that time; most were tribal-dominated districts. The BRGF fund was fully untied in nature; the first of its kind in the Central Government. However, looking back, the BGRF ended up being an infrastructural plan and has now been discontinued.

He explained a new scheme called Rashtriya Gram Vikas Yojana (RGVY) has replaced BGRF. It is under this scheme that the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) was being prepared. He said that the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) had given an allocation of Rs 200,000 Crores to the gram panchayats. Panchayats have to prepare the GPDP using resources allocated through this FFC and also consider their own resources. A proper plan has to be made based on local needs, local matching of priorities and available resources. The locally developed plan has to be accepted by the people during the gram sabha. While all panchayats may not be able to prepare the best plan, at least a plan was in place. The guidelines for preparing a GPDP also ensure that there is convergence of funds. Hence, Balan said that there is ample scope for the Fisheries Department to converge the activities from fisheries schemes into a project, using the finance commission grant as well as other resources available with the panchayat.

He said in the previous week, a workshop held at Chennai discussed activities to be undertaken while planning for the coastal panchayats. Rajan of KILA was invited to share his views. They came up with three important aspects that have to be undertaken in the GPDP planning for coastal areas:

- 1) A sub-plan for fisherfolk. This activity was for the state government to decide. The Centre could only suggest that people living in coastal areas need special attention.
- 2) Disaster Management Plan. Coastal people are badly affected by disasters.
- 3) Special Gram Sabhas for fishermen are to be convened to prepare the GPDP. Participation of fishermen in gram panchayats is generally very limited. In Kerala there is the Matsya Sabha or assembly of fishermen. Holding such an assembly before the gram sabha would help in reflecting the demands of the fishermen at the gram sabha.

The GPDP Guideline that was prepared in 2015 was revised earlier this year and could be revised in future too. The participatory planning process of Kerala could be seen reflected in it. He said it was a matter of pride for Kerala that all the things listed in the Guideline are being followed. Thus, he emphasised that based on the 29 subjects that have been devolved, panchayats can do anything. He concluded with a quick summary of statistics related to the PRI:

- Number of PRI in the country: 2,74,258.
- Almost all panchayats have a plan now.
- Traditional gram sabhas are in addition to the formal PRI
- Number of block panchayats: 6613
- Number of district panchayats: 630
- Number of elected PRI are 31 lakh, out of that 14.39 lakhs are women.

Rajan, who chaired the session, said the voices from north, south, east and west and the women's sector had been heard and all ecological zones as far as fisheries was concerned appeared to have been covered in the various presentations. He specifically referred to issues related to water tenure, CRZ, Ockhi and Sand mining and how they had shown that a panchayat could contribute to social security initiatives, education and upliftment. He said the important issues flagged related to capacity for handling power and leadership issues related to PRI elected representatives, the need for a Fishery Component Plan in line with TSP and the need for special assembly for fisherfolk like Kerala's Matsya Sabha. He then opened the floor for discussion, suggesting that all the questions could be asked after which the speakers could respond.

Discussion

Questions

1) Sebastian Mathew from ICSF sought clarification about the 14th Finance commission which had indicated that 10% of the fund allocated would be given based on performance. Having read that the 15th Finance Commission was likely to increase the allocation to panchayats, he wondered if those panchayats doing resource management could be given incentives, not only in relation to infrastructure and service delivery but also in looking after the natural resources in their territorial areas. He also wanted to know if there was any possibility of the fishing community making submissions to state-wise agencies representing all the sectors to the government, as part of their representation to the 15th Finance Commission so that some kind of separate attention can be made in the Commission for fisheries.

2) A participant from Yavatmal, Maharashtra said in the previous year's GPDP, there an increase in the component for women's SGHs through Mission Antyodaya. He wanted to know how much of it should come in the panchayat's plan. He said most delegates here have said that poverty eradication could not take place without local community support. A representative from Puducherry said that at the local panchayat as well as district and state levels, separate seat allocation for the fisher community was necessary as was done for the SC and ST communities as it would improve representation.

4) Milan Das from West Bengal said that the panchayat system in his State was totally polarised. Representatives were elected on party symbols during elections and did not listen to the people, post-elections. As a result, community rights and demands had no voice. He wondered if it was possible to enact a law to prohibit political parties from participating in panchayat elections.

5) A representative from Kerala said the CRZ notification was a roadblock to building houses or community infrastructure for fishing communities as well as self-employment in CRZ areas and hence housing should be permitted in CRZ areas for fishing communities.

6) A representative from Coringa, Andhra Pradesh, said that while conducting a Public Hearing for an industry, even when there was opposition by the gram panchayat and local people regarding a factory that was to come up and the Sarpanch passed a resolution against it, it was overborne by the Collector and Pollution Control Board at the District level which overrode the GP (Gram Panchayat) resolution.

7) Alkesh Yadav of Assam said Assamese fishermen were traditionally into riverine fishing in the River Brahmaputra. The forest department had stopped permitting fishing in the river as most of it falls in the Kaziranga protected area. There is no support to fishing communities that have been fishing in that area for many centuries.

Answers

Balan

- The first question related to the 15th Commission: Discussions were still going on and a report was expected in March. There was possibly time to give representations from the fishing community. He felt that not much that was discussed here had been represented and suggested petitions to State or Central governments to give representations from the fishing community to the Commission. Reservation in Panchayats: This perhaps requires a Constitutional amendment. Since some states provide for backward castes reservation, that channel could be used.
- In Punjab and some other states, the local body is not political. In some states, politics is prevalent only at the block and district level, and in some only at the district level. It depended on the state government.
- In Assam: Issues regarding fishers have to be taken up with the state government. There has to be continuous intervention to pressurise the government.

Palanithurai

- Two observations: Two studies by Aravind Veeramani in *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW) and Raghuram Rajan's *The Third Pillar* – both mentioned that the State failed miserably and accepted its failure; markets also accepted their failure to alleviate poverty. They reduced poverty to some extent and addressed the issues of the marginalised. In this context, both mentioned that the solution was community empowerment and raising questions through decentralisation and democracy.
- Water has no ideology, road has no ideology. It is for the community. It is for development.
- New politics has to be perpetuated through decentralisation - People's politics, rather than party politics has to be followed.

SESSION 2: PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN KERALA

Chair: P.P. Balan, Consultant, Capacity Building, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India

**J. B. Rajan, Associate Professor, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA):
People's Plan Campaign in Kerala: Inclusive Approach**

Rajan's presentation was on initiatives in Kerala with regard to local governance in the context of fisheries. He said that just as the Kerala model for development was well known, Kerala's model of decentralisation was also well known for its people's participatory plan campaign and its inclusive approach.

Just as fisheries, is a very complex sector with many players, the local government or panchayat is also a very complex governance system with multiple players and views. The focus of his presentation was to explore how Kerala has performed in this area.

He said that the 73rd and 74th amendments to Indian Constitution were well known. In the Eleventh Schedule – demarcating the functions to be devolved to the local governments, the fifth item out of 29 subjects is 'fisheries', giving it a constitutional mandate. In addition, Article 243 G is about planning for Local Economic Development and Social Justice that are the twin objectives of Panchayati Raj in our country. He said it was not possible to have social justice without including the marginalised and the fishers being a marginalised community, it was necessary to take care of their issues and concerns.

In tune with 243 G and 73rd and 74th amendments, Kerala has enacted the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994. Almost all provisions are applicable as far as the Kerala Municipality Act 1994 for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are concerned. In the Panchayati Raj Act 1994, Schedule 3, 4, and 5 deal with functions of gram panchayat (GP), block panchayat (BP) and zilla panchayat (ZP), respectively. Kerala is probably the only state that has demarcated the functional domains of local bodies. As far as these schedules are concerned, for a cutting edge local government, that is, GP, mandatory functions, general functions and sectoral functions have been provided. For others, like BP and ZP or district panchayat, general functions and sectoral functions are applicable. One of the sectors included is 'Fisheries' in the sectoral functions. In addition, there are many areas that have implications on fisheries and fisherfolk. From 1996 (9th FYP onwards) to the end of the 13th FYP, Plan Guidelines have been issued by the Government of Kerala where issues related to development of fisheries, fisherfolk are mentioned. Rajan said it was under this mandate that local governments in general and GPs in particular, are working in fisheries.

There are different strategies for decentralisation. Kerala has chosen to introduce decentralisation through a strategy called 'Janakeeyasoothranam' or People's Plan Campaign (PPC) launched on 17th August 1996. This was a process of making people better involved in local planning and was introduced during the 9th FYP, and has continued irrespective of changing political regimes, apart from minor corrections and modifications depending on

demands from local governments and their associations. The design ensured that changes in the political regime in the state had little impact on the system, unlike the central government's planning system which was replaced with the Niti Aayog.

From 2015 onwards, the GPDP was introduced by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) for gram panchayats in the country. Rajan said it had taken almost two decades to think of planning by panchayats, and credited this move largely to Vijayanand, IAS (then Secretary, MoPR) and Sarada Muraleedharan, (then Joint Secretary, MoPR), both from Kerala who had contributed enormously, first to the PPC and then to the MoPR. Rather than functioning as mere agents to implement centre or state-sponsored schemes, Panchayats have moved towards preparing a plan of their own. The MoPR conceptualised the GPDP in a joint initiative with KILA and had a write-shop on GPDP in 2015. It was a week-long programme which was attended by 28 states which returned with state-specific draft Guidelines on GPDP. During the write-shop, there were also detailed discussions on the PPC in Kerala and visits to gram panchayats. The modified guidelines were issued as a GO (Government Order) by each state and this has enabled GPs in the concerned states to prepare the GPDP for better utilisation of FFC (Fourteenth Finance Commission) grants. There are seven core service areas for which the FFC grant can be utilised for which they need to prepare a plan. Kerala continued with the term 'PPC' as that is the catchword. Also, since the plans are being prepared by gram, block, zila panchayats, municipalities and corporations, it is referred to as Local Government Development Plan (LGDP).

Rajan emphasised that it was necessary to understand the steps of the local planning cycle. First was the formation of the Planning Committee and Working Group. The planning committee, chaired by the Panchayat President, coordinated the planning process at the panchayat level. The Secretary is the Member Secretary. One of the local experts is the vice Chairperson and there were a set of members. They looked after the overall planning process. Working Groups from different development sectors focus on agriculture, education, health etc.; their task was to prepare a situation analysis report or a status report on sectors they dealt with which was presented to the Gram Sabha (village assembly). This report helps to ensure objectivity in the planning process, aids prioritisation after identifying critical gaps in the development sector and lists out and prioritises projects for the ensuing year.

Next is the preparation of two reports by consolidating all the status reports: the Draft Development Report and the Plan Document; after incorporating suggestions from the Gram Sabha. The first contains the vision, mission, developmental strategies and priorities of the panchayat detailing all the sectors of the panchayat. The Plan Document is an abstract on prioritised projects with outlay, source of funds, beneficiaries of such kinds of projects etc. The next step is organisation of the Vikasana (Development) Seminar where all stakeholders such as elected representatives, officials of concerned institutions, Gram Sabha representatives, CBO and NGO representatives, political leaders discuss the development report or plan document. After incorporating suggestions from the development seminar, these two documents are finalised, published and widely circulated. The subsequent steps include the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR), administrative sanction, approval

by the District Planning Committee (DPC), approval of Project, Plan, Budget Integration and Plan Implementation.

Planning Committee and Working Groups provide space for local people to be part of the process. There are three players – elected representatives (they have the political will), officials (to look into the technicalities of the project) and citizens (for whom the projects are formulated). Due representation is given to all these players in the planning committee and working group. The gram sabha includes all the voters in the ward. In Kerala, it is a kind of ward sabha comprising the entire constituency of the gram sabha. The Act provides that once the gram sabha finalises the beneficiary list, it is final – the panchayat cannot dilute it. Rajan said, in the development seminar all stakeholders are involved based on which the development report and plan document are finalised. These are the platforms where the civil society is getting sufficient space to enter the planning process.

He said that the People's Plan in Kerala had an inclusive approach towards development and participation. For example, if the panchayat was getting funds for scheduled castes or scheduled tribes, it would have to prepare a Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) and a Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), respectively. In Kerala, more than 50% of the state funds are devolved to the local government to be spent only through them. Other provisions include the Women Component Plan (WCP) where a minimum 10% of plan outlay is to be utilised for women and if the WCP is not prepared, the panchayat's plan will not be approved by the DPC. There is also a provision for a 5% outlay and the preparation of a sub-plan for special categories such as children, differently-abled and, transgenders. Similarly, a sub-plan for palliative care is mandatory where aged people and those needing palliative care are present. Ashraya is a plan for destitutes and Ashraya families are identified based on 11 risk factors. If there are destitutes in the Panchayat, they need to prepare a separate sub-plan to address their problems.

These, said Rajan, were general provisions in the guidelines. If seen through the lens of fisherfolk, there was ample scope. In coastal panchayats, requirements for fisherwomen, fish vending women and others can be addressed through WCP. Coastal panchayats can look into children, differently-abled, aged fishers, destitutes etc. through appropriate sub-plans

With respect to inclusive approach in participation, he said there were special provisions in the guidelines issued by the state. Special gram sabha and optional assemblies could be convened for women, children, differently-abled and the aged. In the Panchayats where there are tribes, the traditional assembly (Oorukootom) was convened just prior to the gram sabha, and suggestions from the oorukootom had to be formally placed before it. Similarly, Matsya Sabha for fisherfolk in identified fishing villages had to be convened just before the gram sabha meeting. The Matsya Sabha was an exclusive platform offered for fishers especially in coastal panchayats. The convening of oorukootams and Matsya Sabha were mandatory because if they were not convened, the plan of the concerned panchayat could not be approved by the DPC.

Rajan said from the fisheries or fisherfolk angle, there are special provisions. In the guideline, it is clearly mentioned that the focus of project formulation should be the sustainable conservation of fishery wealth, sustained livelihood of traditional fisherfolk and their socio-economic development. This, he said, summarised almost all the items listed in the SSF Guidelines. He also said that in the guideline, it was also mentioned that wherever a fisheries official was present as the implementing officer in a fishing village, a separate working group on fisheries was to be constituted by the panchayat. If there were a minimum of twenty-five registered fishworkers in the ward, a Matsya Sabha has to be convened. Kerala had witnessed unparalleled floods in 2018 August. After that, the government issued a guideline requesting the local government to constitute a Working Group on Biodiversity Management, Climate Change, Environment Conservation and Disaster Management. Since coastal biodiversity, climate change and disaster management are important for fisheries, the preparation of a status report by the working group would be beneficial to fisheries and fishworkers as well.

Rajan also talked about the Social Net. He said wherever individual beneficiaries existed in a scheme, subsidies were available as per the guideline and included for fishing activities and welfare aspects in the marine and inland sectors and for fishworkers cooperatives. He also mentioned that KILA in association with Department of Environment and Climate Change, (DoECC), Kerala, the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB), the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) was in the process of enabling the panchayats to prepare the Local Action Plan for Climate Change (LAPCC). Eleven GPs from Kerala had prepared and presented LAPCC. Another project was Project Clinic which was a joint initiative of KILA and the Department of Fisheries for evolving shelf of projects for Local Government Initiatives (LGIs) and ensuring convergence between Department of Fisheries (DoF) and LGIs (Local Government Institutes).

