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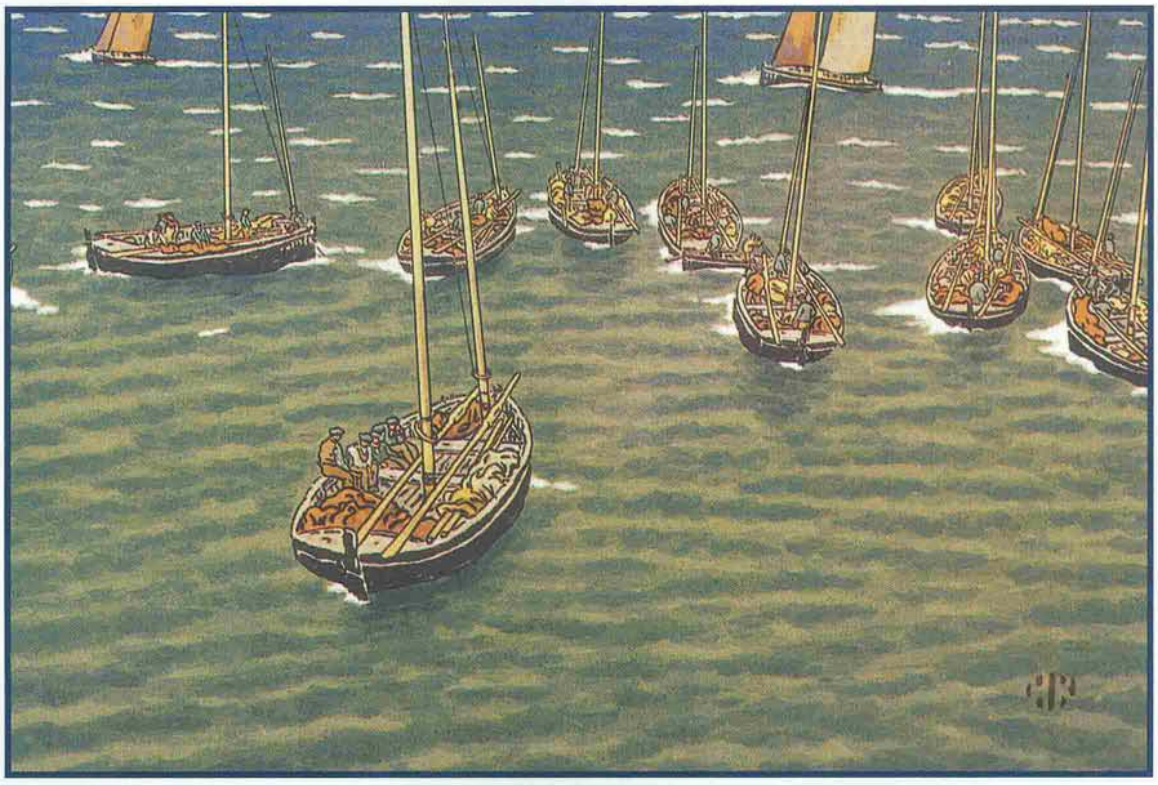
SAMUDRA REPORT

INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS



Contents

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Comment

Small scale, large agenda

The 25th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO) was held from 24 to 28 February 2003 at Rome. Notably, one of the agenda items was on 'Strategies for Increasing the Sustainable Contribution of Small-scale Fisheries to Food Security and Poverty Alleviation'. The last time small-scale fisheries was on the agenda of COFI was 20 years ago, in 1983, in the lead-up to the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development in 1984.

The inclusion of this agenda item was particularly appropriate, given the recently organized World Food Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, both of which focused on the importance of eradicating hunger and poverty. It was also appropriate in view of the process being initiated by the FAO to develop "voluntary guidelines to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food", as a follow-up to the World Food Summit.

The inclusion of this agenda item once again reaffirmed the important role small-scale fisheries plays, especially in the developing world, in providing income, employment and in contributing to food security.

What was needed, however, was a much stronger endorsement that the small-scale model of fisheries development is inherently more suitable, even on grounds of environmental sustainability, a key issue of concern today. In this context, it is worth recalling the observation made in the report of a joint study by the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, Commission of the European Communities and FAO in 1992, titled A Study of International Fisheries Research:

"...in many situations, the comparative advantages may lie with the small-scale sector. It is labour intensive, consumes less fuel, generally uses more selective gear, and is less dependent on imported equipment and materials. The small-scale sector's capital is owned locally, often by the fishers themselves. And because the small-scale fishers depend on resources adjacent to their communities, they have a greater self-interest than large-scale fishers in management of their fisheries."

With many fisheries the world over showing evident signs of overfishing, the imperative is to create a policy environment supportive of small-scale fisheries using selective gear. One of the most crucial prerequisites for this, as mentioned in the paper prepared by the FAO Secretariat for this agenda item, is the need for "better management through the allocation of secure fishing rights—backed by appropriate legislation—to small-scale fishers in coastal and inland zones and their effective protection from industrial fishing activity or activities that degrade aquatic resources and habitats."

Moreover, in view of the increasing technological capacity of the small-scale fleet to harvest resources in deeper waters, as well as the greater pressure on inshore resources, it is appropriate that governments extend the areas reserved for exclusive exploitation by the small-scale fleet within their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). This will also, in no small measure, contribute to increasing safety at sea, as many accidents result from both the industrial and small-scale fleets using the same marine space. Many small-scale fishworkers have lost their craft and gear, and even their lives, as a result of accidents involving industrial fleets.

A clear recognition of the inherent superiority of the small-scale model of fisheries development and a reallocation of resources in favour of small-scale fisheries, is the need of the hour. Given that it is State policies that have supported industrial fisheries, often at the expense of both small-scale fisheries and environmental sustainability, and even in areas where small-scale fleets are capable of operating effectively, a reorientation of these policies is urgent.

A vote for small-scale fisheries would be a vote for long-term socioeconomic and environmental benefits over short-term profits, for livelihoods and a dignified existence for many over benefits for a few.

Boosting fish supplies

Aquaculture, a relatively new potential for fish resource in several Arab States, is currently being expanded to boost local landings

Fish landings from marine, brackish and fresh waters or from aquaculture provide a vital source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well-being for people throughout the world, for both present and future generations.

Fisheries resources from the waters bordering the 22 Arab States as well as from inland waters and mariculture are considered a very important sector for development. If rationally and scientifically exploited, fisheries could play a much more important role in meeting increased demand for food, and in improving the economies of several countries.

The coastlines of the Arab States total just over 23,000 km in length and have a continental shelf area of about 608,000 sq km. Inland water bodies are estimated to have an area of about 7.2 mn hectares, consisting of deltas, water marshes, water reservoirs, lagoons, rivers, lakes, etc. Marine waters border the Arab countries from all sides: the Arab and Oman Gulfs in the east, the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean in the south, the Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Atlantic Ocean in the west. In addition, the Red Sea and various smaller gulfs, rivers—mainly the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates—the natural lakes and man-made lakes—mainly Lake Nasser in Egypt, Lake Nubia in the Sudan and Lake Assad in Syria—which constitute inland water resources, afford the Arab States very important potential for increased fish landings. Furthermore, the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) expands Arab marine waters to rich international fishing grounds. Aquaculture, in marine and freshwater bodies, which is a relatively new fish resource potential available to several Arab States, is another source that is currently being expanded to boost local landings.

Fish landings by all Arab States from all sources in 2000 totalled 2.5 mn tonnes or about 1.9 per cent of world fish landings of 130.4 mn tonnes in the same year, as estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The contribution of fish from aquaculture to Arab fish landings from both marine and fresh waters has been quite significant in recent years. In 1997, the total aquaculture production from marine and freshwater sources was 98,000 tonnes, increasing to 170,000 tonnes in 1998, followed by an even larger increase in 1999 and 2000 to 252,000 tonnes and 366,000 tones, respectively, that is, an increase of 49 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively. Considering that the 1984 production was only 22,000 tonnes, these landings show real progress in aquaculture in the Arab world.

Aquaculture is important in meeting the demand for fish as food from a rapidly growing world population and to counter the dwindling catches from marine and freshwater capture fisheries. Aquaculture's importance the world over is clear, as it grows each year at an increasing rate—accounting for 28 per cent of total world catches in 2000.

Freshwater resources

The Arab world is no exception to this trend. Several States with freshwater resources—such as Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and Syria—have practised aquaculture for many years, although on a subsistence basis. However, in recent years, such practices have been widely commercialized. Other States—such as Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain—where freshwater resources are scarce are currently engaged in

Table 1: Marine Aquaculture Production in Arab Countries (tonnes) 1997-2000

Country	1997	1998	1999	2000
Algeria	81	64	65	74
Bahrain	4	4	5	12
Egypt	64,417	123,897	190,871	303,573
Jordan	0	117	449	489
Kuwait	204	220	264	376
Morocco	1,129	954	1,160	862
Oman	4,698	4,081	6,454	4,851
Qatar	2	0	0	0.5
Saudi Arabia	892	1,861	1,390	2,086
Tunisia	865	944	287	719
United Arab Emirates	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total	72,292.5	132,142.5	200,945.5	313,043

Table 2 : Freshwater Aquaculture Production in Arab Countries (tonnes) 1997-2000:

Country	1997	1998	1999	2000
Algeria	241	219	185	201
Egypt	9,037	15,492	35,406	36,520
Iraq	3,400	7,500	2,183	1,745
Jordan	200	176	66	80
Lebanon	300	400	300	400
Libya	100	100	100	100
Morocco	1,055	1,150	1,560	985
Saudi Arabia	3,798	3,240	3,662	3,918
Sudan	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Syria	5,596	7,233	6,079	6,797
Tunisia	1,010	898	808	834
Total	25,737	37,408	51,348	52,580

Table 3: Aquaculture Production in Arab Countries (Marine and Freshwater) (tonnes) 1997-2000

Country	1997	1998	1999	2000
Algeria	322	283	250	275
Bahrain	4	4	5	12
Egypt	73,454	139,389	226,276	340,093
Iraq	3,400	7,500	2,183	1,745
Jordan	200	293	515	569
Kuwait	204	220	264	376
Lebanon	300	400	300	400
Libya	100	100	100	100
Morocco	2,184	2,104	2,720	1,847
Oman	4,698	4,081	6,454	4,851
Qatar	2	0	0	0.5
Saudi Arabia	4,690	5,101	5,052	6,004
Sudan	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Syria	5,596	7,233	6,079	6,797
Tunisia	1,875	1,842	1,095	1,553
United Arab Emirates	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total	98,029.5	169,550.5	252,293.5	365,623

mariculture activities by farming fish in cages along their coastlines.

Countries such as United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman have also established research centres with the aim of developing mariculture in their waters. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are leading the other Arab States in commercial shrimp culture along their coasts on the Red and the Mediterranean Seas.

Some research centres, especially in the Arabian Gulf region, are experimenting on farming shrimp, as in UAE. The results of their research work are being passed on to the private sector, considered the main potential investor in this sector.

The main species farmed are those indigenous species that are popular in each individual State. In Egypt and the Sudan, tilapia is farmed. Tilapia is also being grown in Saudi Arabia, where Egyptian and Sudanese minorities live.

In Egypt, carp is farmed in rice fields. In most of the States of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE, *Seirranidae* spp. (groupers) are farmed. Also, *Siganus* (rabbit fish) is especially popular, particularly in Bahrain. Shrimp (mainly *Pennaes semisilcatus*) is being commercially farmed in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to the above commercial operations, there are several experimental projects aimed at developing commercial cage farming of sea bass and sea bream on the Mediterranean coast in Egypt, with the aim of exporting production to European countries to generate hard currency earnings. Some farms are also being established in desert areas in Egypt, using underground water resources. It is expected that when research studies on fish farming show better investment feasibility, and the technology knowhow becomes more readily available, fish from aquaculture production will expand even more substantially.

The FAO World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996 defined food security as existing "...when all people at all times, have a physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".

With this definition in mind, fish may play an important role in supplementing the minimum diet of the populations at large, and, in particular, sectors having low purchasing power.

Source of income

In addition, fish has a role to play in food security even if fishworkers themselves cannot afford to eat fish, as long as the fishery provides them with an income sufficient to buy other foods.

In many developing countries, fish plays a significant role in food security through its contribution to people's well-being and incomes, including hard currency earnings from exports, and as a readily available food supply. This is more evident with populations living in coastal areas and around population concentrations living around rivers, lakes and reservoirs. To feed themselves, these concentrations engage in aquaculture activities of locally demanded fish species through small enterprises that also supply surplus catches to nearby markets for immediate consumption by consumers living in the same communities. Besides providing income for fish farmers, such farming also provides fish at low prices for consumers. Such aquaculture by small holders of fish farms is being practised in States like Egypt, Iraq, Sudan, and Syria. Its possible expansion will undoubtedly boost fish supplies in rural areas and ensure more fish enters the markets in urban areas. That will also help conserve much-needed hard currencies by reducing fish imports. It will also make protein available cheaply for the masses.

While it is generally believed that most marine and inland capture fisheries resources are fully exploited, there is an urgent need for the Arab States to increase domestic fish production, and engage more in aquaculture production from marine and freshwater resources. In countries where there are heavy population concentrations, like Egypt, Iraq and Sudan, aquaculture is most beneficial if practised also at the community level (as a cottage industry), especially in communities living around coastal areas and inland water bodies.

The total fish landings attributed to the Arab States from marine, freshwater and brackish water have stabilized over the last few years at around 2-2.5 mn tonnes a year, amidst increasing population growth, and this level of production may continue for years to come. Though long practised for subsistence purposes in some States (mainly Egypt), on a commercial scale, aquaculture is a relatively new development. An increase in production from capture fisheries is still possible through better management and conservation and will probably occur in response to intensified fisheries activities. However, it is very unlikely to keep pace with population growth; nor is the supply of the most sought-after and easily caught fish species likely to be maintained. The challenge here is organizing and stimulating production from fish resources so that the per capita supply of fish for food does not decline in the face of population growth, but, rather, increases.

No roots yet

Aquaculture is yet to take strong roots in most of the Arab States, especially those with substantial fish imports, like Egypt

and Saudi Arabia. In order to sufficiently develop aquaculture, governments and research institutions concerned will need to increase and improve research, whose findings could then be applied inland and along the long coastlines.

The involvement of the governments' research centres is essential to establish the feasibility of projects and to encourage the private sector and industry to invest in such projects. Research in aquaculture must address improvements in technologies, contribute to a reduction in the cost of production, and consider the increasing need to ensure that aquaculture is environmentally safe and that farming indigenous and popularly demanded species—as well as the possible introduction of new species—can be achieved without endangering the ecological balance.

Sustainable aquaculture development calls for certain measures to improve the quality of water used by fish farmers, and farm management technologies, as well as environment-friendly coastal and inland water sites. If these are ensured, aquaculture projects can be efficiently, effectively and profitably implemented.

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Individual transferable quotas

In search of fish and chips

The Viaduct Basin, home to most of Auckland's fishing fleet, has changed irrevocably

I couldn't buy fish and chips in Ponsonby; at least, not the old way from a fishmonger's, with the waterfront window's fascinating display of diverse kinds of fresh fish—big, small, whole, filleted, even heads—and the occasional strange squid.