Rajan concluded his presentation stating that these were the systems and procedures that offered sufficient space and scope for small-scale fisheries, traditional fishworkers and almost all items that were listed in the SSF Guideline and Code of Conduct For Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) of the FAO.

M.S. Saju, Joint Director of Fisheries, Ernakulam Zone, Government of Kerala

Saju presented a case study of success stories in local body plan implementation in four southern districts of Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha and Ernakulam. He said the objectives of the 13th five year plan stressed the need to give priority to increasing production in Agriculture and allied sectors and also providing more employment and income. Also, value addition and marketing of local-level products were to be ensured through strengthening microenterprises and promoting small and medium enterprises.

Saju said the guidelines for the annual plan preparation of the local bodies clearly stated that the main objective of the fisheries sector development is to ensure sustainable conservation of the fisheries resources and livelihood and sustenance of the traditional fishermen, i.e., small-

scale fishers. The guidelines also recommend that local bodies concerned in the sector formulate projects for the social and financial development and rehabilitation of traditional fishermen. In this study, two local bodies from each of the four southern districts were selected to review the Panchayat budget and programmes for marine and inland fisheries and fishing communities in the year 2018-19 and to identify the opportunities and gaps in local governance.

The local bodies selected were Chirayinkeezhu and Karumkulam Panchayats in Thiruvananthapuram district, Kollam Municipal Corporation and Perinad Panchayat from Kollam District, Mararikulam North Panchayat and Panavally Panchayat from Alappuzha district and Elamkunnappuzha Panchayat and Chellanam Panchayat from Ernakulam district. Saju first gave an overview of the area and the population of each of the selected panchayats and said that Elamkunnappuzha in Vypeen island has less area but a very high population and thus very high population density and that the highest population (3.48 lakhs) comes under the Kollam corporation but it is a big area (73.03 km²).

The participation of the fishing community in the decision-making process was highest in the Chellanam Panchayat which has 11 elected members from the fishing community (5 male, 6 female). The details of the implementation of the fisheries projects, in the Chirayinkeezhu gram panchayat revealed there were three welfare projects (motorcycle and ice box to fish vendors, ice box to fish vendors, laptop to children of fishermen), and there was 100% physical achievement in all cases. In the Karumkulam gram panchayat, there were two welfare projects (laptop to children of fishermen and furniture to children of fishermen) and there was 100% physical achievement with 91.2% and 63% financial achievement, respectively. In Perinad gram panchayat, there were three projects under fishermen welfare and three under inland capture. In the case of fishing craft and net approved by the DPC, the fishermen did not agree with the subsidy norms (which could not be changed as they were part of the scheme) and so the projects could not be implemented. 50% of the project cost was to be contributed by the beneficiary. In the Kollam municipal corporation, there were two projects under welfare and two under marine fisheries. In the case of 'Life jacket with marine mercantile department certificate', the physical target was 50 beneficiaries but only 14 came forward. In Mararikulam North Gram Panchayat, of the two projects, ice box to fish vendors witnessed only 25% physical target achievement as fishermen were not prepared to remit beneficiary contribution. Panavally Gram Panchayat also had the same issue with ice boxes. In Elamkunnappuzha Gram Panchayat, there were three projects in the fishermen welfare sector and two in marine capture fisheries. In the case of ice box to fish vendors, only 60% physical achievement was possible because enough applicants were not available. These apart, all other projects were fully implemented. In the Chellanam gram panchayat, there were four projects under fishermen welfare, two under marine capture and two under inland capture. All the projects were implemented with 100% physical achievement. Saju said half the ward members being from the fishing community could have been a contributory factor for the large number of projects and their successful implementation.

Projects undertaken by various local bodies include welfare projects as well as those under marine and inland fisheries. The Chellanam Panchayat has gone through the process of

identification of projects, formulation and implementation as indicated by the utilisation of almost all the funds earmarked for fisheries expenditure while examining the performance of local bodies.

Saju concluded that the projects implemented by the local bodies were in accordance with the objectives. The social and financial development, rehabilitation and livelihood and sustenance of traditional fishermen were given priority while formulating the projects. Distribution of laptops and furniture including study tables and chairs to children of fishermen augmented social and educational breakthrough to eliminate backwardness. Distribution of fibre reinforced catamaran, wooden canoe, distribution of gillnet for traditional crafts, replacement of new nets for old nets for less than 10 m OAL craft etc. are projects that directly support small-scale fishing communities and help poverty eradication. However, projects like distribution of ice boxes were not found to be attractive because of the subsidy norms. He said there was a need for capacity building programmes for responsible and sustainable use of aquatic biodiversity and natural resources and traditional fishermen had to be trained properly to monitor and conserve the environment and to be treated as the ecosystem community. He said the involvement of representatives of the fishing community in the decision-making process at the panchayat level yielded significant achievements in both the number and coverage of projects. The formation of Fishery management councils at fishing village levels was also an action in this direction to evolve village-level fishery management plans.

Abdul Jabbar, President, Valiyaparamba GP, Neeleswaram Block, Kasaragod District, Kerala

Jabbar said that Valiyaparamba was the longest panchayat in Kerala with a length of 24 km and a width of only 600 m on an average. There was a width of 50 m between the river and sea. Most people there depended on fisheries for their livelihood. They were most vulnerable – socially, economically, politically and culturally. Socially they were ostracised, politically they were not getting their due and economically, they were subject to much exploitation. Conditions were so bad that even fishermen who became wealthy and were from the same community were not prepared to have any matrimonial alliance within it. Jabbar said there should be reservation for fishermen.

He said efforts had to be made for supplementary income from sources other than fishing as it was not only dangerous but also economically unstable. In his village, due consideration was being given for the development of the vulnerable section of society. In every plan, they were implementing various schemes such as distribution of wooden canoes, planning for their children's education and distributing study furniture. They had started mussel culture with the help of CMFRI (Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute), which had provided livelihood to many people in the area. However, mussel culture was affected by disease apart from being possible only in the non-monsoon period. Since the monsoon period was six months long, some methodology should be evolved for mussel culture to survive the monsoon as well.

Jabbar said that CRZ norms were hurdles in the way the development of fisherfolk, because although the gram panchayat had allotted funds, the CRZ norms did not permit them to build houses. Plans to supplement their income by involving them in the tourism sector were also in vain because of these norms. He requested the Kerala government to implement the CRZ as soon as possible by following due procedure and appointing a panel for the implementation of the CRZ management plan. Overall he suggested that the upliftment of the fisherfolk should be given more importance than any other section of the people to bring them to the mainstream of the country.

Vinod Malayilethu, Team Leader, Marine Conservation Programme, WWF - India

In India, for eco-labelling, the WWF chose the short-neck clam fishery, the livelihood of a large population of the Thekkumbhagam panchayat in Ashtamudi, Kerala, said Vinod Malayilethu. There are about 1000 fishermen who directly depend on the clam for their livelihood and about 3000 families were supported by this particular resource.

Eco-labelling was used as a tool to make fisheries sustainable. WWF chose this resource because fishermen had a relationship with it. When the resource plummeted in the 1980s, the fishermen had reached out to the district administration and the CMFRI asking for measures to help them sustain or increase it. The first step was actually taken by fishermen. They knew that clams spawned in December and were ready for harvest by February. They enforced a self-imposed ban which has continued till this day from December through February. This attracted WWF which thought it could discuss the three-tier approach with them for the effective conservation of the resource.

Malayilethu said that eco-labelling has three principles: sustainability of the resource, ecosystem impact and compliance with national and international laws and regulations. These three basic principles were applicable to any resource that is to be conserved. First, the resource has to be available to be exploited; second, it has to be extracted from the environment in a way that is sustainable and third, there needs to be compliance with international and national laws and regulations. A major gap WWF found in fishery was that even though the fishermen had a self-imposed ban in place, it had no legal backing.

The WWF told the District Collector that they wanted to build a three-tier approach and he readily agreed. A 20 member council was established with the District Collector as the chairman, the Deputy Director of Fisheries as the convener and members comprising mainly clam fishermen and representatives from CMFRI, Marine Products Export Development Agency (MPEDA), exporters etc. The formation of the council meant that if someone violated the ban, the District Collector who was also the district magistrate could take action against the violator. Next, the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were written. In the MoU, the size of the mesh to be used to exploit the resource, the ban period and areas identified as spawning grounds designated as closed areas were agreed upon by fishermen. The council meets every quarter. The concerns of the fishermen are expressed in the council and the District Collector and the officials from the Department of Fisheries take action.

Malayilethu said this structure had been replicated in the current amendment of the Kerala Marine Fisheries Regulation Act where there is a three-tier council system of approach. The council system is being tried for various resources as a way to conserve that particular resource. This is also mentioned in the National Policy on Marine Fisheries (NPMF) 2017 where the ecosystem-based approach to management has been advocated.

He said while working with small-scale fishers, the basic stakeholders are the fishermen and they have to be heard in order to make rules and regulations. WWF had also found that when something was imposed, there was a setback. On the other hand, if the stakeholder's views were heard, found reasonable and decisions are taken accordingly, a buy-in could be achieved. Malayilethu concluded by saying that while ecosystem-based management works in small-scale fishery systems, in case of large-scale fisheries, there are economic, political, social and other issues. He said WWF was now in the process of identifying other fisheries such as the Indian oil sardine fishery which is extracted using gill nets and was also working with the Lakshadweep pole and line fishing where it was trying to replicate the council system of management.

Tulasi Bai, Advocate, State President, Gram Panchayat Association of Kerala

The development indicators in Kerala, which were comparable to developed countries, were possible only because of decentralisation and participatory local democracy, said Tulasi Bai. She said it aimed at the realisation of the constitutional goal of establishing genuine institutional governance at the local level. The people's plan campaign held in 1996 was an experiment in decentralisation of powers to local governments which focused on local planning implemented with the help of and under the supervision of the Panchayat Directorate and the Planning Board. She said that the state achieved a historical status in the field of local administration and it gave a new face to decentralisation. The state continued in the path of planning with the help of the people as the power vests with the people. They were trying to achieve the goal of democracy in Kerala through decentralising and planning.

She said that they now had a local planning samiti or board or authority in every panchayat which would manage the preparation and implementation of projects. In this manner, the different problems in a village could be understood and it was possible to prepare and implement plans according to the needs of the people and the village. It was only in Kerala that this way of thinking existed.

She also referred to another leap forward. Earlier, they would spend nine months in preparing for the project and had only 3 months in implementing it. Now, it took only three months for project preparation and within nine months, they were able to complete the project implementation. Preparation for 2020 was going to start so that the implementation phase could begin in April itself. She said that in the previous year, of 941 panchayats, more than 351 achieved the goal of 100% expenditure in Kerala. She praised the role of Kudumbashree and MGNREGA in achieving goals and for the development processes of the local bodies.

She explained that she was the President of the state Gram Panchayat Presidents Association, which had been formed based on a GO in 1966. 941 panchayats were affiliated to the

association. The governing body of each panchayat nominated the members to the gram panchayat association. The Gram Panchayat Association thus has 941 members. The Secretary and President were considered very powerful and were included as members in the different missions and departments under the GP. She said that the GP association served as via media between the government and different GPs and problems from the GP to the government were presented through the GP association.

The GP association was responsible for strengthening decentralisation, training selected and elected members and conducting research with the help of KILA. Information about the new policies was given to the panchayats. The GP association helped in troubleshooting problems that arose during the preparation and implementation of projects. The Government also gave due importance to the association by inviting its office bearers for discussions regarding new policies or circulars and it ensured that decentralisation was not diluted. She said that the GP Association participated and provided inputs while preparing guidelines (margarekha) for preparation of projects. Like the GP Association, there were also the Block-level and District-level and corporation level associations.

Tulasi said that the fisheries department, with the help of guidelines, could do a lot of fisheries projects in every panchayat. For example, the local bodies had their own ponds and waterbodies which could be leased to locals for fish culture and the fresh fish could be sold in the local Chanda (market). She said in Kerala, they were now encouraging aquaponics to culture fish and cultivate vegetables. In Kalady there were 12 ponds rented to local people and they were cultivating fish and vegetables there and selling them in the market owned by the local panchayat. This fell under income generation as well as the development sector. She pointed out that local bodies other than coastal panchayats could also do more work with the fisheries department. There was a coordinator and promoter in every panchayat for consultation and advice with whose help they were carrying out fisheries projects. The GP Association was also giving recommendations to take up these projects in the local bodies, she concluded.

Discussion

Questions

- Sebastian Mathew asked Saju whether schemes for motorbikes, laptops, were proposed by the fishing community or decided by the government and did the FD only choose the beneficiaries? He wanted to know if there was a bottom-up process in identifying specific schemes or activity for providing subsidy.
- A participant asked Saju why many projects were welfare schemes instead of development schemes. Was it because they were easier to implement? The participant wanted to know from Malayilethu whether there was any price or conservation advantage by implementing eco-labelling through Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).

- Milan Das from West Bengal commented that in Sundarbans, the Forest Department and the WWF were working together to keep the fishers out though they appeared to be doing good work elsewhere.

Answers

- Saju said that they were given schemes like this. They had government-approved guidelines from which they could not deviate. The schemes would be discussed in the gram sabha and based on this, the projects were implemented. Laptops were given to the children of fishermen. There was no beneficiary contribution. That particular project was implemented for graduate and postgraduate students. Saju said that there was a demand which was why they could implement the project. The demand came from the Matsya Sabha which could choose what the project it wanted. Production sector projects were being implemented by the department of fisheries. They were promoting state-sponsored programmes with multiple components. Production sector projects were comparatively less in the panchayat projects.
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 - Rajan said the demand was through a bottom-up process. There was a working group on fisheries in all identified fishing villages which prepared a status report on the sector that was presented to the Matsya Sabha which was convened just before the gram sabha. Normally the demands were made there and prioritised in the gram sabha. Depending on the funds available, decisions were taken on projects available for the current year and guidelines are subsequently followed. He said there were two sets of guidelines – one on how to convene the working group and the Matsya Sabha and the other provided a list of projects for which subsidy requirements were given. For fishery, too, there were projects which including welfare schemes.
- A participant wanted to know from Rajan why even after massive decentralisation, most of the time the panchayats were being used by the state and national governments as a channel to implement welfare schemes made at the higher level. He wanted to know how much autonomy these local institutions enjoyed in creating and coming up with their own new projects rather than implementing plans made at higher levels.