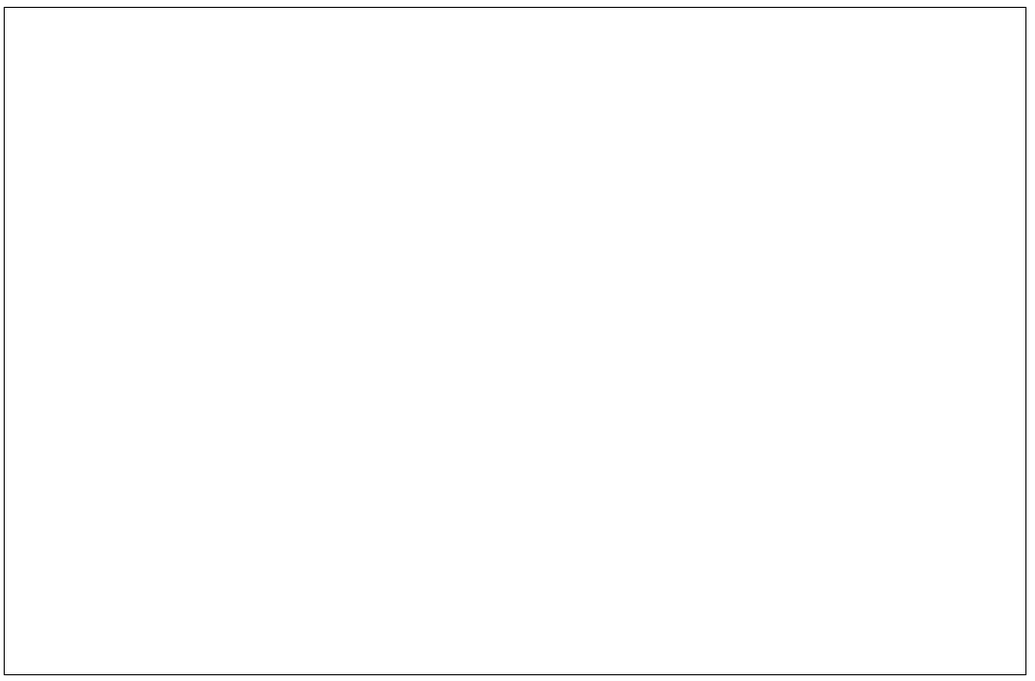
I'd gone back to Ponsonby for an anniversary and to search for the remnants of my childhood. What was once a working-class suburban shopping centre is now a trendy upmarket centre of restaurants and boutiques. Then, in my childhood, the special treat after doing the Saturday night paper round was eating fish and chips—hot, salty, succulent, wrapped in newspaper and extracted with burning fingers through a tear at the end of the packet. Standing at the corner newspaper stand outside the pub was an excuse to watch with avid fascination what I then thought was perdition, as workers and drunks shambled out after the 6 o'clock swill. It was, I now realize, virtually my first contact with the fishing industry. More significantly, prime, fresh, locally caught species were readily available at affordable prices and made up the staple diet for many in the local population.

Later, in the early 1980s, just a year or so before the individual transferable quota (ITQ) system was introduced, I had a six-month research project based on the Viaduct Basin, home to most of Auckland's fishing fleet. The Viaduct is squeezed between the industrial waterfront of cement silos, shipbuilding or repair slipways, the tank farm and oil tanker berths and Auckland's central business district. It was closed off by the road and wharves and split by the lifting bridge, which allowed boats in or out and gave the area its name. Larger boats, trawlers, barges or others awaiting repair, refurbishing or demolition, berthed on the outside, while the wharf broke the northerly swell and sheltered an incredible diversity of smaller boats on the inside. Then, the Harbour Board workshops, the fruit and vegetable markets, big and small fishing companies, the gear suppliers and other support industries surrounded the Viaduct. Despite rubbing shoulders with the Harbour Board repair facilities and their workboats, the timbers of the old fishermen's wharves were rotting and, in places, barricaded off.

Then it was home to big-company, smaller-company fleets and owner-operator boats. The big-company boats, Sanford and Jaybel Nichimo's, were mainly medium-sized, steel trawlers (40 - 60 footers). Many of the smaller-company boats were older, more traditional wooden fishing boats; a few had even steamed from the United Kingdom to form fleets of three to five. But owner-operator boats were numerically dominant, and, by far, the most diverse, including Danish seiners, longliners and a few setnetters. Between 150 and 200 boats used the Viaduct and formed a thriving multicultural industry; with a leavening of Maori, a good representation of Dalmatian—certainly the backbone of the industry—some Dutch, the hoi polloi of Kiwi and, no doubt, other ethnic groups too.

Chaotic scene

I was living on Waiheke Island, just 35 fast ferry minutes from downtown Auckland, but even arriving at dawn on the workers' boat, the Viaduct was chaotic. Dozens of boats, scores of people, crews unloading, stacked crates of fish, buyers haggling with skippers and themselves over boxes of snapper, trevalli, gurnard, leatherjackets, kingfish, flounder, dogfish,



sorted for export or local shops, scaled, cleaned and gutted to later grace the window displays.

Fishermen were beginning to learn of exports for the lucrative Japanese *iki jimi* snapper market. Starter motor-driven reel line haulers were replacing hand pulling and the ubiquitous bicycle inner tube 'Frenchies', and new methods for catching and handling fish were being developed with a fervour of innovation. It was all bustle. Cars, trucks and utes (utility trucks) were coming and going but, as morning wore on, the chaos eased. Satisfied or disappointed with the returns, the fishermen's excitement dwindled but the chores remained as boat or dock crews cleaned, loaded ice or prepared for the next trip. Afternoons were often more subdued, with gear, electronic, boat repair or maintenance experts focused on their tasks.

Then skippers and crews fuelled, loaded up on ice, and even before the gear was stowed, dropped warps and slipped out for their next trip, under the raised bridge, into the harbour and out into the reaches of the Hauraki Gulf, or the secretive recesses and estuaries behind the islands of the inner gulf. Seagulls and gawkers rubbernecked throughout, past the curious, bystanders and passers-by, office workers on lunch break, and tourists gaping at another world. In general, the Viaduct was a masculine domain and other than bystanders and passers-by, there were few women around. One of the small trawlers or Danish seiners supposedly did have a woman skipper, and some skippers' wives were part of the regular crew on a couple of the longliners or setnetters, while other wives occasionally did form part of the crew. It was only later that I discovered hidden participation, where wives "kept the books" and provided shore liaison and other necessary support with buyers.

Fresh fish for the local shops and the fish and chips I'd so enjoyed seemed to be mainly supplied by this motley fleet of owner-operator boats. The longliners targeting snapper were the most numerous. They were a collection of older, converted launches for mullets, including a couple of converted yachts that showcased a history of pleasurable design, ranging from the long counters and plumb stems of the pre- and early 1900s to the contemporary flybridge cruisers.

Popular boats

Some of the earlier boats had been extensively rebuilt. Others had been well maintained through a long working life. Such boats had been popular, not just for their cheap price in the 1970s, when there was a large influx into the fishery, but also for their economy in handling. While many were converted pleasure craft, others, especially the 'mulleties' and

snapper boats had been purpose-built for fishing under sails. The former were used for setnets up the estuaries for mullet, while the latter were fuller bodied craft targeting snapper; both were well equipped to race the catch back to the market.

Initially surprised that most fishermen were not anxious to move to modern, purpose-designed vessels, I was assured time and again that the old boats were better. They'd been designed traditionally for comfort and function in the Gulf, and their narrow, gutted, low freeboard hulls were easily driven and, therefore, thrifty on fuel. Also, the long and low forward but higher aft meant they sat easily head to wind, as the fishermen worked in the cockpit, setting or hauling lines over the transom and well sheltered from the elements.

Only remnants of this fleet remain. Many, like the skippers who ran them, are near retirement anyway. Others have been converted back to pleasure craft; still others lie in various stages of disrepair in the coves and bay around the Gulf. Two are on the beach under the trees just a few hundred yards along the foreshore. One is a bare, deckless hull, which lost its topsides when it sank at the mooring during one of the summer storms. Now on the shoreline, it exposes to the elements and to the gaze of anyone interested, the workmanship of carvel planking on steam-bent ribs. The other is being rebuilt in a more houseboat style by the liveaboards. More relevantly, the old fishing culture of the Viaduct has gone and, with it, most of the people who supported and were supported by it.

At that time, about 30 boats, roughly one-third of the longline fleet, were based on Waiheke Island. They supported families and crew and many other economic enterprises on the island. But under ITQs, by 1996, the 'Quota Bible' listed only four quota owners living on the island. Now those fishermen have moved into charter fishing, running trips for recreational fishers and tourists.

When ITQs were first introduced, some of the Viaduct fishermen, especially part-timers, were ineligible for quotas, while others got less than required for a viable enterprise. Some sold out early, losing their chosen occupation but getting sufficient money to set up alternative businesses.

Economic operations

The shrewd ones took buy-backs on larger, older vessels, and then set up leaner, more economic operations for non-quota species. Others tried to continue. Inevitably, with fish stocks varying from season to season, fishermen face fluctuating fortunes. Some, of course, have done well. Others, with quota as

their only available tradable asset, have had to sell out, usually to companies, and lease back to raise funds for unexpected repairs or to tide over a bad season.

In addition, under the quota system, the Ministry of Fisheries instituted a system of cost recovery to retrieve the costs expended as a result of the commercial fishery. The Department of Conservation has added levies to compensate for costs and damage to the environment. Though they once dominated the industry, the attrition rate of owner-operators has been high and their numbers have declined drastically.

Much of the quota was bought up by the big companies. By 1995, the top 30, representing just five or six consortia, owned 91 per cent of the total quota. Eighty per cent of the quota is for deep-water species, but these companies also owned 72 per cent of the quota for inshore species. In addition to these vertically integrated corporates, there are, of course, many other companies bigger than the traditional family firms of owner-operators.

Many fishermen lease quota from them, with the cost of the lease, and uncertainty of quota availability, adding to their economic woes. The companies say they ease the paperwork, which was indeed an added chore for more practical minded fishermen. Certainly, by 1999, independent fishermen were a disappearing breed, "angry, disillusioned, disheartened and frustrated, to say the least" (*Seafood New Zealand*, July 1999, p39).

It is ironic because these men had been the biggest voice calling on the government to save the fish stocks. Yet, with the ITQ system, they, more than any other sector of the industry, lost their chosen means of livelihood.

More positively, the local remnants of Waiheke quota owners, who are no longer 'commercial fishermen', but still in the chartering game, say the ITQ system has improved the amount of fish around the island. The companies that have the quota are using converted trawlers to longline in deeper waters, leaving more fish in the favourite fishing spots inshore.

With the fisheries privatized, the Viaduct became upmarket. No longer 'The Viaduct', it has been commandeered by international corporate advertising and is now 'The American Express Viaduct Harbour', taken over for billionaire superyachts, and the America's Cup yacht syndicates. The big fishing companies are still in the vicinity but now the area has been redeveloped with 'public spaces', streetscaping, plazas and cafes, and specialized retail and luxury apartments. Only a few small fishing boats and the larger trawlers remain.

There are still fish shops in Auckland that sell fresh fish and even fish and chips; but not as many as there used to be. There is also a retail market and restaurant near the Viaduct redevelopment area. French fries and fish are readily available from the fast food outlets and takeaway bars, occasionally even wrapped in newsprint, but more generally in cartons. Instead of snapper, trevalli and terakihi, now its usually deepwater mass-caught hoki, a whiptail related to hake, from off the West coast of the South Island or, for a while some years ago, according to rumour, from Chile. The prime species we used to enjoy can still be found but at luxury prices. There are certainly more seafood commodities and aquacultured greenlipped mussel in the supermarkets, but nothing like the locally caught fresh fish we used to enjoy. Despite living on Waiheke Island in the middle of what was once the nation's biggest coastal fishery, it is a year or so since my family has bought fresh, locally caught fish. Since the fish shop closed, the little that is available is far too expensive.

Good old days

But that's nostalgia. So much for the good old days! New Zealand is a country of progress, privatized and liberalized. We have ITQs! The Fishing Industry has reinvented itself as the Seafood Industry. Certainly, there are more factory jobs for workers, but not self-sufficient businesses and freedom of occupation for independent fishermen. The seafood industry is a thriving one that exports to predominantly luxury markets. The biggest companies have stakes and joint ventures in overseas companies, and operate with a global strategy. Supposedly, most New Zealand quota is

still controlled by New Zealanders or companies that are still predominantly owned in New Zealand. But there have been suggestions that foreign interests have set up front companies with New Zealanders being only nominal owners of the quota (Peter Talley, *Fishing News International*, Vol.38, No.3, March 1999).

Other vital sectors of the country's infrastructure—banking, railways, electricity and telecommunications—have been largely sold off to overseas interests. We have lost our sovereignty. Even our biggest fishing company is part owned by a Japanese corporation and there is pressure for quota to go the same way. The fact that communities, small fishers and local people have missed out is a cost that is not considered by the ITQ system.

This article is by Leith Duncan (mile@ihug.co.nz), an environmental fisheries consultant based in New Zealand

Fisheries partnership agreements

Goodbye to irresponsible fishing?

The new fisheries partnership agreements being advocated by the European Union may eliminate irresponsible fishing practices

In December 2002, after a lengthy and gruelling process of review, consultation and negotiation, the European Union (EU) put the finishing touches to a package of long-overdue fishery reforms. The previous year, in its analysis of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the European Commission (EC) had acknowledged that, after 20 years, the CFP "has not delivered sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources". In particular, it noted that:

- available fishing capacity of the Community fleets far exceeds that required to harvest fish in a sustainable manner;
- the overcapacity in EU fleets has resulted in overexploitation of target stocks and excessive pressure on non-target species; and
- the fishing industry is economically fragile as a result of over-investment, rapidly rising costs and a shrinking resource base.

The reforms were announced on 23 December 2002, following a five-day meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers from the 15 EU Member States. According to the press release issued by them, the reforms would place more emphasis on "the sustainable exploitation of living aquatic resources, based on sound scientific advice and on the precautionary approach to fisheries management, on the one hand, and on sustainable aquaculture, on the other. The CFP has now been firmly integrated within the Community's policy on sustainable development, taking account of environmental, economic and social aspects in a balanced manner."

Fine sounding words these may well be, but there is a highly uncompromising underlying message: if Europe wishes to maintain a healthy fishing sector in the long term, drastic short-term reductions in fishing capacity are needed. The implications are as plain as they are stark. Without fish stocks, there can be no fisheries. And if European fish stocks are collapsing, then either the fishery sector has to follow suit or find alternative resources outside Europe. Likewise, fish consumers will have to depend increasingly on fish caught outside Europe, or face up to eating less wild-caught fish. Much greater emphasis will, therefore, have to be placed on Europe's international policy if the balance between supply and demand (for fishing opportunities and fishery products) is to be maintained.

The package of reforms for Europe's international fishing policy is to consist of three main elements:

- an action plan to eradicate illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing;
- an integrated framework for fisheries partnership agreements (FPAs) with third countries; and
- a research initiative towards assessments of resources in external waters.

Eagerly awaited

The public announcement of the finer details, particularly about fisheries agreements, has been eagerly awaited. The ground has been well laid. In 1997, acknowledging the growing crisis in Community waters and a growing fish supply deficit, the Council of Fishery Ministers had confirmed that fisheries

agreements would remain an integral part of the CFP.

Past fisheries agreements negotiated by the EU have come in for some stinging criticism. In addition to providing subsidized access for Europe's fishing industry, thereby encouraging fishing beyond sustainable levels, it has been argued that, in many cases, fisheries agreements conflict directly with the development of the local fishing sector. Furthermore, scientific advice about overexploited stocks has often been ignored. This has caused many observers to claim that such agreements were incoherent with the EU's policies for both development co-operation and for sustainable development, and, as such, were "illegal" under the terms of the European Treaty.

In response to such criticisms, in 2000, the EC issued a Communication on Fisheries and Poverty Reduction. For the first time, a link was officially made between the policy objectives for development co-operation and those of fishing. A number of key issues were identified as prerequisite for the sustainable development of the fishing sector in developing countries. Then, in 2001, during the CFP reform process discussions, the EC committed itself to ensuring "sustainable and responsible fisheries outside Community waters with the same commitment as in its own waters"; and "sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources both in its own external fisheries activities and in international trade in fisheries products."