Rajan said at the national level, other than the state of Kerala, before 2015 there were no plans at all as far as the local governments/ gram panchayats were concerned. But from 2015, with GPDP advocated by MoPR, there was a write-shop and after that a draft guideline was prepared and discussed at the state-level and issued as a GO. Now almost all states were preparing GPDPs based on the guideline. He said that the situation has changed now and they were able to plan and were also getting sufficient funds as per the recommendation of the FFT and now the 15th Finance Commission was expected to provide more funds. He also said in Kerala, decentralisation was launched through People's Plan Campaign and hence the Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) have the authority to plan through this process and in the guideline, only general tips are given.

- Sebastian Mathew said that under 14th Finance Commission, the performance related grant was based on how effectively a panchayat was implementing a central scheme. Looking at it from the perspective that Palanithurai had discussed before lunch, regarding democracy and decentralisation versus centralisation, he wanted to know whether a balance was to be maintained between the bottom-up and top-down process. He felt there was a very strong danger of the authority of the community not really being respected and protected and the community Local Self-Government (LSG) being used as a conduit for handouts from top to bottom, taking away the spirit of decentralisation and devolution from the LSG.

Rajan responded that the FFC's position was reinforcing the mandate of the Local government, one of them being civic functions. There were seven core basic service areas that the government needed to concentrate on, through which they were reinforcing civic functions that were mandated upon the Local Government (LG). He said whenever they said functions were devolved, funds should also be devolved. They were directly giving the funds to the LG. In the Kerala context almost Rs 4.5 lakh rupees per annum was received by the GP. It was not really top-down. With regard to the fund, the basic grant was 90% of the allocation and 10% was kept as performance grant to ensure that the 90% allocation was used in a better way. For that, they were only insisting on audit reports, compliance etc., more to see if physical achievement of 90% of the grants given were being achieved.

- Palanithurai added there was criticism against the 14th Finance Commission regarding the awards. The local body system consisted of three tiers – GP, Block and District Panchayats. The FFC recommended the amounts that were to be spent on seven items. It was service, not governance. The LG was not a mere service authority to deliver services which probably could be done more effectively by a private agency. Since they had insisted, huge money had come to GPs; not to the block and district panchayats. Palanithurai said that there was a perception gap between those who worked on decentralisation and public finance economists. The public finance economists always argued that it was a delivery mechanism. Others argued that governance should be given more importance than service, and only then could the local body and community be empowered. He said somebody had written a lot about it and the papers had been submitted to the 15th Finance Commission, which in his opinion, they would take into account.

SESSION 3: PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FISHING COMMUNITIES

Chair: John Kurien, Managing Trustee, ICSF Trust

Comparing Socio-economic Indicators of SC/ST and Fishing Communities in Kerala: P. Sivanandan, Hon. Director, Centre for Subaltern Studies, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thiruvananthapuram

Sivanandan has taken up a new assignment where he is going to study the socio-economic indicators of the three marginalised layers of society, namely the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and the fishing community in Kerala.

He said during the workshop so far, there had been a lot of talk about the fishing community. The other two communities were equally marginalised but they had the advantage having got into the Constitutional list right from the beginning when it was written because they were totally out of the mainstream society for years together and needed special protection for their development. It was more than 70 years since they had been given all the special privileges through constitutional provisions as well as resource allocation through the Special Component Plan(SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan(TSP) for their development. Taking stock of the last seventy years, more than a lifetime that they have been enjoying various privileges, they were still found at the bottom. It was expected initially that the reservation would only be for ten years; it is being renewed every decade and it is not clear when it will end and they will catch up with mainstream society.

Referring to the clamour of fishermen to be included in the list, he said it was important to see the experience of those already in it. It was one thing to be in the list and another thing to be outside but receiving all the benefits. It was a matter of implementation. Sivanandan said if the fishermen community also wanted to be in the list, it did not mean anything unless they were also strengthened materially, socially and otherwise for their due share in the whole process of development.

Looking at the various indicators such as education, landholding or employment, it was seen that the SCs and STs were struggling in all walks of life. Kerala was slightly different as there was a social reform movement where these people were able to get something out of the whole process of development; for example, in terms of literacy, they were almost 90%. Looking beyond that, at higher education, skill development etc., they were found lagging far behind. A recent study showed that the dropout rate was very high among the SC and STs. For both, land was the basic requirement where they could cultivate and live. However, the laws had not been implemented so that they could be given land. They did not have employment, sufficient wages or any livelihood at all. This, he said, was the situation of these two groups who were protected through constitutional provision.

The outcry from fishermen was that they should be given all facilities. Referring to the CRZ issue faced by fishermen, he said it was not possible to do away with CRZ as it would cause other problems and provisions could be mis-utilised. He agreed that people who were living in coastal areas had to be sustained there; they could not go elsewhere and just come back overnight for fishing and therefore some solution had to be found. He felt it was not a question of whether they (the fishing communities) should be inside (a list) or not, but that their professions should be protected and their livelihood maintained. A new law was needed to protect all their rights and requirements. He said the fishermen's contribution in the recent floods was marvellous; they were at the service of the people, but they had been underestimated. They were not taken into confidence but used only during calamities and then forgotten.

He said education was necessary, but higher education was the requirement and not mere literacy. They have to use their education for their livelihood. While all support was being given to fishermen's children, it was necessary to examine the level they had reached and if they had utilised the support provided to them to get the right kind of benefits and improve their livelihood conditions.

Sivanandan concluded that as time passes, everybody progresses, but the lag remains. To fill the gaps, new regulations are needed. Existing regulations need to be examined to see whether they are people-friendly and beneficial. He said he was going to study these three groups to see how to mainstream them as early as possible. The will of the people and government will decide how long it will take. The people and the governments needed to be proactive.

Kurien said Sivanandan had raised an important question whether just putting people on a list, providing them with reservation, giving enhanced allocation, alone, was going to solve the problems they faced. He said Sivanandan in the end alluded to one thing which everyone seemed to forget – unless there was genuine collective action from below and a demand from the community itself, the acceptance of all these provisions as passive recipients was not going to change people's lives. That was a very key point he made. Kurien referred to the history of fisherfolk of Kerala in the 1980s, and said that they organised themselves and made the state change its priorities. Until then they were left out. It was only when they took collective action that they were recognised and the state itself altered its priorities and provided them with welfare and other measures. The gap Sivanandan was talking about, in the case of fisherfolk while it still existed, had probably reduced post-1990s. If that collective action had subsided, then the gap would also have increased.

Amala Shaji, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Kerala

Amala Shaji is an office bearer of SEWA, a central trade union that consists of women in the informal sector. In Kerala they work with six trades – domestic workers, fishworkers, street vendors, tailors, reed workers and home-based workers. In 2018, they had 25,000 members in eight districts. She works in the Karumkulam gram panchayat, a coastal panchayat with high population density. She criticised the presentations at the workshop and the papers of the government stating that there were special programmes for the benefit of fishworkers. While schemes existed, they were not properly implemented. In the presentation here she had heard that there were working groups for the entire development sector and a development seminar took place every year but in her experience she has never been invited to any of these plan formulation activities. She criticised Matsyafed saying that the deserving did not get benefits, but were instead, given to those who sat in their houses and were its members rather than being transferred to fish vendors who actually sold fish. She gave five to six examples where the schemes were not properly implemented. She said male domination was rife women were neglected. For example, when markets were designed, they never consulted the fisherfolk, especially women, making it difficult for them to work there as failed to provide toilet facilities in the market. She asked how women were expected to work for eight to ten hours a day without going to the toilet. The women agitated and so now the authorities were

building another market and were going to spend INR One Crore again and were still not consulting women.

With respect to transport, she said the government had made several schemes to purchase vehicles to transport women fish vendors; however, the government drivers operated the vehicles at their own convenience instead of the early hours of the morning when women vendors went to buy fish and thereafter transported it to the selling points. She compared the Kerala scheme with that of the Tamil Nadu transport corporation. In Tamil Nadu, she said, a section of public transport was reserved for carrying fish. Her organisation had made several representations to the Kerala government for similar facilities, but it failed to pay heed to their demands. She also demanded that women, especially women fishworkers should be represented in working groups in the development seminar in all the planning processes.

Kurien said Amala's view was from the bottom-up and brought to focus once again the issue of whose needs were being catered. Were the needs assessed on stakeholders suggestions or were they just somebody's assumption. He agreed that there did not appear to be an adequate consultative process in assessing people's needs. People may express their wants, but it may be different from their needs. Referring to her point about home-based workers, he said that recently they had had a demonstration where women brought the products made at home by them and it amounted to an incredible range – indicating the amount of labour involved and the extend of the burden borne by women. He wanted to know if there was any way to judiciously understand what the needs were, especially at the local level. There was an assumption that since the implementation was taking place at the local level, everything was fine, but that did not seem to be the case. Even at the local level it seemed that there should be greater scrutiny regarding the needs of the stakeholders, identification of the real beneficiaries and their demands.

Empowering Women in Fishing Communities, Anishkumar M.S., Programme Manager, State Mission Kerala, Kudumbashree

Anishkumar presented the activities of Kudumbashree in coastal areas especially related to livelihoods. He began with a detailed account of Kudumbashree and its functioning and disclosed that Kudumbashree was started in 1998. It was the State Poverty Eradication Mission of the Government of Kerala and functioned under the Department of Local Self-Government. In 2002, Kudumbashree started its neighbourhood groups across all the wards, panchayats and municipalities in Kerala. In 2011, it became the nodal agency for the National Rural Livelihood Mission and also works with the State Rural Livelihood Mission. In 2013, it became the National Urban Livelihood Mission as well, implementing the urban livelihood programmes in Kerala. In 2015, Kudumbashree started supporting other countries such as Azerbaijan, Uganda, South Africa, Ethiopia etc. Kudumbashree's resource persons go to other countries and support them to start self-help groups.

Anishkumar explained that Kudumbashree implements its poverty eradication programmes through its community-based organisational set-up. Kudumbashree actually has two

structures. The administrative structure is a government-supported office. There is a state mission office at Thiruvananthapuram and district mission offices in all the districts in the state. As the Community-Based Organisation (CBO), it has a three-tiered structure. At the bottom level, it has neighbourhood groups (NHG, similar to SHG) comprising 10-20 women; one woman from a family can be a member. There are 2.9 lakh (one lakh = 100,000) neighbourhood groups in Kerala, translating to about 43 lakh families, which means that almost 60% of Kerala is covered under the Kudumbashree mission. Because of this, every government organisation and agency requires Kudumbashree's support. Next, at the ward level the Area Development Society (ADS) exists and is a federated structure of the NHG; and at the panchayat or local self-government level, the Community Development Society (CDS) is present, which is a registered society with community leadership. CDS supports the LSG in poverty eradication programmes.

Anishkumar described how it works: At the NHG level, the poor make a demand or micro-plan. This is consolidated at the ward level and submitted to the CDS and then to the panchayat for inclusion into their annual action plan or annual projects. CDS representatives participate in the working groups of the panchayats and women also participate in the gram sabhas. He also described the many advantages provided by Kudumbashree such as the universal coverage, huge social capital and efficient leadership at different levels in helping to identify real beneficiaries for panchayats to facilitate their project implementation.

In coastal panchayats, there are 12,410 NHG covering 1,84,388 families, comprising half the coastal families. Around 10,681 NHGs have been linked and have taken INR 604.81 Crore (INR 70 = 1 USD) through the SHG bank linkage programme. Kudumbashree has started 1183 individual and 1116 group microenterprises with 6,615 members.

He also explained the functioning of Kudumbashree in Coastal Panchayats. A woman from a coastal family was placed as a coastal community volunteer with an honorarium of INR 6,000. These women support the CDS to strengthen their ADS and NHG, supporting the CDS for 100% inclusion. There are still people in coastal areas outside the Kudumbashree system. The coastal community volunteers are going to other departments and agencies, finding out about the available schemes and converging them with Kudumbashree women.

For local economic development, women from the NHG can form special activity/ enterprise groups. Microenterprise consultants in the panchayat support each enterprise group to become sustainable. They also ensure convergence and networking with government, local self-government and the private sector to avail opportunities wherever available. There are also enterprises for problem solving. Anishkumar cited the example of the stray dog issue in Kerala. To address this, an animal birth control unit was started through which women formed groups, caught the stray dogs and released them after neutering them. They were paid INR 2,000 from the panchayat as handling charges.

Kudumbashree's concept of microenterprise varies from INR 5,000 to INR 10 lakh with a turn-over between INR 5 lakh and INR 10 lakh. These are owned, managed and operated by members themselves and only handholding support is given. Anishkumar listed a variety of

subsidy schemes for starting new enterprises. The support provided is end to end and includes capacity building, skill development, financial support, audit and accounting support and marketing support. There are also crisis management funds and advisories available. He concluded the presentation showing photographs of various units supported and enabled by Kudumbashree.

Kurien said it was an impressive array of activities. In Kerala there was the advantage of these kinds of initiatives that have been doing well. However, two communities that they have not been able to work well with are the tribals and coastal communities. He requested Kudumbashree to provide inputs regarding the factors that keeps fishing communities or coastal Kudumbashree units a little behind in comparison with their mainstream agrarian service-oriented groups and suggested that they should also look at what is happening in tribal areas.

Traditional Village Panchayats in Coastal Tamil Nadu: V. Vivekanandan, Trustee, ICSF Trust

Vivekanandan began by stating that it was important to recognise and understand that in many parts of coastal Indian, there is genuine self-governance of the community as exemplified by the fishing community whose institutions are very old. Capture fisheries is probably the only large profession of millions of people across the world whose occupation really traces back to the hunter-gatherer stage of evolution which is still thriving in today's world. Despite innumerable crises, it is an area in which there has been a huge expansion in employment in the last three or four decades. With one of the longest continuity in terms of institutions and culture, there were some fishing communities in India tracing their origin to prehistory. Referring to *Sangam* Literature, the earliest written history in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, he said it referred to fishermen (*neithal*) and the coast that was also one of the five ecoscapes for the Tamil Nadu – Kerala area with a shared culture, including fisheries. These are communities which are at least 2000 years old. The important hallmark of this community has been the strong system of self-governance which has existed all over the coast and which has been present in varying degrees along the entire mainland.

He then explained how the caste panchayat system works in Tamil Nadu amongst the fishing communities. Tamil Nadu has four different marine ecosystems: the Coromandel Coast with the Bay of Bengal, the Palk Bay, the Gulf of Mannar and 60 km of the Arabian Sea along the west coast. Except for Palk Bay and the northern Gulf of Mannar, the rest has severe surf conditions, heavy sea and is a cyclone prone area. It is also thickly populated. There are three big communities – the pattinavars on the Coromandel Coast, the Paravas in the south and the Mukkuvas on the west coast - all three communities of great antiquity with very strong institutions. The southern communities converted to Christianity in the 16th Century but their self-governance continues in the form of Parish councils.

Vivekanandan said he had the opportunity to interact closely with the fishing community during the tsunami rehabilitation in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu. Every village has its own panchayat. It was originally a system of chiefs, today it is a democratic system with elections

which are spontaneous and quick and the recall is also almost instantaneous. This was visible during the tsunami rehabilitation when fishing community members found that if there was discontentment about the distribution of some benefit in a village, a meeting would be held the same night in the village temple, the existing committee would be dismissed on the spot if it was unable to provide a proper explanation and would be replaced with a fresh committee. In one case, fishing community members witnessed three changes in leadership. The first leaders were from the pre-tsunami period and were more in tune with the internal governance of the village – taking care of the temple, taking decisions on fishing holidays etc.; they were not concerned about the government or NGOs etc. and could not cope with the influx of those who arrived for rehabilitation activities. They were dismissed and slightly more educated people who were a little more articulate were brought in. They made money and were then dismissed and replaced by a new group. This was direct democracy at work. Earlier, for every eight villages or sometimes 16 villages, there was a head village (*talai gramam* in Tamil). There was an overall federation of 64 villages. Disputes and various issues were taken up and resolved internally. He also explained that the homeland of the pattinavar community extends from the Krishna river mouth in Andhra Pradesh to Point Calimere in Tamil Nadu, extending to a coastal length of about 700 km; and was thus a community that had laid claim to some kind of ownership of the longest coastline, for centuries. In Andhra Pradesh, they are known as Pattapu. This structure is still intact as an overall governance system taking care of the village, the landing, law and order, internal conflicts, conflict resolution, social issues, temple management and to a relative extent, fisheries management, related more to the resolution of spatial conflicts. He also mentioned panchayats in Tamil Nadu with auctioneers having a compulsory quota for widows from the community so that their livelihoods were taken care of. They take various kinds of measures and implement it through a very powerful sanctioning system. An ordinary fisherman yesterday could be a panchayat member today. During his office period, he is expected to maintain very high standards of integrity and is supposed to behave in a very impartial manner. He is elevated to an important position and the team works together; if they fail, they are thrown out overnight. This is the kind of culture in which the whole system works, explained Vivekanandan.

Over time, he said, with greater democratisation, the chieftain system has been replaced by elected representatives. Women are not formal participants in this governance system and the formal power is vested with the elected male members of the panchayat. A major problem has been triggered by development schemes, especially mechanisation, which has considerably divided the community internally. Villages with trawl domination are called trawl villages while others are small-scale fishing villages. Between them, there is a considerable amount of conflict over resources, resulting in constant problems and the unity of the 64 villages has been broken to the extent that in Nagapattinam in the last two years, there are two federations each with their own head village. Vivekanandan emphasised that it was important to look at the development processes that have been unleashed that have created extensive differences in terms of technology and the development process.

Regarding the rest of Tamil Nadu, the Christian community is also well-organised, but through parish councils where the parish priest is the president. Vivekanandan explained that

even today in Kanyakumari, if a particular net or way of fishing became a problem, the parish priest took it up and it could ultimately go up to the district level which was the Diocese level. He said such structures were still very active across the coast, to varying degrees. Hence, by completely ignoring traditional self-governance systems and their panchayats and placing a so-called modern panchayat system on top of them was creating a dissonance on the coast. This was part of the reason for low participation by fishing communities in activities such as Kudumbashree. It was not a good idea to ignore the strong internal cohesion of the community with its own internal institutional structure. He said the reason why fishermen panchayats could not be official partners in the development process had not been properly probed, though administrators knew exactly where to go if they wanted a problem resolved. He criticised the fact that when it came to giving formal powers, other artificially created institutions were used instead of genuine community ones, resulting in a dualism difficult to resolve. While gram panchayats could feel comfortable discussing or implementing some activities, in other cases they were not effective because fishermen had typically closed ranks. While fishermen would not allow women to sit in their traditional panchayats, in wards reserved for women, they would select the woman who would represent them. He reiterated that there was a tendency to ignore ground reality and talk idealistically and felt that these organisations were not immutable: just a few decades ago, they converted to the elected system. In Christian-dominated areas such as Kanyakumari, now, where there was high-level male migration, women were running the village. While the president was always the parish priest, coupled with a male vice president, there were women in governance now in the fishing community. Thus the system was very dynamic and responsive to changes and demands. He said in Kerala, the Kadakodi (sea courts) of Kasargod district was a very famous institution. In the northern coastal areas in Bengal or Gujarat, the settlement and work areas were different. In Bengal, under the koti (camp) system at the landing site, they had a traditional governance system that brought traders and fishermen together. Variations of this theme could be observed along the entire coast. He emphasised that it would actually be difficult to find a situation in India where such institutions were not functioning. He concluded by saying that a considerable amount of disservice was being done to the community by ignoring its institutions, often excluding it, erecting artificial entities over it and expecting it to respond the way the mainstream community responds.

John Kurien commented that this was a very important dimension to keep in mind regarding interventions at the local level. A broad criticism about India's policies at the local level was that it was agrarian and terrestrial-oriented. It catered to the agriculture sector and not fishing and tribal communities who related to common property resources very differently. He felt it was necessary to take a look at the customary social laws and come to terms with issues related to legal pluralism.

Address by Nirmala, Trustee, Sakhi Women's Resource Centre, Kerala (Video)

In her short video address, Nirmala said the increasing number of women in panchayats due to reservation had increased their confidence to approach and discuss issues related to them. The gram sabha and Kudumbashree had opened up the scope for women in public spaces. Along the coast, communities were different and the roles played by women differed. Hence,

instead of a single common plan, plans for each area had to be different. Women were vulnerable because they bore the responsibility of looking after the whole family, especially when men migrated or if anything happened to them; it was the women then who took on the burden of clearing their debts as well. It was important to empower women in all possible ways and come up with new and relevant schemes as they played a great role in overall development.

Discussion

Questions

- A participant said he found it very interesting that these villages were organised around fishing practices and wanted to know if self-governance had any role in the fact that the entire village opted to use the same gear and also, how they were looking at resolving the current conflicts.
- Palanithurai addressing his question to Vivekanandan said he had discovered that in Tamil Nadu, some of the traditional panchayats, not in coastal areas, were in a position to synergistically work with the GP. He wondered how such traditional caste-based panchayats were able to take advantage of the constitutional panchayat and why the same was not happening in coastal panchayats. Addressing another question to Sivanandan, he said that when it came to Kerala, tribals were most neglected while other communities were focused on their own development. His second question was regarding atrocities against women in a highly literate society. His last question was about globalisation and Kerala society being immersed in consumerism because of which groups took advantage of globalisation to establish their hold on all the aspects of the development sector with the state being unable to intervene.

Answers

Vivekanandan

- He said local communities coming up with various regulations on fishing, was an ongoing and very old process. The current problems had emerged because the scale at which resource management had to be executed was not at the individual panchayat level, whether traditional or constitutional. The resource boundaries were very large. If neighbours took opposite decisions, it created problems. The ability to build a consensus over a longer part of the coast was thus critical for resource management. Earlier internal differences were managed and contained within the traditional system. Today, the entry of new operators and the creation of a new mechanised sector was not easy for the traditional system to handle leading to the breaking away of a certain section of villagers to the form boat-owners association based in fishing harbours which was immune to actions by local communities. While these were conditions under which it was becoming increasingly difficult to resolve conflicts, even today, on a daily basis, the problems that Noor Jahan (DD Fisheries, Tamil Nadu) would discover would not even be 10% of the problem existing there as 90% of them were resolved internally. So even in modern organisations like the boat owners association,

there was a mimicking of the panchayat system where the committee and president sat in a court-like situations in some of the harbours to resolve disputes. However, he said that their ability to solve larger problems was becoming more difficult.

- Regarding the question of some caste panchayats being able to work with the GP, Vivekanandan felt that it was probably acceptable for communities who were in the agrarian system as it was deeply rooted in most of us. However, fishing and the logic of common property resources completely defied everyone including the topmost scientists and fisheries institutions. Even at the PRI level, discussions could not be undertaken without understanding the common property framework and how it affected resource availability. The assumption of incremental production and revenue by giving one net did not work. Post-tsunami, every fisherman had to be given a boat in the name of equity and equality. But fish was a finite resource and so many people were catching them; for instance, thirty countries were competing to catch tuna in the entire Indian Ocean. Fisheries management was a very complicated business and panchayats could not tackle it through the simple system of handouts and subsidies. Historically, fishing communities have been more seaward-looking than landward-looking. Even here, there are communities that are more mainstream, as for example in central Kerala, where there has been greater political process. There, the panchayat – fishing community link is more seamless and better. Another example is of Maharashtra where the community is relatively more advanced because they accumulated capital very early on and gained a certain level of prosperity. Today they are being threatened by pollution and other problems and the great fishery potential of Maharashtra is getting eroded. They also have a long history of dealing with the larger political system and hence are better able to manage their challenges. Thus there is considerable variation in ability across the coast. Vivekanandan said that a rough thumb rule was an inverse relationship: the stronger the local organisation and internal cohesion, the less they were interested in the outside world and did not bother about dealing with it.

Sivanandan

- He said in a democracy, numbers and majority matter. In Kerala the tribals were 1.2% of the population and hence did not matter in elections. They don't have a voice as there is just one reserved constituency out of 140. Citing the example of land reforms in Kerala, he said it was introduced as early as 1971 but all that happened was that from bonded labour, they became wage labourers as they were given only hutment land and not cultivable land. Nothing happened regarding the government's promises to give them surplus land.
- He said atrocities against women and children was a puzzle and very shameful. He said that caste was still prevalent and the gaps would only cease through economic and cultural development.
- With reference to Kerala being a consumer society, he said the state imported everything as it did not even produce sufficient rice or other food apart from a little

fish. Kerala produces a lot of educated people, they are exported and over 30% of revenue of the state comes from remittances from those outside the state.

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PANCHAYATS (LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS)
AND THE FAO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES GUIDELINES**

Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur, Kerala, India

Wednesday, 6th November 2019: Day 2

**“OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ENHANCING THE ROLE OF
PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT”**

The participants were divided into four groups mainly on a linguistic basis to enable easier interaction within the group. The group discussions continued for about two hours. The coordinators and Rapporteurs of the four groups are given below.

Group 1, Coordinator: Sebastian Mathew; Rapporteur: Manas Roshan

Group 2, Coordinator: V. Vivekanandan; Rapporteur: Ahana Lakshmi

Group 3, Coordinator: John Kurien; Rapporteurs: Ajithraj R., and and Abel Job

Group 4, Coordinator: J.B. Rajan; Rapporteur: Geetha G.

SESSION 4: PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE OF TENURE

Chair: P. Sivanandan, Hon. Director, Centre for Subaltern Studies, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

Noorjahan Beevi, Additional Director of Fisheries, Government of Tamil Nadu

Representing the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department, Noorjahan Beevi said they had a bottom-up approach in co-management which was defined as the sharing of responsibility or authority between the government and local resource-users to manage resources. She said that setting up the co-management system had taken time and attributed the groundwork done to the Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods (FIMSUL) – I, the FAO-TCP and the extensive role played by V. Vivekanandan so that the mindset of people changed.

She said Co-management was a process that began with the government having total control with some input from stakeholders and moved gradually to total control by stakeholders monitored by the government. Over time, the role of government steadily reduced and the intervention of the government was sought only in solution of conflicts and development of policies.

Co-management in fisheries was important on many counts ranging from secure livelihoods (commercial and small-scale/artisanal) to Human health (food security and nutrition), to environmental health and biodiversity conservation of the sea. The stakeholders in fisheries included all those involved in fisheries such as government, fishers, boatbuilders, processors,

fish-sellers, fishers in allied sectors and community. It was necessary to involve them as it broadened the expertise available for management and promoted ownership of management plans and compliance with rules and regulations, among other aspects. Co-management would not work unless the community had a strong desire to address its own problems.

She mentioned that there were a number of social, economic and environmental gains to be achieved through co-management. There were some limitations and lacunae, however. For example, it varied from one community to another, from one area to another, types of fishing and resources available. Co-management plans could not be generalised and required leadership and appropriate local institutions which might not exist in some communities and called for enhancement of leadership qualities and skills among fishers. Development of mechanised fishing had resulted in conflicts requiring the intervention of a third agency for resolution. The future vision of co-management looked at a well-governed fisheries sector, abundant fisheries resources, healthy environment and habitats, increased jobs, profits, improved economy and human health and prosperity.

She next gave an overview of the Tamil Nadu fisheries. She said that initially, co-management meetings conducted were more like grievance meetings. It was over time that the discussions moved from grievances to resource conservation and that, she felt, was the first step towards success. To recognise the co-management committees, a GO had been issued that gave an indicative structure of the committees; this could be changed as per needs of the fishers. There are village level co-management committees, district and zonal level co-management councils and a state level management forum. At the village level, the *aikiya* (traditional panchayat) has been endorsed as the village level co-management committee with the (additional) representation of women, fisher youth and some officials. She explained the constitutional powers, duties and functions of various co-management committees. District Collectors of each of the four coastal zones of Tamil Nadu would chair meetings on a rotational basis. Village-level decisions are endorsed by the district level, so neighbouring village issues are expected to be sorted out at the district level. At the zonal level, inter-district issues are resolved and at the state level co-management forum, resolutions, decisions and requirements at the zonal and policy level, are discussed and submitted to the government as recommendations of the co-management committee. She said they were at the beginning having just formed the committees. One state level co-management forum had been convened and all members from zonal committees had attended. She was happy to note that they were talking only about resource conservation and were aware of the resource constraints. She said it was good to see the change in the mindset of the fishers whom they had been interacting with over time.

She had recently attended the meeting in the Rural Development (RD) department regarding the PRI and had realised that it was similar to the co-management structure. She agreed that representatives of fishermen would not attend the Gram Sabha and therefore their voices would not be heard. Therefore, she had asked the co-management committees to formulate their village-level plan requirements and submit it in the gram sabha through the Assistant Director, Fisheries. She said she would take it up with the State Institute for Rural Development (SIRD) and create awareness among officers and fishers.

S.R. Nagraj, Senior Assistant Director of Fisheries, Government of Karnataka

In Karnataka, Nagraj said there were 3700 major tanks under the minor irrigation department and 22000 tanks which belonged to gram panchayats. In 2014 they had the policy that fishery rights in irrigation department's tanks would be auctioned through fishermen cooperative societies. These societies normally had 100-200 members who were full time fishermen. The tanks were leased to the societies at the rate of INR 3300 per ha water-spread area per year. It is limited to 300 ha per society and hence could be a single tank or multiple tanks. Those not taken up by societies are auctioned through tenders cum auctions which fetches the department revenue of INR 10 crore per annum.

With respect to gram panchayat tanks, they had written a chapter in the policy on how to lease the tanks belonging to local bodies, inserting a condition that they had to be leased for a minimum of 5 years so that even if water was not received for a year or two, the fishers would still manage a profit. What they paid at the end of the auction was for one year. In the second year, if there was any violation like breaking of bunds or sluice gates, the fishery right was not renewed. If fishers obeyed all the conditions of the LSG, the right was renewed. By April 30, they had to pay the bid amount for the following year. Even if there was no water in the tank, they had to pay the bid amount to reserve the right. Once water was received, they stocked the seed.