The European Commission has now taken this a step further by proposing that EU fisheries bilateral relations move from access agreements to fisheries partnership agreements (FPAs), which contribute to responsible fishing in the mutual interest of the parties concerned. They contend that FPAs will ensure both that the interests of the EU distant-water fleet (DWF) are protected and that the conditions to achieve sustainable fisheries in the waters of the partner concerned are strengthened.

The EC proposal makes a number of claims, assertions and propositions. Of prime significance is that the EU has no intention to diminish its presence in international and third-country waters. It contends that the experience of the past years has shown that with the departure of the Community fleet from third-country fishing grounds, the amount of fishing does not decrease, but stays the same or is even increased, as Community vessels are replaced by vessels from other third countries or by vessels flying flags of convenience.

European fleets

Furthermore, this would also lead to a situation whereby the European DWF will be replaced by other DWFs, whose criteria

and conditions may not conform to those of a global sustainable fisheries policy. For those familiar with the behaviour of European fleets in many third-country waters, this contention is surprising.

In the past, and even where there are formal agreements between the EU and third countries, there have been serious violations. For example, in Madagascar two French tuna vessels operating under the EU-Madagascar fisheries agreement were recently caught fishing illegally by the Malagasy authorities. The reaction of COBRECAF, the company that owns the vessel, to the fine imposed (some 530,000 Euros) has been to threaten to boycott the Malagasy ports.

In early January 2003, in Mauritania, several Spanish octopus trawlers, in a serious breach of the agreement, were caught with considerable quantities of undersize octopus. Last year, the organization owning these vessels was quoted in the Spanish press as admitting that often up to 80 per cent of the catch of their vessels consisted of juveniles—a clear violation of the terms of the agreement.

These examples highlight the highly irresponsible approach of a "bandit" section of the European fishing industry, and a policy framework that is clearly highly unsatisfactory. It is hoped that the new FPA approach being advocated by the EU will make such irresponsible European fishing practices a thing of the past.

The EC also proposes that FPAs integrate the objectives of sustainable fisheries development, including components related to the management of resources, control and fleet management.

In particular, the evaluation of the available surplus in third-country waters must be in line with the principle of ownership of the fishing policy by the coastal State and be based on sound scientific and technical advice, as defined in Article 62 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Fishing possibilities must be in line with, and based on, best available scientific data, so as to avoid overexploitation of stocks, and in the interest of the local populations and for the long-term sustainability of their fishery sector.

Such an approach is to be welcomed, but the EU must take into account scientific advice from sources other than its own concerning the issue of surplus resources. In the past, its fisheries agreements have been a major factor in resource overexploitation simply because other sources of scientific advice have been ignored or disputed.

For this approach to be successful, the EU and its partners must also ensure that a common framework exists for similar partnership agreements to be signed by competing distant-water interests, and that coastal States do not trade off their surplus resources several times over. FPAs assume that the partnerships include both the resource owners and the other, competing, resource seekers.

The EC proposal argues that management of the (third-country) fleet may cover the eventual inclusion of European DWF into the fishing fleet of the partner. FPAs can provide the appropriate legal framework and financial instruments reflecting the development objectives of partners, and encouraging the transfer of technology, capital and knowhow by the promotion of joint enterprises between Community interests and those from the coastal States concerned.

Directly linked to this is the Commission policy to phase out subsidies for vessel transfers to third countries by December 2004. The new regulation governing the structure of the European fleet notes that "consistency should be ensured between the policy for restructuring the fisheries sector and other aspects of the Common Fisheries Policy, in particular, the objective of achieving a stable and enduring balance between the capacity of fishing fleets and the fishing opportunities available to them in Community waters and outside Community waters.

Financial support

Since this balance can be achieved only by capacity withdrawal, Community financial support to the fisheries sector through the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) should be

concentrated mainly on the scrapping of fishing vessels and public aid for fleet renewal should be permitted only until 31 December 2004."

This regulation also restricts subsidized vessel transfers to situations where there exists a fisheries agreement between the EC and the third country of transfer. It also demands that appropriate guarantees exist and that international law is not likely to be infringed, particularly with respect to the conservation and management of marine resources or other objectives of the CFP and with respect to working conditions of fishermen.

On the issue of subsidies, the EC contends that the financial contribution (for access) made available by the Community cannot be considered as a subsidy to the European fishermen. This contribution is justified by the need for the Community, by mutual interest, to provide adequate support to the development and the management of a sustainable fishing policy in the third countries where the European DWF fleet is operating. A clear distinction will be made between the part of the financial contribution given in exchange of fishing possibilities for European vessels and the part of the financial contribution devoted to fisheries partnership actions, such as stock assessments, and monitoring, control and surveillance activities. The private sector shall progressively assume greater responsibility for the financial contribution.

For the future, the Community financial contributions will have to be regarded as investments for the improvement of responsible and rational fishing and, therefore, based on new considerations. This contribution mainly covers expenses linked to management costs, the scientific assessment of fish stocks, fisheries management, control and monitoring of fishing activities, as well as expenses for the follow-up and evaluation of a sustainable fishing policy.

Implicit in this proposition is that the amount invested in the improvement of responsible and rational fishing will not be linked to the levels of access granted to the European DWF. There will, therefore, need to be a fixed level of investment agreed to by the EU, while the amounts paid by the vessel owners will vary according to the access granted.

Cash for access

Perhaps the most significant change between the former "cash for access" fisheries agreements and the FPAs proposed, concerns the commercial nature of the agreements. In the past, access was achieved through a commercial negotiation process, where significant and highly inequitable differences existed between the

negotiating partners. The EC is now proposing that FPAs be concluded only after a process of political dialogue, where it is necessary:

- first, to examine the political objectives of the Community commitments to promote policy dialogue in fisheries matters; and
- second, to identify and define the measures that should be set up in order to achieve the political objectives jointly identified by the EC and its partners.

In response to the FPA proposal, the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) has initiated a wide consultation and, based on this, has put forward a position statement. This notes that development and environment non-government organizations (NGOs) favour fair and sustainable partnerships between the EU and third countries, that promote the long-term viability of marine ecosystems and fish stocks, securing sustainable livelihoods and food security in third countries. Therefore, NGOs welcome the communication from the Commission on FPAs, in as much as it proposes to establish responsible fishing on a sustainable basis. This is an important shift from the more commercial approach applied until now. Of particular importance is the commitment to conduct sustainability impact assessments as an integral part of the FPAs.

However, the communication fails to take into account the conflict of interests that may exist between the two parties, given the potentially contradictory objectives of these FPAs (which, on the one hand, wish to secure access to third countries' waters, while, on the other, wish to promote sustainable fisheries). This needs to be clearly spelt out, and the political decision-making process needs to establish how such conflicting interests can be resolved. Provisions also need to be put in place for public consultation both in the EU and in the third country that involve the primary stakeholders (that is, fishing communities).

While the communication advocates a change of approach, it is short on concrete, operational actions. Our welcome to the communication is, therefore, cautious, and we reserve judgement until the FPAs are put into practice.

Prerequisite Conditions

Establishing an equitable framework for fisheries partnerships between the EU and ACP States for sustainable and responsible fisheries, and with both fisheries and development objectives, will require full transparency *vis-à-vis* access rights granted to other distant water fishing nations (DWFNs).

It is, therefore, prerequisite for their success that FPAs are built into a wider fisheries and development framework that addresses the issue of foreign fleets as a whole (and not just restricted to EU fleets), while paying heed to the regional aspect of certain issues.

It is also important to recognize that there are some contradictory interests between the EU and developing countries, and that some political arbitration will be necessary to clarify the priorities. Therefore, there is a need for a wide-ranging discussion of these issues (of contradictory interests) in the parliaments, while consulting with the fisheries sector stakeholders. In the case of the ACP States, organizing such a debate with proper participation must be supported by appropriate means.

It is also important that, if partnerships for sustainable fisheries are to be developed on a long-term basis, the "access" component of the FPA must be temporary, and should decrease (and disappear) if and when the local capacity to exploit fisheries resources is developed. In particular, socioeconomic and environmental impact assessment studies should be made public and widely debated prior to any renewal of th e FPA.

The CFFA statement urges the EU to establish guidelines for FPAs, rather than negotiate from scratch with each partner. Based on the experience and shortcomings of current fisheries agreements, these guidelines would include the following aspects:

Resource Management: The rationale for EU-ACP relations is strongly driven by the EU's internal fisheries problems and concerns (for example, overcapacity and resource depletion problems), and

securing supplies for its growing market (with raw material the priority), so that the benefits of adding value accrue to EU Member States.

The issue of the surplus resources to which the EU fleets may have access raises potential contradictions between EU and third-country interests.

On the one hand, the EC proposes that "wherever possible...the FPA shall support measures aiming at promoting the creation of joint ventures, transfer of technologies, investments and capacity management for the benefit of the fishing industry...", but, on the other, that "financial contribution will be justified by a mutual interest of the two parties to invest in sustainable fisheries policy and not just as a payment for access rights to fishing possibilities for the benefit of European fishing enterprises."

The amount of financial contribution invested should, therefore, not be linked to the level of fishing possibilities given by the third State.

Control/Surveillance: Many ACP countries with fisheries agreements with the EU have large exclusive economic zones (EEZs) to police and control, and they often lack the material capacity to do so effectively. This leaves the door open to catch and by-catch under-reporting.

Through the existing fisheries agreements, EU boatowners are able to evade meeting their obligations to embark an observer by paying a small compensation. Observers, when embarked, are directly paid by the boatowners, and not by an independent body. These are also reasons why control and monitoring of EU fleets' activities are difficult.

The use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS), introduced in some of the last agreements, even if not a panacea, has been a positive step forward. NGOs feel that measures for surveillance and control should be obligatory in all agreements.

Optimizing Post-harvest Arrangements: Even in cases where the natural capital is not under threat, the benefits generated by EU fishing operations still flow mainly to EU operators.

There are three main constraints to maximizing local benefits that need to be addressed:

- Compulsory landings: Although most of the fisheries agreements have provisions for local landings, very seldom are these landings obligatory (with notable exceptions like Senegal).

- Lack of onshore infrastructure: Often, onshore infrastructure

(cold chain, warehouses, etc.) is insufficient to deal with the landings, which constrains organizing value-adding activities.

- The EU is the main market for fisheries products for many developing countries having an EU fisheries agreement. Access to the EU market is increasingly conditional on meeting hygiene standards, which developing countries are not always able to comply with.

The following measures should, therefore, be taken:

- Compulsory landings should be applied to situations where local capacity exists to process fish caught by the EU. Quality specifications should be established for the landings (type of fish, size, quality status, etc). Where the species landed are those traditionally caught and traded by the artisanal sector, a socioeconomic impact assessment should be carried out. If the result is negative, the FPA should contain specific provisions to prohibit the landing of such species.

- Where there is a lack of onshore infrastructure, support should be provided to third countries that may wish to develop value-adding fish processing capacity. This should be linked to the phased introduction of obligatory fish landings.

- Assistance to comply with EU hygiene standards should be provided, particularly when the species imported by the EU are caught by local artisanal fleets. In the case of species not caught by the local sector (tuna, for example), support to processing plants to comply with hygiene standards should be coupled with increasing levels of obligatory landings.

- The impact of international trade on food security needs to be assessed, particularly the potential impact of increasing the export trade of fish products on the food security of the local population in the third country. The negotiations of the FPAs should take advantage of the research and discussions being conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on this issue.[3]

This article has been written by Brian O'Riordan (briano@skypro.be), based on a compilation of CFFA materials

Women in fisheries

Partners in mutual trust

Globalization has opened up new opportunities, but it has also undermined many women's economic independence

The process of globalization in fisheries is transforming the structure of markets and gender relationships. Social, political and economic processes now operate locally and globally. Women in the Kagera Region of Lake Victoria, in northwestern Tanzania, face major challenges in the fishery, due to the growing demand for Nile perch in the export market.

This article looks at the relationship between globalized markets for Nile perch and gender relations in the Lake Victoria fisheries of Tanzania. It explores the challenges women have faced and describes some of their responses to them. Particular attention will be paid to the Tweyambe Fishing Enterprise (referred to as the Tweyambe Group), a well-known women's group based in Kasheno village in Ruhanga subvillage (a *kitongoji* comprising 150-200 families) on the shores of Lake Victoria in the Muleba District of the Kagera Region.

The Tweyambe women, like those in other districts, at present face great challenges within the fishery. These include limited access to capital, interference by men in their activities, theft of fishing gear, and sociocultural problems. This article will explore their responses to these challenges, discuss the potential for new gender-based relationships linked to initiatives like the formation of the Tweyambe Fishing group, and explore the relevance of this case study for future initiatives intended to promote greater gender equality.

Lake Victoria is the second largest freshwater lake in the world, with a surface area of 68,800 sq km. It is shared between three countries: Tanzania (51per cent), Uganda (43 per cent) and Kenya (6 per cent). Lake Victoria has a catchment area of 258,700 sq km and a mean depth of 40 m. The shoreline is approximately 3,450 km long, of which 50 per cent (1,750 km) is in Tanzania. The lake accounts for an estimated 60 per cent of Tanzanian inland fish production. Fish and fisheries products from Lake Victoria are a significant source of food for the country, yielding 122,000 tonnes in 1995 . They also contribute to the country's foreign exchange coffers, generating about US$60 mn in 1997. These fisheries provide income and employment for over 32,000 fulltime fishers. An estimated 500,000 people are employed, formally and informally, in fisheries-related activities.

The Kagera Region is located northwest of Tanzania and shares borders with Uganda in the north, Rwanda and Burundi in the west, and the administrative regions of Kigoma, Shinyanga and Mwanza in the southwest. The region is isolated from the rest of the country by poor transportation and communication networks. Kagera is subdivided into six administrative districts: Bukoba Rural, Bukoba Urban, Muleba, Biharamulo, Karagwe and Ngara. The total population of the region is estimated to be 1.6 mn. The livelihood of over 90 per cent of Kagera's population is derived from agriculture and fishing. Inhabitants from the Haya ethnic group make up 95 per cent of the population of the Kagera Region.

Poor recognition

Women comprise 51 per cent of Kagera's population, but contribute 70 per cent of all the labour input to farming, the region's dominant economic activity. Despite this, women's contributions are poorly recognized and greatly undervalued. Women assume an inferior position within certain customs, taboos and within the sexual division of labour. Research on Lake Victoria suggests that

women dominate the fish trade . If true, this would mean that the fishermen are dependent on women to convert the fish into money and to buy other food. However, recent work on the Tanzanian sector of Lake Victoria suggests that women no longer dominate: out of 198 fish traders and respondents interviewed in 1998, 78 per cent were male .

Historically, fish was primarily consumed fresh, except for some sales to distant markets of sun-dried or smoked fish. The sexual division of labour varied from place to place, depending on the ethnic origin of the group. Women were more likely to participate in fish trading in the eastern portion of Lake Victoria, than in the central and western portions. Traditionally, the Sukuma from the central portion were mainly farmers, and the Haya from the western portion did not value fish-related activities. Local culture generally prohibited women from being away from their homes, limiting their ability to trade fish. The dominant means of transport were travel on foot and by bicycle, which tended to limit fish traders to local markets.