The department provided subsidy for fingerlings and was now providing advanced fingerlings as per National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) guidelines. It gave 50% subsidy for the tank bidder depending on the effective water-spread area and calculated how many advance fingerlings could be stocked. It had also started feed-based aquaculture in panchayat tanks. In the previous year, it had started giving prawn (*Machrobrachium rosenbergae*) seed for panchayat tanks. There was a good response from LSGs as they were making good profits. Small tanks that belonged to the GP were being used for rearing. The bidder could bring spawn or fry, rear them for two-three months, then sell the seeds he got to neighbouring panchayati bidders. This reduced the pressure on the government hatchery and also reduced transportation stress resulting in better survival and fulfilment of local demand. Training for this was also being provided.

Fisherwomen with time were being encouraged to form SHGs. They were provided training at the university on ornamental fish rearing. After training, each group was given one variety and was assisted in marketing, for example through tie-ups with the Karnataka Fisheries Development Corporation. Nagraj said there was a big demand for ornamental fish with more than a thousand shops around Bangalore itself. The annual turnover just selling aquarium fish was INR 10 crore.

Another activity was being carried out through milk producer cooperatives. A milk producer normally had a borewell, some cows and was a full time farmer. To utilise the water holding tanks (100-200 sq m tanks), they were being encouraged to grow fish, including ornamental fish varieties.

Nagraj described another initiative where a pre-stocked waterbody was being auctioned at a higher price with the farmer being saved the trouble of sourcing the feed. This initiative was being tried because of the presence of well-qualified officers at LSGs including agricultural graduates working as panchayat development officers. Scientific farming with aerators in some panchayat tanks, pen culture in big tanks, cage culture etc. were being tried with the suggestion that the fish from such harvests was sold at subsidised rates to local consumers so that they could get a good source of protein.

Coastal fishers in Mangaluru and Udupi districts were relatively well-off and given subsidies and other support, said Nagraj.

Usha P.K., Assistant Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala

Usha agreed with Amala Shaji who spoke earlier regarding the non-availability of the basic amenities for women fishworkers. Issues such as the absence of toilets in markets, vehicular and childcare facilities were faced by women in the coastal sub-offices of the Fisheries Department also. Thus, though the fisheries department has implemented several schemes for sanitation, housing, repair and maintenance in the coastal areas, there are still beneficiaries yet to be covered.

Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) is a registered body under the Department of Fisheries, Government of Kerala with a mandate to intervene in the fisheries sector for women. Its work is similar to Kudumbashree which has SHGs and NHGs in coastal areas. SAF was established on 1st June 2005 after the 2004 tsunami. Its vision is to work for the overall development of fisherwomen in Kerala with an emphasis on developing entrepreneurs in an alternate livelihood sector. Theeramythri (a flagship programme under the SAF which encourages, facilitates and handholds fisherwomen to engage in gainful alternate self-employment for economic and social emancipation.) is the common name given to the projects aiming to promote alternative livelihoods among fisherwomen to enhance their incomes and improve their quality of life, to develop leadership and management acumen among fisherwomen through capacity building and training, to develop suitable and appropriate marketing support to Theeramythri microenterprise units, to pave the way for the overall empowerment of fisherwomen, more significantly economic empowerment.

At the state level, SAF has a governing body chaired by the fisheries minister and the executive committee is chaired by the principal secretary. The state level officer is the executive director. At the district level, the Assistant Director (Fisheries) is a nodal officer for the implementation of SAF projects in each district. There is a district-level approval committee chaired by the Deputy Director (Fisheries). There are mission coordinators on contract basis to implement the projects. At the panchayat level there is the Theeramythri management council – chaired by the local body president. The treasurer is the fisheries officer in the local Matsya Bhavan.

The main project is development of microenterprises. Over the years, SAF has established 2645 microenterprise units for fisherwomen-based activity groups comprising 2 to 4 members. Financial support is INR 75,000 per head going up to INR 3 lakh for four

members. While the beneficiary contribution is a 5%, the bank loan is 15% and SAF Subsidy is 80%, which is not given by any other government scheme. The women belong to the 20-50 years age group with preference being given to Theeranaipunya (a capacity building training programme equipping fisherwomen youth with skill enhancement) students of SAF.

Usha detailed the process involved in the establishment of microenterprises by SAF which was also end-to-end. Capacity building programmes, a variety of training programmes, working capital revolving funds, technology improvement and interest-free credit support schemes for bank loans are some highlights. They also conduct medical camps enabling SAF to offer financial healthcare support to its beneficiaries suffering from serious illnesses. At Ernakulam, every year they participate in the MLA's medical camp programmes and give assistance in the disbursement of Ayurvedic medicines.

Theeranaipunya is a programme catering to the needs of aspiring young women from fisher families. The basic qualification is class twelve, and women up to 35 years can enrol in the courses conducted by CMFRI. Theeramaveli, in cooperation with the civil supplies department, aims to provide food and grocery items to coastal people at subsidised rates and to market products produced by SAF Activity groups. The sales volume is now touching INR 80 crore and there are fifteen major DME (Development of Micro Enterprises) categories; the projects are similar to that of Kudumbashree. It is mainly tailoring and garments in the Ernakulam district and this year, they have introduced an event management group as well.

To ensure sustainability of Theeramythri, there are Theeramythri management councils working with LSGs. There are monthly meetings to deal with the issues of the activity groups where problems are discussed and conflicts resolved. There are four apex and category federations for promoting business. There are federations in the food, fish and tailoring categories. Managerial and field-level support is provided by professional agencies.

Theeramythri Management Councils (TMCs) are representative bodies of microenterprises linking them to the local body through an institutional mechanism. Subsidies are given through TMCs. Federations provide marketing support to different categories of businesses under Theeramythri. They source raw material and have opened a garments showroom, Theeramythri Textiles, under the federation. The fish category federation has launched Theeramythri branded dry fish which provides high quality premium dry fish products.

Through SAF, 2645 fisherwomen-based Activity Groups became successful entrepreneurs providing livelihood to around 8000 fisher families directly with a total annual business volume approaching INR 80 crore; the total annual wages taken were INR 18 crore. A sum of INR 10 crore revolved among the activity groups as interest-free working capital. They have received a gold medal in the India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2015 for the best food court in the country and have won the award for Second best commercial exhibitor in the Kerala Pavilion in 2017. They have introduced an online Activity Report Management Information System for SAF (ARMIS).

There has been significant improvement in economic, legal and social conditions of fisherwomen through the SAF, concluded Usha. It conducted beneficiary meets called

Saphalam which gave them a platform to discuss their ideas and problems regarding their activities and to find solutions. Upcoming is the 3R (Rebuilding, Revival, Reforms) Package to ensure sustainable livelihoods and alternative employment opportunities to fisherwomen in Kerala. There is also a formation of 1200 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) comprising 4 to 10 members, covering 6000 women beneficiaries from fishing community and Anytime Finance Service Centres. In the Ashtamudi Phase 2 Project in Kollam district, they have formed a consortium, establishing 12 microenterprise units for the sustainable livelihood of 48 inland fisherwomen beneficiaries, under the tailoring and garments category. They have also established hygienic refrigerated mobile fish vending kiosks with the support of CIFT which is fetching them good margins along with meeting consumer demands for good quality fish.

K.C. Rajeev, Director Board Member, Ernakulam Matsyafed

Rajeev said the Kerala State Cooperative Fisheries and Fisherman development Society, Matsyafed, was established on 19th March 1984. It is the apex body of 655 cooperative societies with the objective of social and economic development of the fishing community. He said that Matsyafed was not a component of any government organisation. It did not give houses, equipment etc. There were other organisations for such activities, for instance, the Fisheries department.

For fishworkers, Matsyafed provided 61% subsidy for fishing craft and gear with a maximum amount up to INR 1 Crore. He said when fish were caught either in the sea or backwaters; the sellers were women – wives, sisters of fishers. For 15,000 women, interest-free loan to the tune of INR 10,000 was provided which could be scaled up after it was repaid. For 4-15 person groups, microfinance loans of INR 50,000 per person were being disbursed. Just like the SAF and Kudumbashree, thousands of groups were part of Matsyafed. The fishworkers included were not only those in the marine realm but also comprised those who were part of cooperatives for fishers in backwaters and rivers. There were 199 sangams (fisher cooperatives) of rivers, backwaters and inland waters, 335 marine sangams and 122 women's groups that were part of Matsyafed. They served as dealers for fisheries equipment requirements of fisherfolk such as Yamaha and Suzuki engines and there were three Outboard Motor (OBM) centres. Nets were manufactured in three factories at Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur and Ernakulam employing 100-400 workers who met supplies for the total requirement of the fishing community of Kerala.

At fish storage/collection centres, they checked the quality of fish from other states for poisons or toxins. In coastal areas, they worked at ensuring fair price for fishers. Rajeev said the exploitation of fishermen prevailed everywhere. For example, the market price may be INR 100 per kg, but fishermen catching it may be getting only INR 25. Matsyafed has come up with a new system in three centres – Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Kozhikode – to ensure that fair price is given to workers. Around 37 fish stalls have been constructed in different parts of Kerala. There is a collection processing plant at Kochi approved by EU for exports and five containers were exported in the previous month. Fish that cannot be kept in cold storage are made into fish manure / fertiliser. He said that Matsyafed was also working

on aquaculture linked with tourism. With hatcheries in four places and a link-up with fresh fish dishes, tourists could choose the fish and have them cooked.

Rajeev concluded that fisherfolk had a number of superstitions and casteism was prevalent. A change of attitude was required. He also called for a fisheries ministry at the Centre.

Thaha Malika, Chairman, Fisheries Standing Committee, Lakshadweep Islands

Thaha Malika said the situation in Kavaratti is different from Kerala or any other place in India. For example, while training is given to fishermen and other stakeholders by KILA and others, no such training is given to fishermen in Lakshadweep Islands. In Lakshadweep islands, fishermen not only have to catch the fish but also sell it as well, which entails long hours of work. Because of the pole and line fishery, usage of nets is not permitted and there are no storage facilities for fish. Their most important produce is Masmin (smoked skipjack tuna). There is no marketing facility. Recently, an agency collected Masmin promising to pay INR 400/ kg but it now claims that the fish has gone bad and has reneged on its payments. There is one ice plant in Agatti but it is not in operation.

He said in Lakshadweep Islands, there is no social discrimination. Fishers are also a part of the community. He concluded that the attitude of government officials and bureaucracy has to change to a more people-friendly attitude.

Arjilli Dasu, Executive Secretary, District Fishermen Welfare Association, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

Arjilli Dasu said in the coastal panchayats of Andhra Pradesh, hamlets comprise the fishing communities while revenues village comprise the non-fisher community and this is a major problem. The previous government had promoted the janmabhoomi committees which were violating panchayati norms; these committees were taking decisions regarding various schemes while the District Collector / Fisheries Department were merely limited to giving sanctions. The present government has introduced village-level secretariats per every 2000 population. Half the decision-making powers have been transferred to the secretariat. A post for Fisheries assistant has been created to look after both inland and marine fishers. The activities are expected to start fully in the next month. There is no awareness regarding SSF guidelines at both the Department of Fisheries and the panchayat level. He felt that schemes in future should be implemented only through panchayats as government officials are engaged in a lot of duties and emergency work leaving them with little time to operate at the grassroots level. He suggested that fishermen villages should be treated as revenue villages and the SSF guidelines should be implemented through panchayats.

Budhanoor Panchayat: River Restoration

A short presentation on the restoration of the Kuttemperoor River, a tributary of the Pamba and Achankovil rivers was made by Harikrishnan. J. The polluted and weed-infested 12 km long river was divided into 14 segments. Spearheaded by the panchayat president, Viswambara Panicker, over a period of 70 days, 700 labourers including men and women from the wards of the panchayat worked under the MNREGA scheme and cleaned the river of weeds, plastic and mud. After clear water started flowing in the river, the water level in the village wells has also gone up.

Discussion

Questions

- Rajan asked Noorjahan Beevi why the PRIs were missing in the co-management committee and why it was headed by bureaucrats and skewed towards the bureaucracy rather than having representatives from the local governance system.

Noorjahan Beevi agreed that the PRI was absent in the co-management committee. She said the GO issued by the government was indicative of the reasons for this, but the composition was expected to change over time. The government's role was handholding. The resolutions were passed by the co-management committee and the government only endorsed them. Once the government became confident in the committee's ability to implement co-management, it would gradually withdraw.

Vivekanandan added that currently, two states and one UT are officially working on co-management – Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. In Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, it was a follow up of FIMSUL and the model designed to work with fishing communities. The GP layer was not considered important as they do not have a role in fisheries management. Vivekanandan was quite critical of the current process at the village level: the committee was only a proxy for the actual governance system which was the village governance system; and he was not sure what level of resource management could be done at that level. In Kerala, he explained that it was different. The specific context of Alappad was the 17 km barrier island where 99% were fishers, though a lot of them did other work. The council formation first started there and the initial idea of using the panchayat arose from there because it was the potential uniting organisation in that specific area.

In Ashtamudi too, the resource limits are bounded; it is a homogenous community, and the panchayat can be a useful body through which everything can be done. Vivekanandan said it was a particular context that had now been elevated to a proven model for Kerala and made into a law. This carried serious risks as, for example, it would not work in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam. A layer which has no relevance for fisheries management has been created. He said it is very easy to get excited about panchayats as the solution for all problems. He referred to Kurien talking about variations at almost every

50 km along the coast that had existed in Hornell's time and were extant even now. Under such conditions, standardisation of the co-management structure to a great degree rather than working from first principles was also high risk as it would be one more structure placed on top of the community. He said that to create change, some amount of flexibility would have to be inbuilt as combinations would keep changing from place to place. Which institution will be effective in each place is also changing and is an issue for Panchayati Raj academics to study. . He expressed concern that in the Kerala context, there was a tendency to standardise and governmentalise everything. He also said it was necessary to be careful while taking up ideas from Kerala, as what works in Kerala may not work in other places.

A representative from Dakshin Foundation pointed out that Amala Shaji had earlier said that when it came to implementation, development schemes had not succeeded. He wanted to know if any Impact study had been done to evaluate SAF schemes. Usha PK responded that a study done by CMFRI indicated 50% success. She also said that there is a beneficiary monitoring and evaluation system

- A representative from Andhra Pradesh said most panchayat ponds were leased to others rather than fishing communities as they paid very high lease amounts.

GROUP PRESENTATION by RAPORTEURS

Chair: A. Suresh, Principal Scientist, (Indian Council of Agricultural Research - Central Institute of Fisheries Technology)

The rapporteurs of the four groups made presentations on behalf of their groups. The questions to be answered by the groups are given below:

1. How can LSGs contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland)?
2. How can LSG effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems?
3. How can all stakeholders – LSG, Union and state governments and civil society – strengthen participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance?

The key points put forward by each group are given in [Appendix 1](#).