Since the 1980s, the Nile perch fishery has attracted tremendous investment. It has become one of the most important economic activities in the area. Industrial fish processing factories and fishing camps generate revenue for communities in the regions surrounding Lake Victoria. Recent research on the Tanzanian sector of Lake Victoria indicates some of the problems that small-scale fish traders and processors have faced in attempting to benefit from the export-oriented Nile perch fishery that developed in the 1980s. Irrespective of gender, the two dominant problems are transport and the availability of funds. However, both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that most fish suppliers in the Nile perch fishing industry are men. In 2000, male suppliers made up 84 per cent of those providing raw material to the processing sector, compared to 16 per cent women suppliers. In addition, men largely control the new technologies associated with the Nile perch fishery. Fish factory owners attribute the dominance of male fish suppliers to the access men have to the capital needed to buy boats, provide seed money and hire labourers. Other advantages for men are their ability to travel frequently, having better access to business collateral, and being more aggressive than women in persuading owners to grant them loans and advances for fish procurement.

Other work

There are important differences between men and women in the way they engage in the Tanzanian Lake Victoria fish trade. Women, more than men, combine fish trade with other types of work. A majority of women (57 per cent) participate only in

fish trading, but 43 per cent combine fish trading with other business activities. In contrast, on the Tanzanian side, 74 per cent of men participate only in fish trading, while 24 per cent combine fish trading and other business . The high percentage of women who combine fish trading with other business may indicate women's greater vulnerability and greater income insecurity within fisheries-related activities.

In contrast to the fish-supply sector, women made up a majority of those purchasing and processing the waste from the fish plants in the first three years of factory development in Tanzania. Nile perch fish frames (skeletons), locally known as *punk*, were considered waste and factories had to pay to dispose them. To eliminate this cost, factories began selling them to local processors. Women were the first to look for Nile perch byproducts in factory doorways. This business started in 1993, one year after fish processing firms invested in Tanzania.

A study carried out in *punk* processing camps indicated that 70 per cent of *punk* dealers were women. In six operational Nile perch processing industries on the Tanzanian side of the lake, about 67 per cent of those buying and utilizing byproducts from the fish-processing industries were women. The women collected fish frames in troughs, baskets, hand-drawn carts and wheelbarrows, and took them to the processing camps.

By 1997, 4–7 tonnes of fresh fish frames cost Tshs60,000-90,000 (US$75–112.50) wholesale. After processing (smoking and sun-drying), the processed *punk* could be sold for Tshs100,000-120,000 (US$125–150). Women used the revenue from this activity to build houses, feed their families, buy clothing, and pay for school fees and medical care. Over time, however, the Nile perch processing factories improved their filleting process so that no meat content was left on the frames. This meant the *punk* community could not get enough fish frames for human consumption. In response, some women started to grind *punk*s in locally made mortars to feed their chickens.

More recent changes in this sector have further eroded the capacity of women to generate livelihoods from fish frames. In 1996-97, processing *punk* for animal feed got commercialized, resulting in new investments in local fishmeal factories.

Fishmeal products

The major markets for processed fish frames were Shinyanga, Tabora, Dodoma, Morogoro, Singida, Mwanza, Mara and in some parts of Kagera Region. The main markets for fishmeal products were Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza, Morogoro, Dodoma and neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Kenya. In 1998, the

higher standards of hygiene required by the European Union (EU) encouraged Nile perch factory owners to seek wholesale buyers for their byproducts.

This ensured that the factory doorways were quickly cleared, reducing congestion by both humans and byproduct waste. When the factory owners started selling their fish frames to wholesalers, many women were forced out of the trade. Most could not compete with the men buying these products for animal feed as well as human consumption.

The strong export orientation of the Nile perch industry and limited opportunities for women to derive employment and incomes from the sector have encouraged some to focus on purchasing juvenile Nile perch harvested with illegal gear. The minimum weight for legally harvested Nile perch is half a kilogram. Purchasing this fish requires access to capital to compete with the factory agents, who are the main buyers. These agents are not allowed to purchase juvenile Nile perch of less than half a kilogram. Since legally harvested fish has become more expensive for the small traders who serve the local markets, and because falling incomes among local consumers limit the price they can pay for fish, the women traders have resorted to buying fish harvested with illegal, small-mesh gear.

Studies at Ihale beach in Tanzania indicate a preference for illegal beach-seines and nets with a mesh size below the recommended minimum mesh size of 5 in (127mm). The fishermen claim that smaller mesh sizes earned them higher incomes from their fish sales to industrial fish collectors. However, marketing this fish provides a precarious source of income for small traders. Fish less than half a kilogram caught in beach seines and undersized gillnets may be sold to industrial agents who can offer higher prices.

Some women fish traders have resorted to staying in the beach-seine fishing camps overnight so that they can get priority access to the available catch. Others have dropped out of the fish trade and moved to trading in other goods. If illegal gear is eliminated, the surviving women traders and processors could lose their access to fish.

Women also work in the Nile perch processing factories. Women processing workers tend to be segregated into the low-status, poorly paid types of work commonly associated with 'caring' professions such as laundry work, fillet trimming, packing, sweeping and cleaning. Men dominate the highly paid jobs, including those involving fish procurement, quality control, environmental engineering, accounting, production supervision, ice machine operation, administration, and fish filleting and skinning (Table 1).

Women workers were poorly represented among support staff and in actual production, compared to men. The most valuable Nile perch byproduct is processed and dried swim bladders. Swim bladders receive a high price in export markets. Of those who process and dry these bladders, 81.4 per cent were women, while 18.5 per cent were men. Only one factory employs 10 women on a permanent basis.

An interview with one of the factory owners, however, suggested that filleting and skinning are regarded as rough jobs that men manage better than women. In contrast, women are considered to be better than men at trimming and packaging. The employer considered this work required greater attention because mistakes could result in the rejection of an entire shipment in the foreign markets.

Kagera's women have sought to solve their multiple burdens by organizing into groups. However, their socioeconomic situation makes it difficult for them to do so. They face multiple household roles with heavy workloads, capital shortages and minimal access to credit. They are also ill-educated, often lack confidence and have to confront socially accepted 'bad' beliefs concerning women.

Shared trust

On the positive side, women have identified several factors that have contributed to their successful organization. Central to their success have been the trust they share, a characteristic that is lacking in men's groups.

Women from Ruhanga put forth several reasons for being unsuccessful in obtaining loans and credit from the revolving credit funds. These include the fact that women typically lack collateral; that men often interfere in their wives' attempts to apply for these funds; and that men are better able to more aggressively pursue loans. In addition, women often do not know how to apply for the loans, while men bribe loan officials. Also, the new men entering the fish business tend to lower women's chances of getting loans. Among those women whose loan applications were successful, some quarreled with their husbands over the loans, ending up divorced for their refusal to surrender the loans to their husbands. Other women found themselves unable to fully repay their loans because the funds were mismanaged or misused by their husbands

The Tweyambe Fishing Group started as a self-help group for women in Ruhanga, Kagera. The living conditions are tough in Ruhanga village, which has no primary school, hospital or reliable shops. Women's workloads are heavy and comprise responsibilities for work in the household, agriculture and in the fisheries. The women spend much of their time on farms located on the slope behind the village. The fishermen's work routine determines the daily pattern of household activities in many fishing communities. Fishermen leave at night or in the evening, while their wives work during the day. Men have little or no opportunity for family life and this adds to women's responsibilities and work. The women sell fish to supplement their incomes. They are forced to accept the prices offered by buyers on the beaches and want to change this. One woman said: "We can't afford to sell the fish in the distant markets. Transport is a big problem, accompanied by the lack of a well-established market in our village." Ruhanga's women thought that if they could acquire some kind of transportatiom, like a mini-bus, they could get a better price for their fish. In order to do this, however, they needed a way to raise the capital to buy the vehicle.

In 1992, a group of 14 women came together to form the Tweyambe Fishing Group. They agreed on the following objectives: to co-ordinate women's economic and day-to-day activities; to improve the household dietary status and socioeconomic condition of communities in Ruhanga by investing in fishing activities; to protect all women's rights; to help each other and to solve the road transportation problem in their community.

Maximum membership

They also agreed that 14 would be the maximum membership for their group and that all of these members had to be

married women, settled in Ruhanga. This requirement was intended to avoid the potential negative effects migration could have on the group's success. Finally, all members had to be mature and trustworthy.

In February 1993, the group collected US$82 from the revolving credit scheme and supplemented this with weekly membership fees of approximately 40 cents per woman. Members sold bananas, groundnuts, handicrafts and grass for roofing and home 'carpeting'. (The Haya communities cover their floor with grass, which they will normally change every two weeks.) They used the money raised to invest in smoked and fried-fish processing, bought six nets and hired a boat.

Towards the end of 1997, the group applied for a loan from the Kagera Fisheries Project to buy a vehicle to solve the transport problem. The application was rejected by the Fisheries Department on the grounds that running and maintenance costs for the vehicle would be high in view of the bad roads in the area. The Department suggested the group consider developing alternative transport solutions, in particular, water transport. The women agreed, and obtained a loan of Tshs3,580,000 (US$4,475), with which they were able to buy a 25-horsepower outboard engine and a transport boat. This investment has since yielded dividends. Income from fish sales between 9 June 1998 and 29 September 1999 was Tshs2,309,600 (US$2,887), while expenditures amounted to Tshs1,559,600 (US$1,950), leaving the group with a clear profit.

Women generally confront many challenges in their trade and household work. In order to sell their fish, they have to make prior arrangements with male buyers to assure a guaranteed market. This is particularly the case during the farming season, when many buyers return to their farms. In the fish trade, women's main competitors are men. Most of these male buyers are fishermen, and there is an understanding between them and the other fishermen that the male buyers would help them out if they ran into trouble with their boats while on the ake. These male buyers control the fish auctions at the landing site and have come to dominate fish trading activities at the site. The Tweyambe women acknowledge that they cannot easily compete with the men, and could possibly get destroyed.

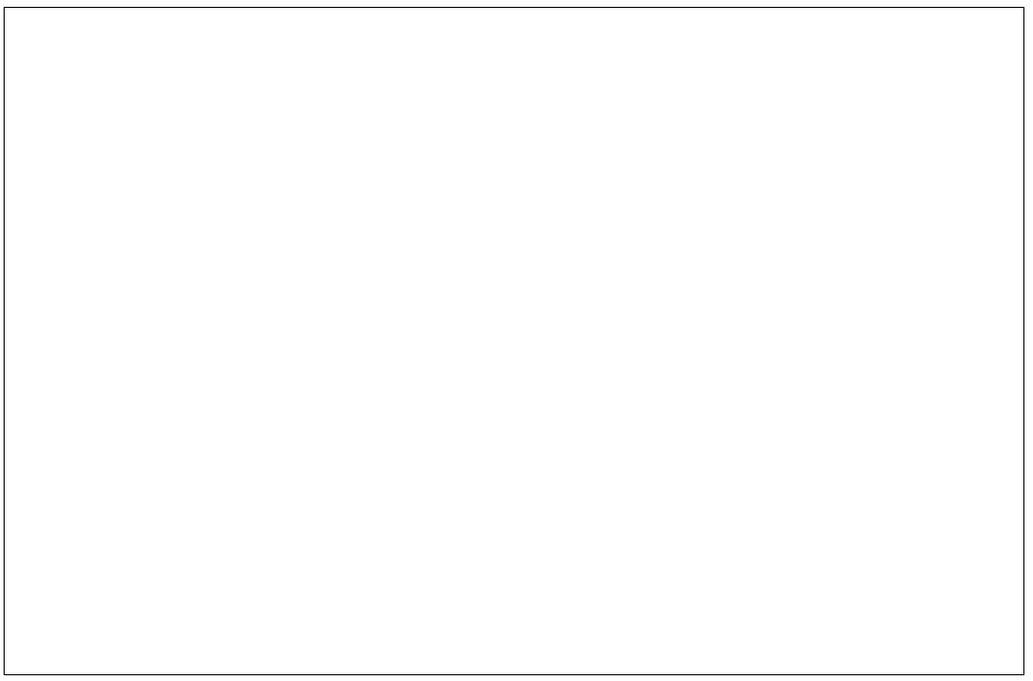
Another challenge occurs when the EU closes the markets for Nile perch, for whatever reason, causing prices to drop so low that they barely cover production costs. Women understand the extent to which they rely on export markets and so want reliable alternative markets for their Nile perch. Export bans and intense competition can destroy their savings. Tweyambe Group members also complain of lack of funds to expand their businesses.

The Group's water transport business has faltered and their income from this source has been halved because of competition from men who have also invested in water transport. The Tweyambe Group has also had to cope with gear theft. Competition and theft have forced some women to drop out of fishing or to shift to less competitive and less remunerative parts of the fishery.

Absentee owners are particularly likely to be cheated of their catch and gear. Since most women hire out their fishing gear to fishermen and do not take part in fishing activities away from the shore, they are most at risk of gear theft. This risk limits the number of units each woman investor is willing to operate. Women often employ men who are related to them or their own sons, in order to avoid theft of nets and catch. In Ruhanga, for example, the women employed their sons as crew. Despite such precautions, in 1997, profits dwindled when 45 of the group's gill-nets, valued at Tshs1,350,000 (US$1,688), were stolen. These nets had targeted Nile perch, the group's most profitable fish. In some cases, women fishers have arranged for night patrols on Lake Victoria, and have selected times for fishing and landing that make it easier for them to monitor their catch and gear.

Poor training

A fish marketing study conducted along the Tanzanian part of Lake Victoria in 1998 indicates that the extent of training amongst fish traders and processors was low. Out of 198 fish traders and processors



interviewed in this area, only 6 per cent were trained in bookkeeping and only 2 per cent in fish processing. Of those with training, only three (2 per cent) were women. These women, like others, believe that education plays an important role in directing their lives and limiting their opportunities.

However, any information received by the leaders was conveyed to the members of the group in both Kiswahili (the language spoken all over Tanzania) and Haya, thereby diffusing, to some extent, the knowledge that they had acquired. They believed that mutual trust and teaching one another have helped the group survive in a competitive environment.

Members of the Tweyambe Group perceive themselves as primararily responsible for the economic well-being of their families. Their domestic and work responsibilities made it hard for them to find time for their group activities. In response, the women looked for ways to create some free time for themselves, for example, by establishing a nursery school. The Tweyambe Group has a schedule of activities that ensures each member allocates time for group activities as well as for her farming or domestic activities.

In contrast, the women who work in the fish-processing factories have had little opportunity to budget their own time. In all the six factories we studied, women worked both day and night shifts. They were hired as casual labourers, and thus denied access to holidays, maternity and emergency leave. Some women factory workers are reported to have quarrelled with, and even divorced, their partners in order to comply with the factory rules, while others found it difficult to marry because men would not accept them working night shifts or taking time away from their household duties .

Tweyambe Group members have adopted a strategy of income diversification, so as to protect their households from hunger. When income from the fishing business is down, the women independently sell *matoke*, groundnuts, cassava, yams, second-hand clothes, tea and burns (candies), fresh beans and sweet potatoes at the village market.

Non-fish products

Women also travel long distances to the beaches in the early morning. Once there, they sit under the trees with their commodities for exchange, while waiting for fishermen to come out of the lake. Intense competition for fish has encouraged the women to resort to bartering for other, non-fish products along the beaches. Firewood, fruits, tomatoes, maize and cassava flour are commonly exchanged for fish. Bargaining

is common. These independent activities, the women argue, have helped their husbands and children understand that the Tweyambe Fishing Group is not an extension of their households, which they can exploit, but a separate entity.

Economic hardship and the important roles played by these women in supporting their households have changed men's attitudes. Group members say that men have realized that they can no longer provide for their families by themselves, and that the prevailing economic conditions are forcing both men and women to devise strategies for their mutual survival. However, problems persist. In the words of one woman, "When we buy and prepare the meals, pay school fees, buy clothes for the children and sometimes buy small gifts as a surprise, men see and realize our potential, although they don't appreciate it. Quietly, they feel offended by our initiative."

Tweyambe Group members continue to depend on men for many things, including advice and access to fish. Although the group has gained local respect through their association with donor agencies and the government, this association and their financial success and investments have also caused some members of the community to be very jealous of them. Women from polygamous households sometimes complained that it was difficult for their husbands to care for all their wives and children and some wives were neglected. Such women work extra hard to bring up their children. Some of the men in Ruhanga have demanded full involvement in their women's Nile perch fishing activities, defining it as a project for the entire community, including both members and non-members. Men have also tried to participate in the selection of crew members and engine operators. Members' husbands have demanded to know the exact income of the women's group and have interfered with planning and operations related to their investments. One woman explained: "I almost broke my marriage because of group funds. My husband forced me to give him TShs100,000.00 (US$124) for his court case, but we eventually resolved the dispute." In Vihiga District of Kenya, according to one study, many of the men who belonged to, or were associated with, women's groups as 'advisors' were considered to be 'crafty' and 'sly'.

Further research is needed to investigate the various issues that concern women's groups. Research topics should include ways to increase women's economic productivity and reduce the burden of their traditional household responsibilities; and ways to increase the participation of women in decisionmaking, as well as in access to, and control over, various resources. Women's time constraints will need to be taken into account too.

Changes in Lake Victoria's fisheries and fishing communities from primary reliance on local markets, equipment and sources of capital to reliance on export markets, external equipment suppliers and external sources of funding have affected, and have been mediated by, gender relations. Globalization has opened up new opportunities for some women but it has also undermined many women's economic independence and increased the challenges they face in supporting themselves and their families. It has done this by contributing to environmental change, undermining their access to fish for processing and trading, enhancing competition and theft within fishing and trading, and ghettoizing women in poorer paid occupations within industrial fish processing as contingent, vulnerable workers. As elsewhere, gender divisions of labour in households and communities within Ruhanga have persisted.

Post-harvest activities

Most development efforts in Tanzania, as in other parts of the world, have tended to discount the potential contributions of women to economy and society, and have thus failed to mobilize this vital human resource. The idea that those who fish are fishermen and that fishing predominantly involves men going fishing in boats has generally not been challenged by the institutions extensively involved in Tanzania's fisheries. Women are thought to engage only in post-harvest activities (smoking, drying and marketing), where they earn less profits than those earned by

fishermen, particularly the owners of fishing equipment and gear. The case study of the Tweyambe Group shows the importance of integrating women into fishery programmes and development projects. This should be done in ways that address women's dual responsibility for income generation and family care.

Women's interests should be built into the design of programmes aimed at obtaining sustainable resource management. Several indicators confirm the value of the Tweyambe Fishing Group for its members and the larger community. Group members report that face-to-face interaction allowed them to get to know one another, build a reputation and develop trust. Openness on the part of the members helped them to resolve small conflicts within the group. In many cases, they have managed to separate project from individual activities and thereby helped to insulate the group from wider household pressures.

These features of the group point to its relevance for community organization initiatives, such as the development of co-management regimes designed to respond to the often larger-scale economic and social dilemmas affecting fishing communities affected by globalization.

When people consider themselves to be a member of a group, they are able to collectively achieve more. The benefits that accrued to the community as a whole support women's groups in their attempts to break through some of the constraints they face, particularly within an industry that is dependent on export markets and global processes. This means providing women with support not just for income-earning opportunities, but also for advocacy, mobilization in the public sphere and empowerment. It means ensuring that women's voices are heard in all the main decision-making processes, and not just in a small, isolated, women's office. Available evidence suggests that by working with more women's groups, the reach of extension services can be doubled and costs reduced. The result would be greater food security for rural families. Women's needs and interests are more likely to be satisfied if they are made the primary beneficiaries of certain welfare programmes. Examples like the Tweyambe Group remind us that donor organizations and governments must understand that people, especially poor women, are capable of promoting their own development if their efforts and initiatives are recognized and supported.

A gender-sensitive approach to development that assesses and monitors the impact of rules and regulations at all levels on women, men and gender relations is more than a political imperative. It is, in fact, a basic condition for sustainable economic and social progress. It requires radical changes, particularly in areas where the belief that women are inferior to men continues to prevail. It would be advantageous for men and women to collaborate in the development of a gender-sensitive approach in order to avoid problems and conflicts. However, in order for this to happen, men would need to learn how to work in partnership with women.

This article, which summarizes some of the findings of an M. Phil. study, is by Modesta Medard (modentara@hotmail.com), Researcher, The Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute (TAFIRI), Tanzania

Fisheries management

Something has gone wrong

For rational exploitation of fisheries resources, the European Union should seek co-management with local fishing interests

For decades, the fishing grounds of the North Atlantic ocean have been subject to extensive and expensive institutional and governmental research and management by some of the most developed industrial countries. The area also has the greatest concentration of fishery scientists and the best-equipped research, management and enforcement systems on either side of the Atlantic.

Notwithstanding all that, this is the area where the world's greatest washout of fisheries management repeatedly occurs, in spite of the fact that fishery management has had ten years to learn the lessons of the cod fishery collapses in North American and adjacent, international fishing grounds. Every commonsensical observer must assume that there is something basically wrong in the prevailing fishery management systems and in the politicians', managers' and their scientific advisers' ways of thinking and performing.

Some 10 years ago, the government of Canada issued a moratorium banning fishing of cod, because of the deterioration of both catches and standing stock. The once mighty cod fisheries of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia collapsed, and 20,000 people lost their source of income. The whole debacle is well documented, and its consequences described in hundreds of articles and several books. And the cod is not yet back.

A decade later, nobody seems to know whether all this happened due to overfishing, or due also to some unspecified changes in environmental conditions. Whatever be the case, mismanagement is evident, because management was aplenty—it just misfired. Now it looks as if a similar scenario is replaying itself on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in the management of European fisheries through the notorious Common Fishery Policy (CFP) of the European Union (EU) .

In the autumn of 2002, the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) recommended a complete closure of the northeast Atlantic whitefish grounds to save cod stocks from total collapse. Advised by the latter, Franz Fischler, the EU's Fisheries Commissioner, started talking about a total ban on fishing for cod, haddock and whiting, and substantial reductions in plaice and prawn quotas, or, alternatively, drastic cuts in total allowable catches (TACs), quotas and effort. Scottish, French, Spanish and other European fishermen and their respective associations have reacted strongly.

While they keep disputing both the management's diagnosis and medicine, they also embarked on various protest activities. The action has been two-pronged: resistance to the draconian management steps, and demand for assistance to fishworkers barred from exercising their trade. At the time of writing, the proposed restrictions have become reality, and the fishing industry and fishing communities around the western European coasts are facing extreme economic and social difficulties.

Reduced fishing

Fishermen's associations and industry protests have had some effect. Although the Commission gave full backing to the ICES stock assessment, it ditched the idea of a moratorium and, instead, the governments involved agreed on a deal that outlined a longer-term North Sea cod recovery plan. It greatly reduces fishing effort (days at sea) on cod, haddock and whiting, on the one hand, and an increased support aimed at alleviating

socioeconomic harm to fishermen, on the other.

Unsurprisingly, the deal angered fishermen as much as it dismayed conservationists. The latter consider it anything between political fudge and a betrayal of the future of Europe's fish stocks. Fishermen are afraid that the reduced effort and quotas will not keep them afloat, and that the proposed support would be inadequate.

Fishermen's representatives' criticism of the EU's management encompasses several issues. For example, they say that the EU is obsessed with "one size fits all" approach to regulation; that a fishery cannot be managed at the same time by effort and catch restrictions; and that the advice, concocted from national research data under the auspices of the ICES, lacks the scientific validation needed for underpinning legal management steps.

Whatever the causes, and whatever is going to be the outcome of what the EU now calls "alarming state" of the stocks of the North Atlantic whitefish, European fishing people are going to experience detrimental social and economic consequences. A fisherman prevented from going fishing in a feasible manner has got several options, writes Hamish Morrison, the chief of a Scottish fishermen's federation: to permanently withdraw his boat from the fleet, to temporarily lay-up, to move to an alternative fishery, to go bankrupt, or to go poaching.

Evidently, the cod alarm helped to accelerate the reform of the CFP. On 20 December 2002, following tough negotiations, the Council of Ministers finally reached an agreement. Among the accepted Commission's proposals were: the introduction of multi-annual management plans, a new fleet capacity reduction system and targets (3 per cent in 2003-4), and an elevated level of the European Community support for scrapping of vessels and for displaced fishermen, and doing away with support for permanent export of vessels. Support for construction of new vessels will also be eliminated, but becomes fully operational only after a two-year transitional period.

New legislation

The agreement marks the end of a two-year consultation and discussion process. Based on this agreement, the Council approved amendments to the EU's fisheries structural funds regulation and passed a completely new regulation governing conservation of EU fisheries resources, including a regulation to establish a higher level of fisheries management for fishing of important deepsea stocks in Community waters, observer programmes, vessel monitoring, effort controls and a designated landing ports scheme.

In many Third World countries fisheries are not really managed by their governments, either because there are no rules, or if any, because they are not enforced. Not every fishery, however, that is not managed, *de facto* or *de jure*, is in a bad shape. The North Atlantic fisheries, however, hardly suffer from a lack of management. If anything, they are overmanaged. In any case, something must have gone wrong with their management. If, after all those years of EU's management, the recommendation is a moratorium, and after exhausting negotiations, the resulting deal limits the groundfish fleet's operation to 15 days / month, and reduces the quota by 45-55 per cent, one must recognize a case of lingering mismanagement .

But, mismanagement is a parentless baby. Scientists blame political managers, managers blame the industry, the industry blames both and the environment. But fisheries management is a system comprising all the above and more. It is like an engine in which all the parts must work in a synchrony, while being fed with the right fuel, and lubricated with the right oil. It must have adequate scientific information and analysis, which must include understanding of the role of environmental factors. It needs managers who would use the above to form workable rules, acceptable to industry, and otherwise enforceable. Enough if one of those goes wrong, the whole management machinery misfires.

Fisheries management requires knowledge of fishery biology and ecology, population dynamics and historical data of the fishery and of environmental and associated stock fluctuations in its area, on the one hand, and negotiations, legislation, technology and enforcement, on the other. Fisheries management, however, is also about distributing the wealth derived from the fishery resources and allocating benefits. Hence, it reflects the political and economic ideology of the managers. Although, fisheries management aims at maintaining fish stocks at sustainable levels, it cannot directly manage fish populations and their environment. All it can manage is people's actions, and their equipment and activities. In practice, it manages mainly fishermen. Doubtless, in the case of the North Atlantic fisheries, important political factors from outside the fisheries domain played a major role in skewing management decisions.

There are many reasons why a richly equipped and well-staffed management system can go awry. One is the science it is based on. Use of figures obtained from mathematical models that do not reflect realities of the system produces a flawed assessment of the stock and hence of the recommended allowable catch or effort. The various stock assessment methodologies that form the basis for fixing the TAC use mathematical models fed mainly with catch and effort data, and sometimes with results of fish sampling and acoustic monitoring. But both the accuracy of such figures and the validity of the models themselves are often questioned, and rightly so. None of these models are able to express environmental factors and influences. Practically the only important variable in most models is the fishing mortality, for natural mortality is usually assumed to be a certain constant—a fallacy in most marine fisheries, while fluctuations in recruitment, problematic to monitor, are rarely accounted for.

However inadequate, those models produce results, which, however flawed, represent the 'best available science' in the hands of managers. Consequently,or for other reasons, authorities are taking wrong management steps that are questioned not only by fishing people, but also by those scientists who spend time on board fishing vessels and see many things that the mathematical models and their operators are oblivious of. No doubt, the 'best available science' should be fully accepted only if it is adequate for fishery management. Thus, scientific recommendations put forth to managers should always be critically assessed by scientists totally independent of the recommending institutions and the managing authorities.

Lack of experience

The inadequacy of the prevailing fisheries management stems also from other problems. Many of the managers involved lack the experience, social touch and economic and political skills needed for

good fishery management, and are liable to take inappropriate decisions. But, when skippers, experienced old salts, and other observant fishermen start feeling that what the management says or does does not fit what they see and catch at sea, and what their experience and common sense are telling them, the failure of management is almost certain.

Where scientists do not recognize and internalize that what they have derived from statistical data fed into models is only a part of the picture, and that to have a full picture, they must consider also natural environmental fluctuations and fish abundance cycles, as well as verbal information from fishermen, and information from scientists observing and sampling on board fishing vessels, the way to mismanagement is wide open. But even the best scientific advice will not do if the resulting management steps disregard dominant cultural features and the vital socioeconomic and political needs of the fisherfolk and their communities. Fishing people will never live with rules, if they perceive them as unjust, and not fitting the reality as they see it, or favours one group or branch of the fishery over another.

And when management is out of step with the industry, especially where large numbers of fishing vessels and whole populations of fisherfolk are affected, it simply cannot succeed. Fishermen will do everything to beat its regulations; they will cheat, poach, land or sell over-the-side 'black' fish, and discard marketable fish to make space for larger and more expensive specimens under limited quotas. Enforcement under such conditions becomes unfeasible or so expensive as to be impractical. All this has been happening in the northern Europe's fisheries for years under the CFP ineffective management. Now, to be left with something to manage, it needs draconian steps.

If the EU, or for that matter, any other fishery managing authority, wants to attain rational exploitation of the resources it is in charge of, it should seek co-management with local fishing interests. Successful co-management depends, among others, on choice of partners. Local, area-based small and medium-scale fishermen and boatowners would be the best partners, because they would always be interested to sustain reasonable catch levels and, hence, sufficient fish stocks. The wrong partners would be owners and operators of large-scale fishing vessels, such as superseiners, factory-trawlers and other industrial fishing fleets, who are always interested in maximizing their catches, overexploitng a stock in one area, and moving on to another region, sea or ocean.

Good management would make sure that a flag, whether national, foreign or 'flag of convenience', does not become a licence to fish out stocks from under the noses of local fishermen. Good management would refrain from selling national quotas away to foreign, corporate or transnational interests. It would never let such fleets fish on home grounds of locally based small-scale fisheries. Where national and transnational fishing rights overlap, as in the case of EU, special arrangements must be made and fishing grounds allocated among inshore local, and offshore, national and other European fisheries. Bureaucratic obsession with uniformity should not become a rule. A network of policies adjusted to the different areas and stocks, and to traditional national and local rights may become one—or even the only—way out of a failure. This may complicate things, but we live in a very complex world.

This article is by Menakhem Ben-Yami (benyami@actcom.net.il), an independent fishery adviser based in Israel

Debating small-scale fisheries

The 25th Session of the Committee on Fisheries, held in Rome from 24 to 28 February 2003, sought to focus on small-scale fisheries

The 25th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) was held from 24 to 28 February 2003 at Rome. Delegates from over 100 Members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as well as observers from the UN, UN bodies and specialized agencies, regional fishery bodies, other international organizations, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended.

The item on 'Strategies for Increasing the Sustainable Contribution of Small-Scale Fisheries to Food Security and Poverty Alleviation' was appearing on the agenda of COFI after 20 years. The agenda paper for this item (COFI/2003/9) highlighted the contribution of small-scale capture fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation, summarized the main issues that continue to constrain the sector, and outlined strategies that would go towards increasing this contribution. Actions proposed for support by the committee were as follows:

- gaining a better understanding of the nature, extent, and causes of vulnerability and poverty in small-scale fisheries, and improving information on, and indicators for, monitoring the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation;

- improving cross-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration, and developing effective strategies and policies to address poverty and food security issues, and, where appropriate, including small-scale fisheries in national poverty-reduction strategies and policies;

- better management through the allocation of secure fishing rights—backed by appropriate legislation—to small-scale fishers in coastal and inland zones, and their effective protection from industrial fishing activity or activities that degrade aquatic resources and habitats;

- implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and development of technical guidelines on increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation; and, lastly,

- encouraging the formation of fishermen's organizations at community level and the facilitation of their representation at local, regional and national levels, thereby creating a sense of ownership and accountability by the small-scale stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Many delegations welcomed the focus on small-scale fisheries and complimented the FAO on the quality of the paper prepared. Several States expressed the need for greater support to small-scale fisheries, given the scale of employment and income it provides, and its role in food security, and endorsed the actions suggested to the committee.