A short discussion followed and a few points were added to the list given by the rapporteurs. Noorjahan Beevi said actions taken for conservation of ecosystems should not conflict with the Biodiversity Act and that there should be inclusion of the inland fishing community as stakeholders in Water User Associations. Priority should be given to fishing communities for leasing waterbodies. Abdul Jabbar said that there should be reservation for the fishing

community in education. Shawn Desouza said welfare of fishworkers must include labourers who are brought in to work with fish processing centres. He observed that there was an emphasis on social mobility but economic mobility for upliftment was also necessary.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

Chair: Joy Elamon, Director, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

Workshop Recommendations: N. Venugopalan, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust

The workshop recommendations are included as [Appendix 2](#).

Valedictory Address: S. M. Vijayanand, Chairman, Sixth State Finance mission, Government of Kerala (Video presentation)

Vijayanand congratulated KILA and ICSF for holding this workshop. He said it was the first time a national workshop had been held that focused exclusively on fishworkers and small-scale fisheries and thus was a path-breaking event. Having worked as Secretary, Panchayat Raj in Delhi, he knew the role played by UN agencies like the FAO in reaching out to local governments to clarify their roles with respect to international goals. Here it was a perfect fit for the Panchayati Raj.

Vijayanand said small-scale fisheries had not got the attention it deserved. It provided food and nutrition security and also livelihood security which were a national priority. It had a strong ecological and a gender dimension because it really benefitted the poor among women. By definition, helping in the improvement of small-scale fisheries reduces poverty of one of the most vulnerable groups in the country. Just as special programmes have targeted SC and ST communities, fisherfolk, especially traditional fisherfolk, need to be targeted with this kind of precise approach. Since the year marked the hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Vijayanand, said it was worth recalling Gandhiji's advice that Swaraj was nothing but eradication of poverty.

He said the SSF Guidelines evolved by FAO through consensus were morally binding. Like all consensus documents, they were general in their prescription and it was up to us to make them operational in accordance with the spirit of the principles laid down by them. He said fishery was one of the subjects which could be devolved to the panchayats under the 73rd amendment. The principles laid down by the SSF guidelines - participatory approach, integrated approach, transparency and accountability, social responsibility - all these can be done best by gram panchayats because it is natural to their way of functioning. But it does not happen automatically and hence it was necessary to work very carefully and in detail to ensure that it gets done.

Vijayanand said there is a huge variation in functions, powers and resources of panchayats. Therefore a pan-India solution or a pan-India programme through panchayats was not possible; it had to be contextualized and extremely local. While decentralisation of powers

was extremely political, analysis of the powers already conferred on panchayats through laws, GOs and circulars indicated that they are substantial though they may have not been clarified in an operational sense to the panchayats. He advocated a start with the as-is-where-is Panchayati Raj; study the Panchayat Raj situation in each state, study the status of devolution of powers already taken place and how they can be utilised in the current context, particularly with respect to small-scale fisheries.

Pointing out that panchayats can do a lot of low cost or no-cost development just by bringing together and converging services, resources and also reaching out to the people, he said the biggest opportunity was the huge grant with the 14th Finance Commission devolved to gram panchayats and the consensual decision by all states to go for a gram panchayat development plan, generically called GPDP. He expressed the hope that the 15th Finance Commission would also continue to provide handsome grants to panchayats. In addition, the Ministry of Rural Development had taken a very important policy decision to make the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which was about INR 60,000 crore a year, as a part of the GPDP; and this could bring in a lot of livelihoods for the fisher people. Another important policy decision of the Government of India with respect to the livelihood mission which had not been discussed in great detail was that after a long time GOI was advocating that the SHGs of the poor should work with gram panchayats. Since the fisherfolk live as a community in neighbourhoods, it is easy to have SHGs for poor fisherfolk women so that they can influence gram panchayats. He referred to the informal component of the livelihood mission called the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) and said that there have been very few fisheries projects under it and suggested that expert organisations aiming at developing viable fisheries projects be implemented under the MKSP component of the livelihood mission. He also referred to Mission Antyodaya, the new phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission and the newly launched Jal Shakti that dealt with piped water supply and said gram panchayats would have a definite role to play at least in its planning, operation and maintenance, so there again they could converge this with the fisherfolk.

He also referred to the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan which mandated that every educational institution in the country, right from IITs and IIMs down to graduate colleges, had to work with a panchayat in the vicinities. He said that this offered unlimited opportunities to local communities to interact with students and local academics and here fisherfolk could be a well-identified group. Similarly BharatNet, the fibre optic network reaching every gram panchayat, could be rolled out to the whole country, giving huge opportunities for marketing, knowledge dissemination etc.

Referring to specific aspects of support which gram panchayats in the current context across the country could give to the poor fisherfolk, he said, that civic amenities, water supply, road, streetlights, playgrounds, burial ground or crematoria, could be provided using the 14th Finance Commission grant and perhaps the 15th Finance Commission as well. MGNREGA could be used to set up fish drying yards, fish storage centres, improving the ponds in inland fisheries and it was up to us to exploit the potential. Since panchayats decided the beneficiaries of the national social assistance program, people with disabilities, widows or aged people, those among fisherfolk could be identified and provided social security.

Development of tanks, ponds and markets, including fish markets could be done by local governments. Most importantly, inclusion through SHGs and gram sabhas would be a very important step towards empowerment.

Vijayanand said though Kerala had the most empowered gram panchayats in the country, well-endowed with resources, both their own and transferred from the state government, they had not done as well as they could have in terms of fisherfolk who continued to be outliers. This, he said was quite surprising and in a sense shocking. But there were some lessons to be learned from Kerala, such as the concept of Matsya Sabha –where all adult fisherfolk came and participated as a subset of gram sabhas so that their views could be aired in a focused manner in Kudumbashree and its SHGs. Yet another lesson that could be imbibed was related to working groups where outside experts were allowed into the formal system of plan preparation. So experts, NGOs working with fisher folk could participate in the planning process and contribute their ideas for improvement and perhaps develop at least an informal sub-plan for fisheries where all the development activities which were meant for the fisherfolk were integrated.

Vijayanand concluded his address with pointed suggestions on the way forward. He suggested that a write-shop should be held at KILA and people from government, academia and civil society should come down to Kerala, and find out how the panchayats are performing in terms of the people's plan campaign; they should come back and reflect on what each state can do better than Kerala; adapt the Kerala model or just say it cannot be done now, and then come out with a real action plan for each state which can be given directly to the secretary and become part of the gram panchayat activities. Another suggestion he made was related to resource cluster; he said maybe four or five clusters could be introduced in the country where all efforts and energy could be invested and developed as a proof-of-concept. From this, a school of practice could emerge from which other panchayats and states could learn. Emphasising the importance of capacity building, he also suggested that a platform could be developed for advocacy, to provide technical support and to bring together agencies to share views on helping fisherfolk. With new vistas such as climate change emerging, the concept of a local action plan on climate change was very popular with academics and translating it into practice could be experimented with fisherfolk. Similarly, localising SDGs with respect to small-scale fisheries could be another activity. He thanked the organisers and once again reminded the workshop that this was the beginning and it was necessary to work out an action plan.

Vote of Thanks: Shri Manas Roshan, ICSF Trust

Manas Roshan gave the vote of thanks on behalf of the ICSF Trust and KILA. He thanked supporters and well-wishers of the LSGs, as ICSF (International Collective in Support of Fishworkers) had engaged with the process for the first time. He also thanked panchayat representatives and hoped that in the future it would be possible to engage with many more as

they were the ones who upheld the principles of Local Self-Governance each day and requested them to continue doing so. He thanked Fishworker Organisations like the National Fishworker's Forum (NFF), the National Platform of Small-scale Fishworkers (Inland) and the District Fishermen Welfare Association, Andhra Pradesh which had attended the workshop and hoped that this would be a renewed start on fisheries governance at all levels, from national to local. He thanked the Governments of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka who had sent officials from their fisheries department to share their experiences and take home some of the recommendations that were made through this workshop.

He thanked civil society organisations, NGOs, researchers and the many individuals who participated in the workshop. He also thanked the Department of Local Self-Government, Government of Kerala and mentioned that they had reached out to the Principal Secretary Sarada G. Muraleedharan who had extended her full support to the process and the recommendations that had come from it. He thanked the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), especially Suresh, for joining in and also the presenters at the workshop: He also extended his gratitude to G. Palanithurai who had told them about the state of devolution in the country, S.M. Vijayanand who had delivered the valedictory address and S. Venkatesapathy, Director of Fisheries who had given the Inaugural Address. He thanked Nirmala, Trustee of the NGO, Sakhi, in Thiruvananthapuram and said that they did wonderful work with LSGs mainly on women and women's empowerment. She could not attend the workshop in person and had given a recording which could not be shown due to paucity of time but would be uploaded on the website and on social media. He also thanked the member from the Budhanoor panchayat for making a special presentation on the restoration of the river along with the trustees of ICSF, John Kurien and V.Vivekanandan. He said that Nalini Nayak, another trustee, could not attend but had extended her felicitation and support to this process and had also extended her thanks to KILA for hosting this workshop. He thanked the people who were essential to the logistics of the programme and expressed his gratitude to Photoman Colour Lab – the agency that had done the photography and videography for the workshop. Roshan also thanked KILA and its entire staff, particularly Joy Elamon, Director, for extending support for the workshop and facilitating it. . He extended his gratitude to J.B. Rajan and P. Sivanandan, also from KILA, who had been very supportive of the programme and had helped in building the sessions. He said many participants who had come from various panchayats were Rajan's contacts. He thanked K.K. Babu, section officer; .O.S. Mirash, Systems-in-charge, Pratap Singh, Training Associate, and Haneefa, Support staff for the workshop who had played a crucial role in the logistics and arrangements of the whole programme. He also thanked Ahana Lakshmi, the rapporteur for this and previous workshops and Geetha, Consultant with ICSF, Ganga Devi, from the ICSF Secretariat, and Manjula and Sangeeta who were not present but had given valuable help in the arrangements.

APPENDIX 1

GROUP DISCUSSION REPORTS

Group 1: Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and West Bengal

Participants: Nalini Kant, Sureendra Mishra, Niraj Sharadro Nakhate, Alkesh S.K. Kashyap, Purnima Meher, Narendra Ramachandra Patil, Milan Das and Gajanan Kaluji Aatram

(Coordinator: Sebastian Mathew; Rapporteur: Manas Roshan)

- 1. How can Local Self-Governments contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland)?**
 - Social development should be inclusive and universal, rather than sector-specific. (No fixed definition of fishing communities in some inland panchayats.)
 - Livelihood is a challenge for fishing communities. Panchayats should have community-focused livelihood programmes.
 - Convergence of these livelihood programmes and schemes of all departments and gram sabhas, to benefit fishing communities.
 - Raise awareness of gram sabhas and panchayats about rights, entitlements and government schemes
 - Targets and delivery of social welfare is a challenge. Panchayats now have enough funds, if they are able to raise awareness and access services

- 2. How can LSG effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems.**
 - Integrate awareness about ecosystem services of waterbodies into LSG planning
 - Matsya Sabha and cooperatives should collaborate to manage fisheries tenure, protecting legitimate fishing community tenure
 - Where panchayats control small waterbodies, promote conservation practices. Consult panchayats on management of waterbodies controlled by other government agencies
 - Preferential access to fish in inland waterbodies should go to fishing communities using traditional fishing techniques (determined by LSGs)

- 3. How can all stakeholders – LSG, Union, state governments and civil society – strengthen participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance?**
 - Social mobilisation important to enhance participation of marginalised groups – tribals, women, fishing communities
 - Coordination between line agencies and gram panchayats on implementation of programmes

- Matsya Sabha, Kerala model can be adapted by other states to protect the interests of fishing communities at the local level
- GPDP Plans should include fisheries livelihood enhancement programmes in new plans
- Democratise LSG processes to protect livelihood of fishing communities

Group 2: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Karnataka.

Participants: K. E. C. Tangavadi, Lourd Raj, George, S Noorjahan Beevi, . G. Palanithurai, Chandramohan, Arjilli Dasu, B. L. Narasimharaju, K. Ganpati Rao, S.R. Nagraj and C.S. Ananth

(Coordinator: V. Vivekanandan; Rapporteur: Ahana Lakshmi)

1. How can Local Self-Governments contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland)

- Since GPDP is a mandate as per the 14th Finance Commission, needs of community can be met by preparing a sectoral plan to include all social development need demands such as
 - Health, education, water supply, sanitation, waste management, housing,
 - Alternate/supplementary employment
 - infrastructure (roads, streetlights)
 - Markets
- By making use of scheme funds, sectoral department fund and their own panchayat funds (SFF, CFF etc)

2. How can LSG effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems.

- Perspective plan has to be prepared first
 - Can be supported by NGO/CSO, Research and Academic Institutions
 - We should look at waterbodies (inland) not merely as an income generating system and water bodies under LSG control should be properly maintained
- A Natural Resource Management sub-plan can be prepared at GP level as part of GPDP
- Control of pollution (sewage, industrial wastes, plastics)
- Observations of rules and regulations with respect to fishery resource exploitation
- Prevent/ mitigate erosion by supporting shelter belt plantation, restoration of coastal vegetation
- Fishery Universities and other research institutions to research critical issues relevant to fisheries

3. How can all stakeholders – LSG, Union, state governments and civil society – strengthen participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance?

- Promote/popularise the use of special gram sabhas for fisherfolk as done in Kerala
- Scope of PRI to be exposed to fishing communities
 - NGO, CSO and such organisations to help in this
- Fisheries Department (and other departments) can brief the fishing community about schemes, opportunities and facilities available
- NGOs/CSOs also have scope for participation in fisher sabhas as resource persons

Group 3: Kerala and Lakshadweep (a)

Participants: Jackson Pollayil, K.C. Rajeev, A. Suresh, P. Seleena, MT Abdul Jabbar, Basheer Karanaman, Thaha Malika, Vinod Malayilethu, . P.Sivanandan, Usha and Anishkumar M.S.)

(Coordinator: John Kurien; Rapporteurs: Ajithraj R, and Abel Job)

1. How can Local Self-Governments contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland).
 - How can the socially backward state of the fisheries sector in Kerala be improved considering the fact that the state is performing well in social development indicators? Fisherfolk and STs have been left out from the Kerala model of development.
 - Representative from Lakshadweep- Situation is different and administration keeps control as a Union Territory. The administration is taking care of development needs. They are doing well in social development indicators.
 - Three Departments are under the panchayat including Animal Husbandry, Health and Fisheries. They have funds too. There is no differentiation as coastal and non-coastal. But the autonomy is less. The administration is still not interested in devolving powers.
 - There is an argument that social development will occur along with improvement in income. But the Kerala model is based on the premise that without economic development, there can be an improvement in the social situation.
 - Income diversification can be done through responsible tourism. However, the introduction of tourism may not necessarily improve income or social status. They can again end up engaging in jobs which are considered menial by mainstream society.