First time

At the start of the session, NGOs were asked by the Chair to present the report of a meeting held earlier with the FAO Secretariat on this Agenda Item. Relevant portions of the statement (see page 36), supported by several NGOs represented at COFI, were read out.

In the discussion that followed, Brazil said that it fully supported the NGO statement. The delegate went on to describe the steps being taken by Brazil to support small-scale fisheries and aquaculture. The emphasis, it was said, was on issues of equity and on eliminating hunger. It was further emphasized that the concept of responsible fisheries meant as well the need to guarantee that fishing activities contributed to the well-being of the people.

Venezuela pointed to the great importance given to protecting small-scale fishworkers, reflected in Article 305 of its Constitution, which states: "The State will protect the settlements and communities of artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen, as well as their inland fishing areas and those near to the coastline (as) defined in the law." This constitutional provision, it was noted, has led to an improvement in the standard of living of fishing communities.

While highlighting the importance of small-scale fisheries, El Salvador spoke of the need to provide a legislative basis favouring the participation of artisanal fishworkers in management. El Salvador also emphasized the importance of capacity building in the artisanal fisheries sector. The increase in influx of people from other sectors, including farming, into the fisheries, despite the risky nature of the sector, was highlighted, as was the need to explore alternative employment possibilities.

Burkina Faso stressed the need to pay more attention to small-scale fisheries, and especially to the role of women in the sector. The importance of strengthening organizations at the level of fishing communities was also emphasized.

Tanzania pointed out that 90 per cent of its production was from the small-scale sector. Benin said that small-scale fisheries provide employment to over 300,000 people and the sector is of high priority to the government.

The positive contribution made by the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) to the fisheries sector in the sub-Saharan region, and the need to expand the programme to cover the rest of Africa, was highlighted. Angola requested the FAO to undertake more programmes in support of small-scale fisheries.

Peru spoke of the importance of small-scale fisheries, especially its contribution to domestic fish supplies, and said that the Permanent South Pacific Commission (CPPS) had set up a working group on small-scale fisheries.

India said that the approximately 6 mn fishermen in the country made substantial contributions to employment, income and food security. There was a need to support the small-scale sector, given the increasing levels of poverty and vulnerability in the sector. India extended support to all the action points in the FAO document.

Cuba proposed that small-scale fisheries should regularly be on the agenda of COFI and called on the FAO to provide assistance in the management of small-scale fisheries.

Norway called for a greater focus on small-scale fisheries from donors and NGOs. It was emphasized that the FAO Code of Conduct provided the framework to support the sector. Norway's commitment to support research on small-scale fisheries, a priority area identified by the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research (ACFR), was highlighted. Attention was also drawn to the FAO / Norway study being undertaken to understand the links between fish trade and food security.

Canada stressed the negative impact of land-based sources of pollution on small-scale fisheries and pointed out that declining inshore resources had pushed fishermen to go farther out into the sea, which had implications for their safety. It was also pointed out that the greater vulnerability of the subsector was partly linked to its high foreign exchange requirements.

Small-scale sector

Chile emphasized the high priority given to supporting its small-scale sector, which employs approximately 40,000 fishers. In Chile, the 5-mile inshore zone is

exclusively reserved for artisanal fisheries.

In addition, fishing communities have been given rights over specified management areas. The need for striking the right balance between allocation of resources to the artisanal and industrial sector, was emphasized. The point was made that, with the right support, artisanal fisheries need not be characterized by poverty. Chile called on the FAO to provide greater support to small-scale fisheries and its management.

St. Lucia spoke of the importance of fisheries for its people, pointing, however, to the negative impact on its small-scale fishermen of the listing of species under CITES. It called for a greater role for the FAO on CITES-related issues.

Philippines mentioned its Fisheries Code of 1998, by which the zone reserved exclusively for artisanal fisheries was extended from 7 to 15 km. This Code also provided for the setting up of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Committees (FARMCs) for participatory resources management.

The European Union (EU) spoke of its commitment to small-scale fisheries, and its support to the sector in several parts of the developing world. Endorsing the proposed strategy, the EU called for more support to small-scale fisheries and an improved understanding of poverty in the sector.

Belize said that even as conservation agencies were encouraging a shift to tourism from fisheries as a source of income and employment, the decline in tourism in the recent past had exposed the vulnerability of communities depending on tourism. Belize also pointed out that, despite the increase in coastal aquaculture, it was not the poor who were reaping the benefits. The US spoke of the ''White Water to Blue Water'' Project it was supporting in the Caribbean, using a cross-sectoral approach to ecosystem management, beginning with the upstream sectors and extending through the wetlands, mangrove swamps and coral reefs into the ocean.

The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) highlighted the need for a clear definition of what constitutes small-scale fisheries, given the heterogeneity that characterizes the sector. It cautioned against the trend of small-scale fleets fishing farther out into the seas, pushing their technological limits, as this compromised the safety of these fleets.

There was unequivocal endorsement by most countries of the need for greater support by FAO to small-scale fisheries. Support, it was said, should go, among other things, towards better management of resources, formulation and implementation of approaches for participatory resources management, reduction of post-harvest losses, safety at sea and building capacity of fishworker organizations. It is to be hoped that this will translate into effective national policies in support of small-scale fisheries and more FAO programmes directed at the sector.

This report has been filed by Chandrika Sharma (icsf@vsnl.com), Executive Secretary, ICSF, and Maria Cristina Maneschy (crismane@amazon.com.br), a professor of sociology at the Federal University of Pará in Belém, and member of ICSF

Document

COFI

Case for small-scale fisheries

At the 25th Session on the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the following NGO statement was issued

We welcome the attention given by COFI to defining *Strategies for Increasing the Contribution of Small-scale Fisheries to Food Security and Poverty Alleviation.*

Such a focus is urgent in a context where, on the one hand many populations are facing a growing crisis of food insecurity and poverty, whilst, on the other, the fish stocks that provide human food are being overfished to below sustainable levels.

The case for small-scale fisheries

It is important to recognize that in the developing world, for millions of fishworkers and their families in coastal fishing communities, life is characterized by poverty, social and economic vulnerability, insecure access rights to land and sea resources to which they have traditionally enjoyed access and lack of alternative employment possibilities. In poor, labour-surplus fishing economies, artisanal and small-scale fisheries are an important vehicle for poverty eradication and greater food security. It is as important to note that the case for supporting small-scale fisheries is equally strong on environmental grounds.

Voluntary guidelines on the right to food

We welcome the suggestion to the committee to develop technical guidelines on increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation under the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. We also welcome the decision by the FAO to develop "Voluntary guidelines to achieve the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food", and see these as linked and complementary processes.

We feel that food security and poverty alleviation should become issues cutting across all programme areas taken up by the Fisheries Department, in keeping with the FAO mandate to alleviate poverty and hunger and to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living.

It is our view that the Guidelines would have to address the following issues, towards strengthening the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation.

Secure access rights

The actions proposed towards supporting the sector are to be welcomed especially the emphasis on ensuring better management through the allocation of secure fishing rights to small-scale fishers backed by appropriate legislation. We also welcome the emphasis on the need to protect small-scale fishers from industrial fishing activity or activities that degrade aquatic resources and habitats.

We feel that it is essential that governments extend the areas reserved for exclusive exploitation by the artisanal fleet, within their EEZs, in view of the increasing technological capacity of the small-scale fleet to harvest resources in deeper waters. It is equally important to increase monitoring, control and surveillance of these zones to protect the livelihoods of small-scale fishworkers.

We also urge States to ensure secure access to the lands and beaches traditionally used by fishing communities, in the face of the increasing pressure on coastal areas in many parts of the world.

Secure access rights are particularly important when low- income food-deficit countries are faced with the dilemma of whether to sell off fishing rights to distant water fleets or to develop their small-scale and artisanal fishing sectors. We note with

concern the trends towards establishing private property regimes through transferable quota systems, and international trade arrangements that promote speculation and put small-scale fisheries at a competitive disadvantage. We feel that international arrangements that trade off fishing access rights against concessions in other sectors (such as access to markets) jeopardize the achievement of sustainable patterns of exploitation and undermine attempts to promote food security and poverty alleviation.

Formation and strengthening of fishworker organizations

We strongly support the suggested actions to encourage the formation of fishworker organisations and to facilitate the representation of men and women of fishing communities in decision-making processes at various levels. Such actions will also need to include capacity building and awareness raising components, and to provide the financial and human resources needed.

In this context, we welcome the opening up of FAO to the participation of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations, especially of those that represent small-scale and artisanal fishworkers. With some notable exceptions, and until relatively recently, organizations representing fishworkers have been excluded from the FAO decision-making processes.

Fish trade

We welcome the importance accorded to supporting small-scale processing and marketing activities (post-harvest sector), where women play a vital role, and the recognition of the role of these activities in contributing to food security and poverty alleviation. In most parts of the developing world, to address food insecurity and poverty, greater support to the work of small-scale women fish processors and traders is urgently needed, as is the need to provide impetus for developing local and intra-regional trade in artisanally processed fish products.

Whilst international trade in fishery products may provide an important source of foreign exchange earnings to low income, food deficit countries, there is a need to ensure that such trade does not jeopardize the contribution of fisheries to meeting local food security. We fully support the proposal to develop technical guidelines for the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to promote the contribution of fish trade to food security.

Transboundary issues

Due to both resource depletion and technological advances, the small-scale sector is increasingly targeting resources, such as tuna, beyond territorial waters. We urge coastal States to take into account the migration patterns of small-scale fleets in negotiating access agreements and in regional management initiatives.

Adequate attention, however, needs to be paid to aspects that relate to safety at sea.

Recognizing and supporting the rights of small-scale fleets to access and harvest, in a selective manner, stocks that straddle and migrate across marine boundaries, could contribute significantly to greater employment and food security. It would also be in keeping with the provisions of Article 24 (b) of the Fish Stocks Agreement, emphasising the "need to avoid adverse impacts on, and ensure access to fisheries by, subsistence, small-scale and artisanal fishers and women fishworkers, as well as indigenous people in developing States, particularly small island developing States".

A failure to do so has led to small-scale fishermen being detained and arrested in foreign countries. In some cases, these fishermen, whose only fault has been to catch a few tonnes of fish for their livelihood, have spent several years in prisons of other countries, in contravention of Article 73 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We urge States to respect their international obligations and release and repatriate arrested fishermen on a priority basis. A mechanism to address these problems in a speedy and socially responsible manner is urgently needed.

Subsidies and labelling schemes

We urge States to implement incentive and other support schemes to assist small-scale fishers in fisheries management. This would include providing subsidies and incentives for selective harvesting and promoting fishery products that are harvested and processed in a socially and environmentally friendly manner, including through labelling. We note with concern that certain aspects of certification schemes marginalize small-scale and artisanal fishers, including high cost of certification, inappropriate criteria and complex procedures,

Ecosystem-based fisheries management

We support an ecosystem-based fisheries management, particularly in the context of reducing or eliminating unsustainable fishing practices, such as bottom trawling in tropical multi-species fisheries. We underline the importance of an inclusive approach, where humans are included as a central part of the ecosystem. This is particularly important given the experience of conservation efforts that have had negative consequences for subsistence level and highly fishery dependent populations, whose activities have relatively minimal ecological footprints.

Aquaculture

The role that aquaculture could play in increasing food security and reducing poverty should not be underestimated. However, we note with concern that certain aspects of aquaculture development undermine the achievement of both these goals. In particular, aquaculture development in many countries has displaced fishing communities from their homes, and restricted their access to the sea. The destruction of important marine habitats, wetlands and mangrove areas to make way for intensive aquaculture units is alarming.

We would, therefore, urge delegates to promote a precautionary approach to further developments, and to support research on the potential impact of aquaculture on wild fisheries, and especially on the livelihoods of small-scale fishworkers.

There is also a need to factor in and minimize the environmental and social costs of intensive production systems, including wetland and mangrove conversion, capture of fry from inshore waters, biotechnology, and input and waste aspects.

Information on small-scale fisheries

We urge States to take up the issue of collecting and analysing data on socioeconomic aspects of fisheries, the importance of which has been recognized by the Technical Consultation on Improving Information on the Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries. Emphasis should be placed equally on gathering data on the status of those who harvest the resources as on the status of the resources themselves. Given the relative invisibility of the artisanal and small-scale sector, particulary of women within the sector, it

is imperative to capture, in full, its economic and social contribution to employment, income and food security.

This statement was endorsed by the following organizations present at COFI:

1. World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)
2. World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF)
3. International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
4. West African Programme for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries (WADAF)
5. Greenpeace
6. World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

This statement was issued on 26 February 2003 at the 25th Session of COFI in Rome

Tuna labelling

Don't misunderstand us

This is a response to the editorial comment in *SAMUDRA Report* No. 33 of November 2002

I read the Comment on the first page of SAMUDRA Report No.33 with much interest. I am pleased to note the Comment states that our concern about illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and flags of convenience (FOC) fishing vessels are valid and understandable.

In the meantime, I am concerned about the comment regarding the small-scale tuna longline fisheries. I wish to inform you of our position concerning the point raised by you, so that the mission and activities of the Organization for Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT) may not be misunderstood.

1. OPRT's basic objective is to contribute to the development of responsible tuna fisheries in line with international and social responsibility as well as to promote the sustainable use of tuna through the co-operation of all stakeholders.

2. OPRT's first major project at present is to work toward the elimination of all IUU tuna fishing vessels. These are large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels with super-freezing capacities, having high mobility and operating in high seas beyond regional boundaries. These large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels are the source of IUU tuna fishing. We are, therefore, concentrating our efforts to eliminate them.

3. OPRT does not have any intention to "leave a third group in the cold". OPRT does not have any intention to "reward a few." The measures we are developing and implementing are designed to eliminate IUU tuna fishing activities by large-scale tuna longline fishing vessels and not to give any adverse impact to the small-scale tuna longline fisheries in the developing countries.

We hope our position as above stated may be helpful to increase your understanding about us and we request your kind consideration to carry it in your next edition.

This response is from Yuichiro Harada (harada@oprt.or.jp), Managing Director, Organization for Promotion of Responsible Tuna Fisheries (OPRT), Tokyo, Japan

Powerful, inspiring work

Conversations: A Trialogue on Power, Intervention and Organization in Fisheries. Aliou Sall, Michael Belliveau and Nalini Nayak

Conversations is one of those rare books where individuals deeply involved in organizational work have reflected upon it in a manner that is simultaneously engaged and objective, personal and theoretical.

Aliou Sall, Michael Belliveau and Nalini Nayak have all been involved with fisheries for over two decades. Each has played a foundational role in organizing fishing people in their respective countries of Senegal, Canada and India.

Aliou Sall has been working with fishing people since the 1970s, and was a founder of the Collectif National des Pêcheurs Artisanaux du Sénégal (CNPS), a national organization. Michael Belliveau worked, from 1981 until his untimely death in 2001, as a full-time staff person for the Maritime Fishermen's Union (MFU) in the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Nalini Nayak has worked with fishing communties since 1967, and was involved in the founding of the Kerala Malsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) in the State of Kerala, and later, the India-wide National Fishworkers Forum (NFF). She has also been central in introducing a feminist perspective into issues of both resource management and organization in fisheries.