- Lack of dedicated funds in the panchayats for addressing social issues. Lack of awareness can be tackled through *Matsya Sabha* and other platforms; awareness can be improved regarding status of jobs. Similarly, technology can improve its status.
- Expert – When technology changes people may get more fish. But the income may not change.
- Fishers are getting trapped by interest rates for credit taken. How are fisherman utilising the money taken on credit? Are they spending on things which enhance social development?
- From this discussion, the conclusion is that the process of social development is multifaceted and can only be ensured through both economic and socio-cultural development.
- There is no surety that fishers will get back what they spend; Kerosene decrease, higher rates of interest, debts. Governments are not giving proper compensation; discrimination.
- Responding to concerns raised regarding certain government programmes, the government representative said that programmes are conceived based on suggestions from the bottom even though it could be designed as a top-down model. However, the frameworks which the government puts forward needs to have more flexibility.
- There are various government welfare programmes and funds. Below are the points which the participants raised as constraints.
- No dedicated funds for fisheries.
- Lack of flexibility in fund allocation to relevant categories, even to improve social development facilities.
- Low implementation level as local bodies are unable to allocate funds based on specific needs.
- Stakeholders ignored despite proper representation in local bodies from the community.. Functioning needs changing.
- Trade union leader – Lack of proper statistics. Corruption at different levels.
- Lack of coordination; convergence required to avoid institutional overlaps.
- Government guidelines needed; spending on fisheries should be made mandatory; bureaucrats need to be educated.
- Value addition.

2. How can LSG effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems.

- Panchayat has the responsibility of checking pollution and waste management
- Lack of clear rules and guidelines to direct panchayats to take a lead role in resource management-related issues. Therefore, they lack the necessary powers as well.
- Participants identified the gram sabha as a very powerful institution in making decisions concerning resource management.

- As coastal panchayats are penalised for the pollution that happens elsewhere, there may be a need to tax other panchayats for the wastes they generate. A dedicated fund can also be kept for the same.
- Participants also raised issues related to CRZ. Licenses are not given to fishermen for houses; even those built under government schemes.
- Local body representatives raised issues faced due to the umbrella protection to mangroves. Harassment of poor e needs to stop as it is acting as a deterrent even to those who want to plant mangroves.
- John Kurien – What can be done at the panchayat level through Fisheries Management Council?
- Government representative said the main objective of Fisheries Management Councils is involving panchayats and such bodies; FD is trying to come up with management plans like ‘no-fishing’ zones through such councils.
- John Kurien – Can we introduce something like a water protection policy?
- The question over the ownership of the sea was discussed. It can be something similar to a tribal policy. All local body representatives agreed that such a policy can be implemented by the panchayats if there is a state rule.
- Suresh – What about the small fishes? Trash?
- There is a limitation for the panchayats in curbing fishing violations. They are empowered to address socio-development issues. But most of the participants highlighted that panchayats in Kerala do not play a big role in resource management under the current setup.

3. How can all stakeholders – LSG, Union and state governments and civil society – strengthen participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance?

- Issue of same welfare schemes are being repeated, pointing to a lack of proper needs assessment.
 - Campaigning about the rights of the people is the need of the hour.
 - Panchayat representatives suggested top-down approaches involving a reasonable compulsion. e.g. You will get the benefits only if you come to the panchayat.
 - Need a Fisheries Department and Ministry at the top level as legislations need to travel top-down. There are many social stratifications; Fisher communities are being politically manipulated; caste organisations and religious institutions misusing poor, illiterate fishermen.
- MLA-local body relationship can be improved as there are limitations for the local body.
- Institutional overlaps should be avoided. There needs to be a nodal agency for each programme.
- More importantly, promotion of awareness among LSG office-bearers regarding the law and other provisions is imperative.
- Funds need to be flexible. SC funds and agricultural funds are allocated to panchayats where it is not required.

- The suggestions from the bottom level as well as other stakeholders are not taken into consideration by the bureaucrat lobby.
- Officials need to have a humane approach. Representation of fishermen and political representation in the bodies, required.

Group 4: Kerala and Lakshadweep (b)

Participants: Harikrishnan, Sreelu, C.K. Ajayakumar, Biju, Amala Shaji, Mahaboob Khan, Shawn D'souza, Fousiya C.K., Pravin Kumar, S. Ravindran Nair, M.S. Saju and Lakshmanan

(Coordinator: J.B. Rajan; Rapporteur: Geetha G)

1. How can Local Self-Governments contribute to the social development of fishing communities (coastal and inland)?

Socio-economic development

- Suitable alternate employment or income generation should be identified/looked into during off-season
- Women friendly employment opportunities should be considered
- Increase the contribution towards off-season saving scheme
- Off-season benefits should be tailored according to the local specific needs
- Subsidy norms should be revised according to local needs for traditional fishworkers
- Fisherwomen-friendly market amenities should be established

Human development in terms of:

a. Health

- Service delivery through family health centres should be strengthened and improved. Work timing between fishworkers and health workers should be aligned
- Maternal care and benefits for fishworkers should re-looked
- Coastal-specific package for basic amenities like housing, drinking water, hygiene and sanitation should be considered
- Effective management of coastal pollution and protection of waterbodies

b. Digital Education, literacy

- Digital literacy program for small-scale fishworkers
- Scheme for promotion of academic excellence of children of small-scale fishworkers
- Supplementary education and career guidance

Social Security

- Effective service delivery of destitute package to be ensured
- Suitably enhance social security pension scheme
- Fishery occupational-related health issues to be studied, and monitored
- Local governments have to facilitate and improve the effective implementation of centre and state sponsored schemes
- Functional effectiveness of Matsya Bhavan should be ensured

2. How can LSG effectively restore, conserve and manage aquatic and coastal ecosystems?

- Protect and maintain wetland
- Measures to safeguard mangroves
- Instead of granite sea wall, promote eco sea wall
- Measures for coastal promotion and protection under panchayat
- Surveillance mechanism for waste dumping into waterbodies and coastal area
- Removal of existing waste and pollution in coastal water

3. How can all stakeholders – LSG, Union and state governments and civil society – strengthen participation of fishing communities (coastal and inland) in democratic platforms for local governance?

- Collective action plan for strengthening democratic platform in the local governance shall be included in the agenda of NGO, CBOs and Peoples' Organisations.
- Effective monitoring mechanism should be in place at state level to ensure that these plans are in place.

APPENDIX 2

WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Social development

- Recognise the role of Fisheries in local economic and social development and set up a framework for understanding, improving and orienting the demands/subsidies/social security/social protection measures/livelihood programmes/affordable credit linkages available/rationalisation of schemes to fishing communities including support to vulnerable and marginalised sections in the services sector specific to the needs of fishing communities, suitable to their coastal geomorphology, current economic, social and cultural needs
- Provide universal social development programmes and include inland fishing communities in their coverage
- Analyse the current situation of relevant infrastructural facilities and their utilisation in fishing hamlets and women-friendly fish markets
- Provide suitable healthcare facilities with special focus on occupational health and diversification of income generation opportunities
- Build capacity in digital inclusion, support excellence in education and guidance

Ecosystem-based Management

- Elicit voluntary commitments from FWOs to manage fisheries resource in a sustainable manner
- Provide improved support system to control, regulate and deter threats like pollution, sewage, dumping of waste and plastic waste, industrial waste, restoration of rivers, etc.
- Implement effective rules and regulations in relation to fish harvesting and fish trade
- Develop adequate measures to mitigate erosion through eco seawalls, shelter belt plantation, restoration of coastal vegetation
- Include the above-mentioned points in relation to ecosystem-based approach in GPDP
- Set up Matsya Sabhas, following the Kerala model, for fishing communities throughout India with support from civil society organisations and NGOs,
- Develop systems to manage tenure with the participation of cooperatives
- Promote preferential access to fish in inland waterbodies of fishing communities
- Make panchayat the nodal agency to approve and assess the impacts of developmental activities in their region
- The role of panchayats in resource management to be specified, and uniform application of laws at panchayat level to be undertaken and monitored

Participation in Democratic Platforms

- Promote synergy between LSG structures and community-based management structures and develop collective action points

- Mainstream fishing communities into the larger society at various levels to ensure their economic development and human development. Matsya Sabhas can play an important role in enhancing perceptions about the role of fishing and fish processing, and associated cultural values
- Build capacity to provide training of LSG members in participatory and consultative fisheries management
- Develop sub-plan, with provision for revision, for natural resource management and for fishing communities at LSG level to make them more inclusive and attentive to local needs in fish production, infrastructure and services
- Develop projects for women through consultation and participation
- Integrate LSG bodies into fisheries plan development and streamline delivery mechanisms with dedicated funds
- Develop manuals for the functioning of panchayats to change its structure from a physical target achievements institution to a management institution based on annual plans
- Ensure that the development of new legislation or policy does not undermine traditional management practices
- Ensure better coordination and common management plan between various local self-government bodies
- Ensure participation of fishing communities in planning exercises is made more inclusive, convergent, beneficial, meaningful, consultative, accountable, non-discriminatory and flexible
- Include collective action plan for strengthening democratic platforms in local governance which should be included in the agenda of NGO, CBOs and Peoples' Organisations
- Request research institutions to disseminate information which has impact on fishers' livelihoods
- Disseminate scoping of what panchayats, fisheries department and other agencies can do in the fisheries sector, promote awareness-raising programmes
- Devolve powers to panchayats in states and UTs, and set up an exclusive ministry of fisheries at the national level
- Establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism at state level to ensure that above-mentioned recommendations are actually working on the ground



**INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE
IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS
(ICSF) TRUST**

22, First Floor, Venkatrathinam Nagar,
Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India
Tel: 91-44-2445 1216 | 2445 1217
Fax: 91-44-2445 0216
Email: icsf@icsf.net

**KERALA INSTITUTE OF
LOCAL ADMINISTRATION
(KILA)**

Mulamkunnathukavu P O
Thrissur 680 581, India
Tel: 91-487-2207006
Fax: 91-487-2201062
Email: director@kila.ac.in



APPENDIX 3

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PANCHAYATS (LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS)
AND THE FAO SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES GUIDELINES**

Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), Thrissur, Kerala, India
5th to 6th November, 2019

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 5th November 2019: Day 1	
8.30-9.00	REGISTRATION
9.00-11.30	INAUGURAL SESSION <i>Welcome and Overview of the Workshop</i> Shri. Sebastian Mathew, Executive Trustee, ICSF Trust <i>Inaugural Address</i> Shri. Dr. Joy Elamon. Director, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) <i>Opening Remarks</i> Shri. S. Venkatesapathy, Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala (<i>VIDEO</i>) Shri. Narendra Ramachandra Patil, Chairman, National Fishworkers' Forum

	<p><i>Keynote Address</i></p> <p><i>Implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines in the Context of Local Governance: Shri. John Kurien, Managing Trustee, ICSF Trust</i></p> <p><i>Participant Introductions</i></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Shri. V. Vivekanandan, Trustee, ICSF Trust</p>
11.30-11.45	TEA-COFFEE BREAK AND GROUP PHOTO
11.45-1.15	<p>SESSION 1: THE PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM AND THE GOVERNANCE OF FISHERIES IN INDIA</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <p><i>Community Perspectives on LSGs: Shri. Nalini Kant, Jharkhand; Smt. P. Celeena, Kerala; Shri. Alkesh Kashyap, Assam</i></p> <p><i>State of Devolution in India: Shri. Dr. G. Palanithurai, Professor (Retd.), Gandhigram Rural Institute, Tamil Nadu</i></p> <p><i>Role of Panchayats in Decentralised Governance in India: Shri. Dr. P.P. Balan, Consultant, Capacity Building, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India</i></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Shri. Dr. J.B. Rajan, Associate Professor, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)</p> <p>DISCUSSION</p>
1.15-2.00	LUNCH BREAK
2.00-3.15	<p>SESSION 2: PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN KERALA</p>

	<p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <p>Shri. Dr. J. B. Rajan, Associate Professor, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)</p> <p>Shri. M.S. Saju, Joint Director of Fisheries, Ernakulam Zone, Government of Kerala</p> <p>Shri Abdul Jabbar, Valiaparamba GP</p> <p>Shri. Vinod Malayelethu, Team Leader, Marine Conservation Programme, WWF – India</p> <p>Smt Thulasi</p> <p><i>Chair:</i></p> <p>Shri. Dr. P.P. Balan, Consultant, Capacity Building, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India</p> <p>DISCUSSION</p>
3.15- 3.30	TEA -COFFEE BREAK
3.30-5.30	<p>SESSION 3: PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FISHING COMMUNITIES</p> <p><i>Speakers</i></p> <p><i>Comparing Socio-economic Indicators of SC/ST and Fishing Communities in Kerala:</i> Dr. P. Sivanandan, Hon. Director, Centre for Subaltern Studies, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)</p>

	<p>Smt. Amala Shaji, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Kerala</p> <p><i>Empowering Women in Fishing Communities</i>, Shri. Anishkumar M.S., Programme Manager, State Mission Kerala, Kudumbashree</p> <p><i>Traditional Village Panchayats in Coastal Tamil Nadu</i>: Shri. V. Vivekanandan, Trustee, ICSF Trust</p> <p>Nirmala - video</p> <p><i>Chair</i></p> <p>DISCUSSION Shri. John Kurien, Managing Trustee, ICSF Trust</p>
Wednesday, 6th November 2019: Day 2	
9.15-10:45	<p><i>Group Discussions:</i> OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ENHANCING THE ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT</p> <p>(Group 1, Coordinator: Shri. Sebastian Mathew; Rapporteur: Shri. Manas Roshan</p> <p>Group 2, Coordinator: Shri. V. Vivekanandan; Rapporteur: Smt. Ahana Lakshmi, Consultant, ICSF Trust</p> <p>Group 3, Coordinator: Shri. John Kurien; Rapporteurs: Shri. Ajithraj R., Dakshin Foundation, and Shri. Abel Job, Dakshin Foundation</p> <p>Group 4, Coordinator: Shri.Dr. J.B. Rajan; Rapporteur: Smt. Geetha G., Consultant, ICSF Trust</p>
11:00-11:15	TEA-COFFEE BREAK
11.15-12:30	SESSION 4: PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE OF

	<p style="text-align: center;">TENURE</p> <p><i>Speakers</i></p> <p>Shri. Dr. Noorjahan Beevi , Additional Director of Fisheries, Government of Tamil Nadu</p> <p>Shri. S.R. Nagraj, Senior Assistant Director of Fisheries, Government of Karnataka</p> <p>Smt. Usha P.K., Assistant Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala</p> <p>Shri. K.C. Rajeev, Director Board Member, Ernakulam Matsyafed</p> <p>Shri. Thaha Malika, Chairman, Fisheries Standing Committee, Lakshadweep Islands</p> <p>Shri. Arjilli Dasu, Executive Secretary, District Fishermen Welfare Association, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh</p> <p>Shri. Dr. P. Sivanandan, Hon. Director, Centre for Subaltern Studies, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)</p> <p><i>Chair:</i></p> <p>DISCUSSION</p>
1.00-2.00	LUNCH BREAK
2.00-2:40	GROUP PRESENTATION BY RAPPORTEURS