Together, the three authors and co-interlocutors were among the founders of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) in 1986, and have, since then, collaborated periodically on common projects or discussions. Conversations grew out of their desire to engage each other in a sustained reflection on their shared and separate experiences.

The book has two parts. The first consists of a trialogue among the three, carried out over the space of a week in a guesthouse in Ghana. The second consists of essays by each on the character of the fishery and the history of organizational efforts in their region. The authors also use the essays to further develop some of the themes of the trialogue.

Taken together, the trialogue and the essays reveal the fertile and creative mind of the organizer of the project, who must combine theory, new ideas, and an awareness of larger history and current developments with a deep knowledge and appreciation of her chosen milieu—technical aspects of the sector, the culture and psychology of the community—and then weigh all this against a judgement of the ripeness of the times and of what is possible, to devise institutions that will be viable, appropriate and durable or campaigns that will be powerful and effective. Michael Belliveau's essay is particularly brilliant in this regard. It is written as a reflection, both personal and theoretical, but it also serves as a history of the MFU. Events in the MFU and the parts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia that it operates in are tied to shifts in resource patterns, Canadian government policy and international markets, as well as to world events and larger political forces. In its depth and long sweep, it is almost as if Belliveau sensed that this would be his closing statement, his summing up of his own life in the context of his work.

Wide range

The conversation ranges widely, and any review can only hint at its richness and complexity. It goes from

autobiographical sketches of the authors' early politicization, to broad subjects such as the changing nature of social science, and to questions particular to fisheries, such as the role of fisheries science and models of resource management.

Fresh insight is provided into some of the enduring themes of political organizing—the relationship of the 'outsider' or professional organizer to the community she works with; whether working people identify in terms of class or community; voluntarism versus waiting for the right conjuncture of conditions; sector-specific issues versus broader political issues and alliances; what a feminist approach to organizing would look like; the relationship of funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to unions and movements—and into themes peculiar to the current period: what community management might mean in a period of growing individualism; the power to organize and modes of organization in an era of globalization.

Senegal, Canada and India all have large and significant fisheries, but there are important differences between them and between their larger national contexts. The Canadian fishery is the most technologically developed and capital-intensive, and has the greatest amount of State intervention and regulation. Fishermen had some power in the provinces where fisheries is a major source of occupation, such as Newfoundland (when the cod was plentiful, a situation that has changed with the collapse of the cod fishery). The MFU represents inshore owner-operators in the province of New Brunswick and a few villages in Nova Scotia.

Senegal is a small and relatively homogenous country. Fish is an important food item in Senegal, and the fishing community, therefore, has some political power. Senegal has a history of fisheries access agreements with various European countries, which use them for access to Senegal's fish resources. The CNPS is an autonomous national organization, unique in a country where most organizations are sponsored by the State.

The fisheries in India employs close to 10 mn people, but they have historically been marginalized as lower castes. While fish is an important food item in coastal areas, it is not so nationally, and fishermen have not had the same political clout nationally as farmers, for instance, have had.

National organization

The NFF is a national organization in a large and highly diverse society, where no two coastal States speak the same language, and is one of the few unions independent of party affiliation.

There are also several commonalities between the three fisheries. In all of them, community-based, traditional fishing people began to mobilize in response to shrinking access to the resources or to coastal lands, as more 'efficient' exploiters entered the sector, or as coastal lands began to be put to other uses, such as tourism. Much of the conversation in this book, therefore, is devoted to questions of resource management, focusing on the twin aspects of the role of science and the relative roles of State and community. Scientists played a central role in devising resource management models in the Canadian fishery, but the collapse of the cod has revealed the shortcomings of relying on fisheries science and has led to a turn to the 'traditional knowledge' of the fishers. But, the discussants wonder, how much of this is merely fashionable, and how much should fishers share with scientists in the absence of a consensus regarding who will own this information and how it will be used?

Furthermore, there is no easy alternative to scientific management in community management, for the question of community is itself fraught. The process of 'professionalization' of the Canadian fish harvesters is creating a situation where the harvester is increasingly defined by ownership rather than membership in a community. Also, the social security provided by the State has reduced the need for the communal solidarity mentioned in the contexts of India and Senegal. But within these countries as well, this solidarity is diminishing, as the pressure for higher returns and increased consumerism leads to a differentiation based on ownership and access to credit.

In addition, there has always been an ambivalence in fishing people's self-identity—as workers or self-employed owners, and as class or community. And where they identify as a community, it is often on the basis of religious, ethnic or caste identities, as in India, so that an appeal to community may not always have progressive outcomes. All three discussants note wryly the vulnerability of the communities they work with to populist appeals, and to co-optation by members of the community with political aspirations.

Other aspects are also linked to this tangled question of community. The complex relationship between community, class and gender is reflected in the very different space for women's participation in the three contexts. It would seem that, where the fishery is still more of a community affair, women have a greater role to play in the organization itself, whereas in the Canadian context, their role is limited. And conversely, where women have organizational presence and strength, they are more likely to take up issues other than the 'hardcore' ones of resource rights and incomes.

But is it necessarily preferable to take up wider issues? Should fisheries organizations concentrate on sectoral issues, or should they take up broader issues and alliances in larger movements? Michael Belliveau argues that only by focusing on issues such as the restoration of the resource and access rights will fishermen remain with the organization, and only if there is an enduring mass base can the organization keep open some space for supporting progressive politics. This position is certainly confirmed by the observation that organizations that focus increasingly on larger, national-level issues and movements begin to lose their mass base because they are seen as not being able to assist with issues of immediate concern to their members.

However, Belliveau's insistence that organizations focus on 'hardcore' fisheries issues and not "escape into politics", while a salutary check on those pushing purely political agendas, does not then deal with the issue of how these organizations may remain progressive. If no broader ideological work is done, what will ensure that a focus on bread-and-butter issues and professionalization does not lead to conservatism, or that the populism that fishers are vulnerable to is countered?

Progressive position

Even though he details in his essay the progressive position put forth by the MFU with regard to the dispute over native fishing, it is not clear whether that was due mainly to the presence of people like himself and would have been lost in their absence. Surely, the case demonstrates

only too clearly the need for educational work around issues such as this, one of the most vexed in Canadian politics, where the rights of fishing families must be balanced against a history of expropriation and extreme marginalization of the First Nations.

This is the kind of work that has been attempted in India, although it can be strongly resisted, as Nalini Nayak points out when describing attempts to introduce a feminist perspective as well as one concerned with self-limitation of capacity within the community.

This leads to another recurring trope of the conversation—that of the relationship of the 'outsider' to the community she works with—for it seems that it is when organizers attempt to introduce these larger perspectives, to counter populism or narrow economism, that they get challenged as 'outsiders'.

Of the three, only Aliou Sall comes from a fishing family, but he too became an 'outsider' of sorts, an intellectual rather than someone who works with his hands, when he went away to Europe for higher education. Interestingly, all three were influenced by the work of Paolo Friere and Ivan Illich during their early politicization, and they use their ideas to debate the difference between accompanying a situation, supporting it, and 'intervening' in it. Does the community gain more if the supporters identify completely with it, immerse themselves within its situation, or, as Belliveau suggests, if they remain 'outside' to some extent, and bring something new to the situation?

The context of Conversations is one of an apparent narrowing of political possibilities and a backsliding of gains. In Canada, this is witnessed in the trend toward 'professionalization', the focus on bread-and-butter issues, and the resistance to progressive positions with regard to other marginalized groups such as the natives.

In India, it is seen in the growth of casteist feelings within some of the local unions, and communalism within the country at large. In Senegal, there are some hints of this in the attempts at co-optation of the movement by NGOs, and by politicians from the community.

It is in this context that these supporters have been challenged and their contribution questioned. But while Aliou Sall wonders whether fishing people need outsiders to organize them at all, Michael Belliveau is clearest that they bring something important to a situation. In some tension with his position that organizers or supporters should not introduce wider ideological or political issues, he argues that "(a) social grouping becomes regressive and infantile in its thinking when it starts to believe that it is self-contained."

In any case, all three agree, the gains of organization must be measured in other ways than in the subjective response of members. But there is no agreement upon what the objective measures might be. Do they have to do with conserving and restoring the resource? Or protecting the community and especially those marginalized within it? With social and political recognition for a previously low-status occupation and community? Or presence on official committees? Are they reflected by the size of the base? Or by national presence?

Difficult assessment

Given the difficulty of assessing gains, the organizer is only downcast if she puts too

much faith in rational, planned action, in 'voluntarism' or the assumption that one can control and influence all change if one has the will. Wisdom lies instead in keeping in touch with the base, knowing how to wait for the right conditions, and accepting uncertainty in the face of the still mysterious and frequently capricious nature of fisheries. In Bellievau's memorable words: "We must learn to leave a lot of room in our thinking for ironies, for occurrences that take place unexpectedly, and even for reversals. That's what I mean when I say you have to leave room for 'the Will of Allah'."

A word on the format of Conversations. Does the trialogue work? It allows us to 'hear' the discussants, providing for a directness of voice, and makes for all kinds of interesting and unexpected references and explorations, as each sparks a response from the other. But this also means that the conversation wanders, as conversations tend to do, and goes rapidly from technical details of the fishery to reflections on life itself.

The section entitled "On Organizational Work" is particularly long and could have done with some finer subtitling, as it includes long diversions into the specifics of the fishery and sociology of each area, as well as into the relationship between fishery science and the 'traditional knowledge' of the fishermen.

Also, there are allusions that are not always developed in the course of the conversation itself, such as Belliveau's tantalizing references to the dispute over native fishing rights—a potentially burning issue for Canadian readers. Initially, therefore, one wonders whether an outside interlocutor may have helped, especially if the work is to be accessible outside the fishery. But this doubt is laid to rest as one gets to the second part, and finds that the idiosyncracies and shorthand of the conversations are nicely balanced by the systematic coverage of the essays.

ICSF must be commended for the quality of the publication. The book is beautifully produced in terms of text, layout and cover design, a real treat for book lovers, and the perfect complement to a work that is powerful in its ideas and inspiring in its passions. This book is invaluable to those working in fisheries, as well as to all those concerned with questions of power and the scope of collective action to counter it, and effort must be made to publicize it to a larger audience.

This review is by Aparna Sundar (asundar@chass.utoronto.ca), Research Scholar, Department of Politics, University of Toronto

Traditional fisheries

Jammed in Jambudwip

The traditional stake-net fishers of the ecologically sensitive Jambudwip island face a likely ban of their seasonal fisheries

In the South 24-Parganas district of the State of West Bengal in India is the 20-sq km island of Jambudwip. Located about 10 km offshore in the southwest corner of the Sundarbans at the mouth of river Hooghly in the Bay of Bengal, the island can be reached in 45 minutes from the Frasergunj fishing harbour by *bhut bhuti*, a small powered country craft.

Jambudwip has been used as a site for fisheries camps at least since 1955, according to Bikash Raychoudhury's *Moon and Net* (published by the Anthropological Survey of India in 1980). *Behundi jal* or stake-net fishery is a traditional activity in different parts of the Sundarbans delta, on both the Indian and Bangladesh sides.

The largest stake-net fishing operation in the Sundarbans is based in Jambudwip. It is the *Jalia Kaibartha* community from the Chittagong hills that mainly practices *behundi jal* fishery in the marine waters of the Sundarbans. After India attained independence in 1947, the members of this highly enterprising fishing community settled down in places like Kakdwip, Namkhana, Sagar and Pathar Pratima in West Bengal, and Champaran in Bihar.

However, this traditional source of livelihood and sustenance is now under serious threat. The Central Empowered Committee (CEC), has said that the seasonal "occupation" of the Jambudwip island by fishermen and the fish-drying activity was a non-forest activity that cannot be permitted under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, without prior approval of the central government. (The CEC was constituted by the Supreme Court of India by a Notification on 20 June 2002 to provide relief against any action taken by the Central / State Governments or any other authority regarding, *inter alia*, deforestation and encroachments, and the implementation of legal instruments for forest conservation.) It has directed the West Bengal government to remove all traces of encroachment on Jambudwip island by 31 March 2003.

While the Fisheries Department of West Bengal under Minister Kiranmoy Nanda strongly defends the fishermen's claim to the seasonal use of the island, the Forest Department is bitterly opposed. The fishermen are now living in the shadow of uncertainty. Will their two-generations old fishery be treated as an activity eligible for regularization or will they be summarily evicted?

It was on 29 May 1943 that, under a Notification of the Government of West Bengal, Jambudwip became reserved forest as part of the protected forests in the Namkhana Division. As a result, no activity was allowed on the island, except those permitted by the Forest Department. From at least 1968 onwards, fishermen have been issued permits to use the island to collect firewood and to launch boats into the main creek.

Since 1989, Jambudwip has been part of the Buffer Zone of the Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve, where ecologically sound practices, including fisheries, are permitted (unlike the Core Area of a Biosphere Reserve, which is securely protected for conserving biological diversity). Jambudwip is, however, located outside the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve.

Mangroves destroyed

The CEC visited Jambudwip on 3 December 2002, in response to an

application from the Executive Director, Wildlife Protection Society of India, seeking suitable relief against alleged encroachment and destruction of mangroves by fishermen.

The CEC's report of 24 December 2002 directed the West Bengal government to remove all traces of encroachment on Jambudwip by 31 March 2003. However, the CEC observed that the proposal for fish drying on the island could still be considered, but only after obtaining clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs for the fishermen involved, since some Bangladeshis were alleged to be involved illegally in the island's fisheries.

The CEC denouement followed a series of events consequent to the Supreme Court order of 12 December 1996 on the issue of forest encroachment. Further to its Order of 23 November 2001 restraining the Central Government from regularizing all encroachments, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) wrote to all States and Union Territories on 3 May 2002 to regularize *only* eligible encroachments before 1980 and to evict all other encroachments by 30 September 2002. The Forest Department, soon after receiving this letter from the MoEF, ordered the Jambudwip fishermen not to use the island and to remove their fishing implements from their makeshift sheds. Subsequently, the Department set fire to the sheds and fishing implements in July-August 2002. The torching of bamboo-and-reed sheds and fishing implements is particularly intriguing since there was a Ministerial meeting held between the Fisheries and the Forest Departments on 9 August 2002. At this meeting, a decision was made, as reported in the press, to regularize the seasonal use of a demarcated area of Jambudwip for fish drying by fishermen holding identity cards issued by the Fisheries Department.

A subsequent letter dated 30 October 2002 from the MoEF even made provision for setting up district-level committees or commissions to settle disputed claims of eligible encroachments. But no such initiative was taken in the case of Jambudwip. The letter also revealed a softening of the MoEF's position; the earlier rigid stand on "summary eviction" by 30 September gave way to "showing progress on the eviction of ineligible encroachments".

Entry blocked

The West Bengal forest authorities, however, hardened their stand on Jambudwip. They erected concrete pillars at the mouth of the creek—the lifeblood of the fishermen and their fisheries—allegedly to block the entry of fishing vessels into the creek. On 12 November 2002, for the first time in the history of Jambudwip, ten fishermen drowned at

sea during a cyclone, as they were unable to seek shelter in the creek.

Soon after the drowning incident, the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), India, launched an agitation on 18 November 2002 against preventing seasonal fisheries camps and blocking entry of fishing vessels into the creek in Jambudwip. Subsequently, the Principal Secretary of Fisheries, West Bengal, informed the CEC that the West Bengal State Government had decided to permit fishing activity in Jambudwip on the ground that it has been continuing for almost 50 years.

The fishermen resumed fishing but they were still prevented from landing their catch in Jambudwip. On 25 November 2002, after removing a few of the concrete pillars erected by the West Bengal Forest Department, the fishermen entered the creek and sat in their fishing vessels in peaceful protest against being denied access to the island.