	<p><i>Chair:</i> Shri. Dr. A. Suresh, Principal Scientist, (Indian Council of Agricultural Research - Central Institute of Fisheries Technology)</p> <p>DISCUSSION</p>
2.40-3.30	<p style="text-align: center;">VALEDICTORY SESSION</p> <p><i>Workshop Recommendations</i> Shri. N. Venugopalan, Programme Manager, ICSF Trust</p> <p><i>Valedictory Address</i> Shri. S. M. Vijayanand, Chairman, Sixth State Finance Commission, Government of Kerala (VIDEO)</p> <p><i>Chair</i> Shri. Dr. Joy Elamon. Director, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)</p> <p><i>Vote of Thanks</i> Shri. Manas Roshan, Programme Officer, ICSF Trust</p>



APPENDIX 4

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



ICSF - KILA
National Workshop on Panchayats
(Local Self – Governments) and the SSF Guidelines
KILA, Thrissur, Kerala
5 to 6 November, 2019

CSO/NGOs

1. Shri. Abel Job
Dakshin Foundation
1818, 5th Main, 9th Cross,
Sahakarnagar C Block,
Bangalore - 560092
KARNATAKA
2. Shri. Ajithraj R.
Dakshin Foundation
1818, 5th Main, 9th Cross,
Sahakarnagar C Block,
Bangalore - 560092
KARNATAKA
3. Shri. Alkesh S.K. Kashyap
Honorary Wildlife Warden,
Bishwanath Division Assam
Wetland & Aquaculture expert.
The P.C.C.F. Wildlife, Arainya Bhavan, 2nd floor, Panjabari
Guwahati – 781037
ASSAM
4. Shri. Arjilli Dasu
Executive Secretary,
District Fishermen's Welfare Association,
14-8-27/1A, Bhanojithota, B.C.Road,
Gajuwaka,
Visakhapatnam - 530 026
ANDHRA PRADESH
Tel: 0891 2701 228
Cell: 09849807388
Email: arjillidas@rediffmail.com
5. Smt. Fousiya C.K.
Dakshin Foundation

1818, 5th Main, 9th Cross,
Sahakarnagar C Block,
Bangalore - 560092
KARNATAKA

6. Shri. Mahaboob Khan
Dakshin Foundation
1818, 5th Main, 9th Cross,
Sahakarnagar C Block,
Bangalore - 560092
KARNATAKA
7. Shri. Niraj Sharadro Nakhate
S/O Sharadrao Bijaramji Nakhate
Nagpur Road, Near HP Petrol pump
Vidhyanagar
Wardha - 442001
MAHARASHTRA
8. Smt. Nirmala
Trustee, Sakhi Women's Resource Centre
TC 27/1872, Convent Road, Vanchiyoor
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 035
KERALA
Tel: 0471- 2462251
Email: sakhikerala@gmail.com
9. Shri. Dr. Palanithurai G.
Professor (Retd.)
42, ATS Nagar
Gandhigram 624 302
Dindigul
TAMIL NADU
10. Shri. Pravin Kumar N.
Project Officer
Fish Forward 2
WWF- India
KERALA
Cell: 9600641252
Email: pkumar@wwfindia.net
11. Shri. Shawn Dsouza
Dakshin Foundation
1818, 5th Main, 9th Cross,
Sahakarnagar C Block,
Bangalore - 560092
KARNATAKA

12. Shri. Vinod Malayilethu
Team Leader, Marine Conservation Programme
WWF - India
55/2451, 'Prasanthi', Kadavanthra
Kochi 682020
KERALA
Cell: 09447290728
E-mail: vinodm@wwfindia.net
Email: vinod.malayilethu@wwfpanda.org

Local Self Governments

13. Shri. Abdul Jabbar MT
President, Valiaparamba GP, Neeleswaram Block
Kasaragod District
KERALA
Tel: 0467-2258276
Cell: 9496049676
Email: klksvalgp.lsgd@kerala.gov.in
14. Shri. Ajayakumar C.K.
President, Kadalundi GP, Kozhikode Block
Kozhikode District
KERALA
Tel: 0495-2470227
Cell: 9496048244
Email: secretarykdyy@gmail.com
15. Shri. Basheer Karanaman
Karanaman, S/O Aalikunji,
PO Neduva,
Parappanangadi
Malapuram – 676303
KERALA
Cell: 8547265183
16. Smt. Celeena P.
Alappad
Kollam District
KERALA
Tel: 0476-2826338
Cell: 9496041712
Email: alappadgp@gmail.com
17. Shri. Gajanan KalujAatram
S/o Lakuji Atram
Eklara PO Dhotra
Ralegaon Taluk
Yavatmal District
MAHARASHTRA

18. Shri. Ganpati Rao K.
S/O Musali Naidu Late
1-41, Main Road, Kovilam,
LN Peta, Srikakulam - 532458
ANDHRA PRADESH
19. Shri. George
Kombuthurai
Thothukidu District
TAMIL NADU
Cell: 9788565809
20. Shri. Lourd Raj
S/O Thommai
Tharuvaikulam
Thothukidu District
TAMIL NADU
Cell: 9443021429
21. Shri. Muhammed Kunji C.P.
Chairperson, Ponnani Municipality
Malappuram
KERALA
Tel: 0494-2666236
Cell: 9946119512
Email: chairmanponnani@gmail.com
22. Shri. Narasimharaju B.L.
6-148 Boddu China Venkatayapalem
Mahalakshmi Temple
Tallarevu Mandalam
Koringa, East Godavari – 533461
ANDHRA PRADESH
23. Shri. ShibuK.S.
Panchayat President
Perumbalam Village (Clam work)
KERALA
Cell: 9447721428
Cell: 9496043608
24. Shri. Sreedharan K.
Chairman
Vadakara Municipal, Kozhikode
KERALA
Cell: 9446281225
Email: sreedharan8977@gmail.com
25. Shri. TangavadivelK.E.C.
51, Pillayar Koil Street, Karaikalmedu,

Karaikal
PONDICHERRY
Cell: 9443525885

26. Smt. ThulasibaiK.
President, Kerala Grama Panchayat Association
Panchayat Bhavan, Opp. Kanakakunnu Palace
Thiruvananthapuram
KERALA
Tel: 0471-2325185
Cell: 9447605138
Email: keralagpa@gmail.com
27. Shri. Harikrishnan .J.
28. Coordinator Budhanoor Grama Panchayat, Alappuzha
Suryathara, Budhanoor, Chengannur
Alappuzha - 689510
KERALA
Tel: 0479-2465750
Cell: +91 9447565450

Fishworker Organizations (FWO)

29. Smt. Amala Shaji
SEWA
Sadanand, ANRA 62, Choola Lane,
Anayara P.O.,
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 029
KERALA
Tel: 0471-2470167
Cell: 7293335611
30. Shri. Jackson Pollayil
State President
Kerala Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Federation
Alapuzha,
KERALA
Cell: 9349447166
Email: jacksonpollayil@gmail.com
31. Shri. Milan Das
Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum
Vill. Ramrampur, PO-Diamond Harbour, Dist. South 24 Parganas – 743331.
WEST BENGAL
Cell: 7872407611
Email: mdas1640@gmail.com
32. Shri. Nalini Kant

Manavi, Professors Colony,
Shiv Pahar,
Dumka - 814 101
JHARKHAND
Cell: 9801889613
Email: manavidumka@gmail.com

33. Shri. Narendra Ramachandra Patil
Chairperson
National Fishworkers Forum (NFF)
At & Post - Satpati, (Kharibav)
Palghar,
Thane - 401 405
MAHARASHTRA
Tel: 02525 224 111
Cell: 094226 69050 / 099232 41641
Email: rpatilnarendra@gmail.com
34. Smt. Omana Berly
Secretary, Chellanam Panchayat
Kandakadavu, Kochi
KERALA
Cell: 9562654685
35. Shri. Padmakar B.
House No. 58-14-75/1, Tejashwi Apartment
2nd Floor, Near Children's Park
Off Office Double Road,
Marripalem Vudalayout
Visakhapatnam 530018
ANDHRA PRADESH
Cell: 9505388283
Email: padmakarbojja@gmail.com
Email: pbojja@tatatrussts.org
36. Smt. Purnima Meher
Vice President
Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samitee
Addr 1: At Wadarai Village
Post- K. Mahim, Palaghar,
Dt. Palaghar
Pin - 401 404
MAHARASHTRA
Tel: 025 25628036
Cell: 098928 38203
Email: purnima.meher@yahoo.com
37. Shri. Surendra Mishra
Saran District

Sikati Village
Anjani Panchayat
Parsa Block
WEST BENGAL
Cell: 9113793285

GOVERNMENT

38. Shri. Anishkumar M.S.
Programme Manager
Kudumbashree State Mission Office
Medical College P.O.
Thiruvananthapuram 695011
KERALA
39. Shri. Dr. Balan P.P.
Consultant, Capacity Building
Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India
Sardar Patel Building
Patel Chowk, Police Colony, Connaught Place
New Delhi, Delhi - 110001
Cell: 8547721312
Cell: 7907697250
Email: pp.balan@gov.in
Email: Balanpp25@gmail.com
40. Shri. Dr. Joy Elamon
Director
Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)
Mulamkunnathukavu P O
Thrissur 680 581
KERALA
41. Shri. Majeed C.K.
Director Board Member, Thrissur
Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd
Matsyafed District Office, Thrissur
Mini Civil Station, Triprayar, P.O. Valapad
Thrissur - 680567
KERALA
42. Shri. Mounissamy R.
Director, Department of Fisheries & Fishermen Welfare,
Government of Puducherry,
Fishing Harbour Complex,
Thengaithittu
PUDUCHERRY
43. Smt. Noorjahan Beevi S.
Additional Director of Fisheries

Government of Tamil Nadu
TAMIL NADU

44. Shri. Dr. Rajan J.B.
Associate Professor
Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)
Mulakunnathukavu P O,
Thrissur – 680581
KERALA
Email: jbrajan@kila.ac.in
Tel: 0487 2207080
Cell: 9447817042
45. Shri.Rajeev K.C.
Director Board Member, Ernakulam
Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd (Matsyafed)
Matsyafed District Office Thoppumpady, Kochi
Ernakulam – 682005
KERALA
46. Shri. Ravindran Nair S.
Former Joint Director, Fisheries Department,
Government of Kerala,
ROHITHA
Pangappara P.O.
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 581
KERALA
Tel: 0471 2925 166
Cell: 9447974903
Email: ravinairs@gmail.com
47. Shri. Sahadevan P.
Special Officer, Integrated Coastal Area Development
Kerala State Rural Livelihood Mission
Villa No: 22
Chothy's Royal View
Punchakkri, Thiruvallaom
Thiruvananthapuram 695 027
KERALA
Cell: 9495900670
Cell: 9946379539
Email: sahadevpayyanur@gmail.com
Email: sahadevanpayyadakath@yahoo.co.in
48. Shri. Saju M.S.
Joint Director of Fisheries
Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala
Directorate of Fisheries
Central Zone
Ernakulam

KERALA
Cell: 9846951414
Email: sajumpl@gmail.com

49. Shri. Dr. Sivanandan P.
Honorary Director, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)
Honorary Fellow, Centre for Development Studies (CDS)
Kailas, Prasanth Nagar Road,
Medical College P.O., Ulloor
Thiruvananthapuram – 695011
KERALA
Cell: 9446464573
Email: siva.cds@gmail.com

50. Shri. Dr. Suresh A.
Principal Scientist (Agricultural Economics),
Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (ICAR- CIFT),
CIFT Junction, Willingdon Island,
Matsyapuri (PO),
Cochin-682029,
KERALA
Cell: 7838963081, 9013499172

51. Shri. S. Venkatesapathy
Director of Fisheries, Government of Kerala
Directorate of Fisheries, 4th Floor, Vikas Bhavan
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 033
KERALA
Tel: 0471-2303160
Fax: 0471-2304355
Tel: +91 9496007020
Email: fisheriesdirector@gmail.com

52. Shri. Vijayanand S.M.
Chairman, Sixth Finance Commission, Government of Kerala
Centre for Management Development, Thycaud
Thiruvananthapuram – 695014
KERALA
Tel: 0471 2320101
Fax: (0471) 2331253
Cell: 9868120730
Email: cmdtvm@dataone.in

INTERPRETERS

53. Shri. Lakshmanan P. (Retired Professor)
Thiruvathira
P.O.Koovery
Chapparapadava
Kannur District – 670581

KERALA
Cell: 9446359621
Email: plaxman06@gmail.com

54. Smt. Chandramohan
Email:

55. Smt. Nandini Chavan
Email: nandini.jai@gmail.com

WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION

56. Smt. Ahana Lakshmi
2B, Y226, 6th Main Road,
Anna Nagar,
Chennai - 600 040
Tamil Nadu
Cell: 9840740404
Email: ahanalakshmi@gmail.com

57. Smt. Geetha G.
Program Director
CommunityActionTrust
No. 1, Kannadasan Street, New Balaji Nagar,
3rd Cross, Selaiyur,
Chennai – 600 073
Cell: 9841413468

ICSF SECRETARIAT

58. Smt. Ganga Devi
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
No: 22, First Floor Venkatrathinam Nagar,
Adyar, Chennai - 600 020
Tamil Nadu
Tel: 91-44-24451216
Fax: 91-44-24450216
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net

59. Shri. John Kurien
BN-284, Thanal,
Mahila Samajam Lane,
Bapujinagar
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 011
KERALA
Tel: 0471 2446 989
Cell: 81292 98407
E-mail: kurien.john@gmail.com

60. Shri. Manas Roshan
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
No: 22, First Floor Venkatrathinam Nagar,
Adyar, Chennai - 600 020
Tamil Nadu
Tel: 91-44-24451216
Fax: 91-44-24450216
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net
61. Smt.Nalini Nayak
SEWA
Sadanand, ANRA 62, Choola Lane,
Anayara P.O.,
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 029
KERALA
Tel: 0471 - 2741 675
Cell: 98950 77961
E-mail: nalini.nayak@gmail.com
62. Shri. Sebastian Mathew
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
No: 22, First Floor Venkatrathinam Nagar,
Adyar, Chennai - 600 020
Tamil Nadu
Tel: 91-44-24451216
Fax: 91-44-24450216
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net
63. Shri. Venugopalan
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
No: 22, First Floor Venkatrathinam Nagar,
Adyar, Chennai - 600 020
Tamil Nadu
Tel: 91-44-24451216
Fax: 91-44-24450216
E-mail: icsf@icsf.net
64. Shri. VivekanandanV.
Fisheries Management Resource Centre
T.C.24/1911, N.C.Hospital Road,
Thycaud,
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 014
KERALA
Cell: 98470 84840
E-mail: vivek@siffs.org