On 26 November 2002, the Chief Secretary of West Bengal wrote to the CEC requesting it to agree to the State Government proposal to allow the fishermen to resume fish-drying activities up to February 2003 as an interim measure and to await a formal proposal on the issue from the State Government. The letter also contained viable proposals for long-term solutions to the vexing issue, such as allowing the seasonal fishery in a fenced area along the seaboard of Jambudwip, with full protection to mangroves beyond the fenced area.

Although it indirectly makes provisions for resuming fish-drying activities for the 2002-03 season, the report of the CEC hangs like a Damocles sword on the future of the Jambudwip fishery. As we go to press, there is still uncertainty if the fishermen could resume their fishery from the year 2003-04. About 3,000 fishworkers live on the island during the season, staying in makeshift sheds of bamboo and reed, repairing fishing nets, sorting, drying and storing fish, while about 3,500 fishermen engage in *behundi jal* fishing in the adjacent sea. What makes *behundi jal* fisheries possible is the unique delta ecosystem and the community's indepth understanding of the inter-relationships between the lunar cycle, oceanic currents and the migratory behaviour of fish, in conjunction with the dynamics of bottom topography of the sea, including the pattern of sedimentation and soil quality. The fishery is marked by simultaneous capture, transport and processing activities, with different sets of people involved round-the-clock as one unit under one *bahardar*, or fleet operator.

In actual practice, it is like setting up two camps: one on land and the other at sea, since the fishermen who fish do not return to the island until the end of the season, unless there is a cyclone or some accident. The fishing ground is connected to the fish-drying yards by fish transport vessels that operate daily, sometimes twice a day.

The island—especially the creek during high tide—is not only useful for unloading fish and loading victuals for the fishermen staying on the fishing ground, it is also beneficial as a refuge from cyclones. Drinking water and firewood are also available on the island. Easy access to sufficient quantities of firewood was a long-term requirement not only for cooking, but, more importantly, for boiling hemp fishing nets in natural dyes to make them invisible to fish in the thick mud of *khari*. These days though, firewood is used only for cooking since everyone has switched to nylon nets, which do not require any dyeing.

In the *behundi jal* fishery, a series of bag nets are fixed in the black, sticky mud in the seabed undulations called *khari* at a distance of about 25 nautical miles from Jambudwip. The *khari* has a combination of disintegrated mangrove wood and mud, and is an important source of food for bottom-feeder fish. Aggregation of benthic fish attracts other fish that predate on them. Both prey and predator fish become quarry to the fishermen.

Bagnet design

Each fishing unit has about 20 bag nets. The bag net has an average length of 75 ft and has a 60-ft mouth. Ropes, corresponding to the water column depth, bind wings of bag net on either side of its mouth to metal stakes driven into the mud. The knots are ingeniously tied so

that the mouth of the net always faces the water current, in both high and low tide.

The net is designed in such a manner that a strong current would take it to the bottom of the channel, while a weaker current would keep it at the midwater level. In the absence of a current, the net would float on the surface. Two hardy bamboo poles are tied vertically to the mouth of the net, 20 ft apart, to keep it open. The nets are fixed at depths of 12 to 15 fathoms. The high opening of the bag net, in synchrony with the currents, allows both demersal and midwater species to be caught.

In each of the *khari*, five nets are fixed in a row, as a cluster. Often, different *khari* are chosen to deploy the nets. Unlike the trawl net, which furrows the seabed, the stationary bag nets do not cause any damage to the seabed. The fish are emptied every six hours, at the time of the equilibrium between the high and low tides, when there are no currents, and when the mouth of the net floats on the surface of the sea. Fish are emptied from the cod-end of the net; *doa* the Bengali word for emptying the cod-end can be translated as "milking" the net. Each unit catches about 400 tonnes of fish in a single season. Two-thirds of the catch comprise species like Bombay duck, ribbonfish, anchovies, silver belly and wolf herring that are dried for human consumption and poultry feed. The remainder one-third comprises high-value species like shrimp, jewfish, catfish, Indian salmon, eels, and rays, which are sold fresh. It is estimated that each unit catches fish worth Rs4 mn (approx. US$80,000) in a good season. Putting all the units together, Jambudwip produces about 16,000 tonnes of fish worth Rs168 mn (approx. US$3.4 mn) in a five-month long fishing season.

According to Dr L K Banerjee, Retired Joint Director, Botanical Survey of India, who has worked on the mangroves of Sundarbans for the past 30 years, Jambudwip has successive stages of vegetation, comprising mainly *Avicennia* species of mangroves, and species of grass like *Porteraesia coarctata* and *Phoenix paludosa*. The species diversity on the island is not that significant. However, the satellite imageries of Jambudwip for the period 1981 to 2001 from the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) furnished to the CEC by the Forest Department as "irrefutable proof" of mangrove destruction show dense mangrove vegetation coverage except in areas that are allegedly cleared by the fishermen. Moreover, since higher-resolution satellite images clearly showing deforestation to the detail that the NRSA images are claiming to portray have been produced in India only from 1998, the authenticity of the images as irrefutable proof for the period prior to 1998 needs to be independently verified scientifically.

Even if there is felling of mangroves on the Jambudwip island for firewood by the fishworkers, it is not an impossible situation to salvage since the *Avicennia* species of mangroves found on the island can be successfully regenerated. There are several examples from India as well as other parts of the world. Moreover, the fishworkers are ready to move from firewood to liquefied petroleum gas for cooking purposes.

There are about 10,000 people dependent on the stake-net fishery today, as against a couple of hundreds 35 years ago. Instead of extinguishing the fishery, what is required is to recognize its salient aspects and mitigate negative impacts through better coastal area management, treating the island and the fishing ground within one framework. The Fisheries and Forest Departments have to develop mechanisms to collaborate with the fishermen to achieve this goal.

"I gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together", the poet Robert Browning made the Count say in "My Last Duchess". In the case of Jambudwip, it is high time to retract the command and bring back the smiles to the faces of the fishermen of the island.

This article is by Sebastian Mathew, Programme Adviser of ICSF (icsf@vsnl.com)

News Round-up

CITES *strikes*

Last month the 12th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) decided to protect mahogany and the entire genus of the seahorse, as well as regulate the trade of basking and whale sharks. The listing of seahorse on Appendix II of CITES enters into effect on 15 May 2004.

Opponents to the listing, led by Japan, claimed there was not enough scientific evidence to justify the proposal. In the committee, the measure fell two votes short of the two-thirds majority required for listing on Appendix II. In the plenary session, however, the whale shark listing was approved 81 for and 37 against, and the basking shark listing approved with 82 for and 36 against.

Whale and basking sharks are the world's two largest fish species, and both are hunted for their meat and fins. The fins of whale sharks fetch high prices in Asia, with a single fin reported to have sold for $15,000 in 1999. Both species are also highly migratory and often caught and killed accidentally as by-catch.

Reserve bill

In New Zealand, a new Marine Reserves Bill will allow marine reserves to be established anywhere within the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone.

Currently, they can only be declared within New Zealand's 12-nautical mile territorial waters.

Fishing is not allowed in marine reserves but the bill says other activities such as approved scientific research is allowed.

According to critics, the bill does not sufficiently balance rights against views.

They point to the Wellington South Coast Marine Reserve as an example of resources being locked up, which runs counter to the spirit of sustainable development and customary fishing rights.

Lights off

Tension is rife in the fishing industry of Ghana following the government's directives for the arrest of vessels using lighting to attract fish into fishing nets.

At least 500 wooden vessels belonging to the Ghana Inshore Fisheries Association, whose members are using this method, have remained moored at the ports and jetties along the country's coast over the past week, for fear of being arrested by the navy at sea. While the government is defending its stand to halt the method, which is described as dangerous and likely to deplete fish stocks, especially of juvenile fish, the fishermen say that it is a way of throwing them out of business.

No dole

The president of Brazil has vetoed a bill to give unemployment benefits for fishermen who are out of work during temporary fishing bans, arguing that it goes against public interest and contradicts the country's Constitution.

According to *Diario Oficial de La Unión*, the executive said professional fishermen are already protected by unemployment insurance.

The Ministry of Economy also said there was no budget provision to cover this type of subsidy, and pointed out that in any case it would be contrary to the Fiscal Responsibility Law.

Fishermen said the decision was "absurd." Around 11,000 fishermen are covered by unemployment insurance and union leaders hoped the new law would achieve a 40 per cent increase in the number of beneficiaries by extending it to another 4,400 workers.

Subsidies

Argentina, Chile and Peru are adding their weight to the Friends of Fish campaign to stamp out fishing subsidies.

The Friends of Fish group, including Norway, Iceland and

New Zealand, has been pushing for subsidies to be classified according to detailed inventories.

It wants a study on the impact of the different support schemes to determine which of them violate multilateral commerce rules.

Meanwhile, Argentina, Chile and Peru have voiced their concerns at the World Trade Organization.

Various fishing industry organizations represented their members at a meeting with government officials.

The fishing companies say they pay various fees and taxes, but don't receive any subsidies on their exports, while, in other countries, companies that perform the same activities, and import products caught in Argentine waters, do get subsidies.

Child labour

Free the Fishing Boys, a US-funded programme, which aims to assist and return to their families more than 1,200 children trafficked for forced labour in the Central and Volta regions of Ghana, is making good progress, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

To date, IOM staff in Yeji and Atebubu districts of Brong Ahafo region have successfully registered 814 children who are currently employed under slave-like conditions in numerous fishing communities established along the shores and on islands scattered on Lake Volta.

Lake help

The European Union (EU) has approved a 29.9 mn euro programme to implement fisheries management measures on Lake Victoria.

The programme, to be implemented over a 5-year period (2003-2007), is a concrete expression of support for the Fisheries Management Plan, which aims to maintain and sustain fish resources in the lake.

In particular, the programme will help the three East African countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to monitor catches and enforce measures to counteract illegal fishing.

Caught poaching

Last month, the authorities of Mozambique seized four foreign industrial fishing vessels for illegally fishing for prawns in Mozambican waters, according to the independent newspaper, *Mediafax*.

The trawlers were operating in the country's richest prawn fishery, the Sofala Bank, off the central Mozambican coast, during the period of the year when all prawn fishing is banned, in order to allow the crustaceans to breed.

The four ships, which are currently being held in the port of Quelimane, were flying under the Thai flag, according to a source in the fishing industry cited by the paper.

Quota curbs

The Agriculture Ministry of Malaysia is considering setting a quota on fishing output and reducing the number of fishing licences to revive the country's fisheries resources to a more sustainable level.

Turtle tattle

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC), constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, of India, to look into the death of Olive Ridley sea turtles along the Orissa coast, has directed the State Government to establish permanent camps and boat stations in the next few months for the protection of the endangered species.

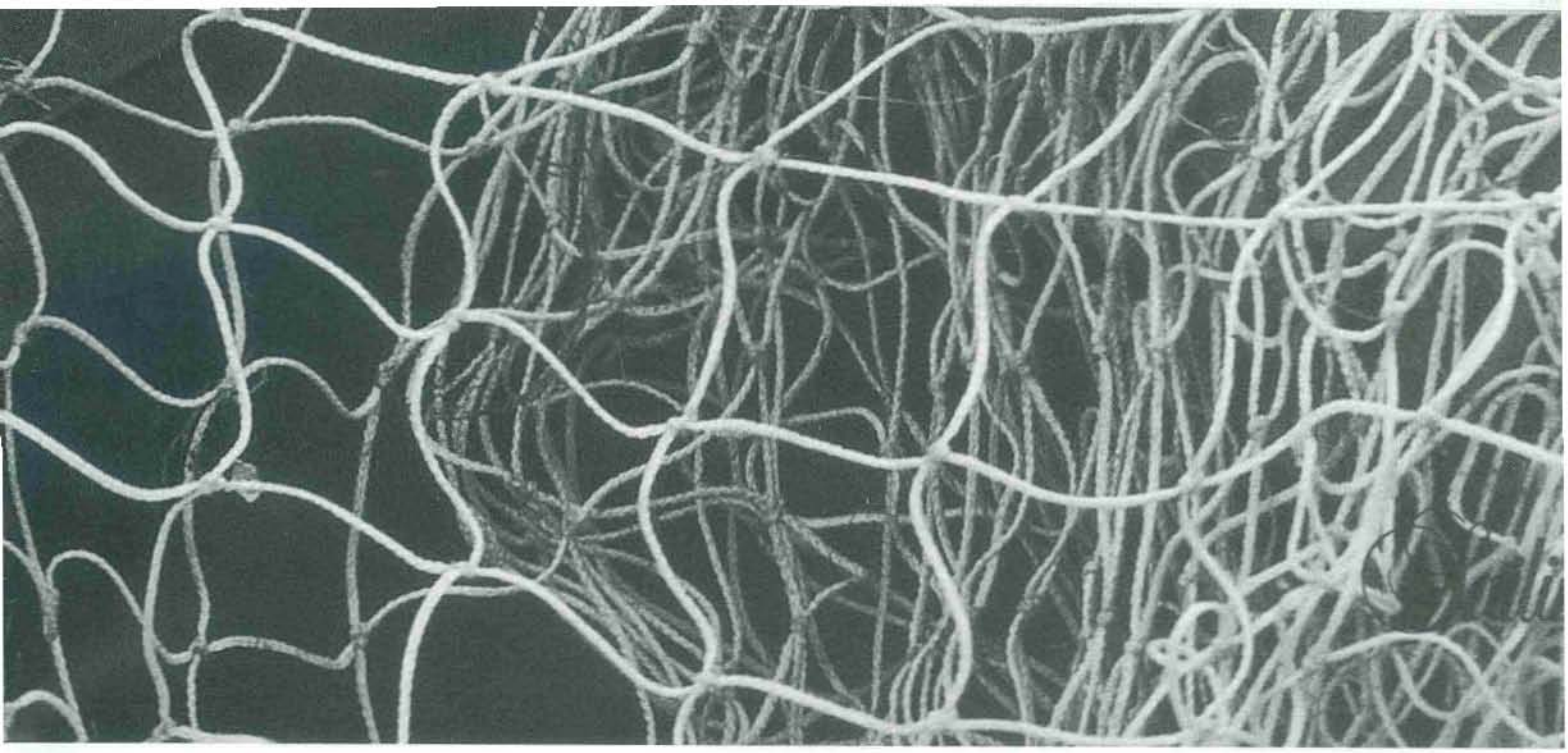
The Committee has suggested that the officers of the Coastguard at Paradeep be notified as Authorised Officers under the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act to empower them to seize and impound trawlers operating in the restricted zone where the sea turtles nest.

The CEC wants the Fisheries Department to suspend the licences of boats not using turtle excluder devices (TEDs).

It has also recommended that all gill-net boats operating within 5 km of the nesting sites should be banned for the next three months.

This was the land's end:
The last fingers, knuckled and rheumatic,
Cramped on nothing. Black
Admonitory cliffs, and the sea exploding
With no bottom, or anything on the other side of it,
Whitened by the faces of the drowned.
Now it is only gloomy, a dump of rocks —
Leftover soldiers from old, messy wars.
The sea cannons into their ear, but they dont budge.
Other rocks hide their grudges under the water.

—from *Finisterre* by Sylvia Plath



ICSF

ICSF is an international NGO working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is in status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN and is on ILO's Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations. It also has Liaison Status with FAO. Registered in Geneva, ICSF has offices in Chennai, India and Brussels, Belgium. As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, ICSF's activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns and action, as well as communications. SAMUDRA REPORT invites contributions and responses. Correspondence should be addressed to the Chennai office.

The opinions and positions expressed in the articles are those of the authors concerned and do not necessarily represent the official views of ICSF.

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