Conversations

Joining in a bit late

A reading of *Conversations* prompts some reflections on organizations and external agents of change

On the one hand, it is quite late to join a conversation that had taken place four years ago, and was published as a book a year ago. On the other hand, however, while reading *Conversations*, I felt several times this absurd wish to intervene in that discussion, and have my say too.

One reason was this feeling that my point of view would have made the discussion more complete, not because of the 'wisdom' of my possible contribution, but because of the sort of person I am, and the way I would be looking at the discussed subjects. But, I was not there in Accra, back in 1999, hence my late and, thus, rather lame, contribution.

Conversations is a book published by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), and authored by three remarkable people: Aliou Sall of Senegal, the late Michael Belliveau of Canada, and Nalini Nayak of India, all of them active supporters of inshore fisherfolk and their communities' struggles to survive and make a decent living. All three are intellectuals, who, for personal reasons, have chosen this sector as their battlefield for a better world and a more just society. Of the three of them, only Aliou Sall comes from a fishing community, leaving which at a relatively young age enabled him to go his own way to higher education. None of them, however, at any time in her / his life has made a living by fishing or other fish-related trade. Their experiences and opinions stem from taking active parts and leading roles in organizations of fishing people, and in social and political struggles in their respective home countries.

I feel that my point of view would add to the significance of the discussion in *Conversations* because my background and experience are so different from those of the actual participants in that conversation, that they present a sort of a reverse image of the original participants' perspectives.

I became a fisherman at the age of 22, after a spell as a stevedore on cargo barges at the Tel Aviv harbour, and another one with the Israeli Navy. Soon I became a skipper of a small trawler, which belonged to a whole community (*kibbutz*), not just to its fishing members. I was also a member of the fishermen's union and, at some stage, also of its executive body. We had our meetings timed with the weather, mainly on stormy days when the whole fleet was in harbours. I drifted out of commercial fishing, and, due to my interest and certain achievements in fishing technology, I was recruited to be a staff member of the Haifa fisheries research station.

In the early 1960s, I worked in Eritrea as a master fisherman and fishery adviser to the local government—which is what has set me on the path I have travelled for four decades as an 'intervener', or 'agent of change', but not among my own people, but among people of other nations, cultures, languages, and fishing habits, involved in what is called, often unjustifiably, fisheries development.

Outsider activists

Among other things, what I would like to do in this essay is to examine the question why fisherfolk join, support, act in, and quit their various organizations, and how they perceive and look at outsider activists. It is many years now since I last fished for a living, but fewer still since I helped others to make a living of fishing. Thus, I'm stepping into this 'conversations' exchange with my feet still in water, but a laptop computer at hand.

For reasons evidently important for its authors, *Conversations* starts with a serious and lengthy discourse, with many sages quoted, as to whether people like them should be called 'interveners' (Mike Belliveau), 'social activists' (Nalini, Belliveau), or 'supporters' (Aliou Sall).

All three of these terms seem right to me. Aren't people from outside the fishing community, who are coming to assist the fisherfolk in their daily or extraordinary struggles, 'supporters'? Are they 'social activists'? That too. 'Interveners'? Sure they do intervene in the fisherfolk's affairs.

My opinion on this subject is that it little matters how we, the outsiders, call ourselves, or how we are called by others. What really matters is what we actually do, and how others perceive what we do. People who come and work for, and with, fisherfolk, whether they are volunteers or are paid for their efforts, do not need to walk around with the feeling that they have to justify to themselves or to others for being there and doing what they do.

For example, the name of Gandhi was mentioned in *Conversations.* So who was the great Mahatma—an intervener, supporter or activist? What would be his answer to such a question? He would probably say that he is just a man trying to help his people.

Another question discussed was how an organization that wants to embrace all the people in fishing communities who draw their income from fishing should call its members: fishermen, harvesters, fishworkers, or what. In my opinion, it depends on the desired and actual membership character, or, in certain areas, on the public-relations value of the name. For example, once, in an Asian country, I helped to establish a fishermen's school. But, I was asked by my local counterpart, "Please, Mr. Ben-Yami, let's find some other name for the school. Fishing is not a very appreciated trade in my country." Of course, I left it up to my hosts to find a name of their preference. I wonder if they chose 'sea-harvesters' school'.

'Fishworkers' is a good term, but, in some cases, not sufficiently inclusive. Personally, for a truly encompassing grouping, I prefer the term 'fisherfolk', which is more inclusive than the others, covering all the fishing people, owners and crews, and their families, whether they participate or not in any post-harvest activities. It also implies more of a community organization, than an association of individuals.

Inshore fishery

There is also the problem of what is inshore / coastal / small-scale / artisanal fishery and what is not. No doubt, a small-scale, inshore fishery of one, especially, Northern country, would be

considered 'industrial', or medium-scale in some of the Southern ones.

What, however, should unite all fisherfolk is their common interest to protect against outside and foreign fleets at least their traditional fishing grounds and resources, and, desirably, any fishing grounds that they can feasibly access.

This is a common cause to small-scale fishermen in the European Union, Newfoundland, Iceland, West Africa, India, Chile, and where not, whatever 'small-scale' means in their countries.

When the discussion comes to what I would call the real issues, there is plenty of wisdom in *Conversations* as, for example, the criticism of fisheries science for its path of specialization, and hence losing the overall picture of the complex dynamics of systems in general, such as, for example, a fishery ecosystem, societal aspects of its management, and of the complexity of development, in particular.

The collapse of the Canadian Atlantic groundfish fisheries remains an intriguing subject, in spite of so many attempts to describe or explain it by various people. The share of environmental-climatic influence in that collapse is a part of the enigma, but faulty assessment and mismanagement are widely quoted as well.

Mike Belliveau throws an interesting light on the history of fishing quotas in Canada, and how they came to being, rather to assure and allocate fishing rights than to protect fish stocks from overfishing. The political-economic reality was already there, when the biological stock-management ideology moved in to ride it piggyback, and explain away the government's pro-companies allocation preference. Scientists on the government's payroll have provided a rationale based on mathematical models that do not, and cannot, wholly reflect the dynamics of the fishery ecosystem.

It is not only the question of the methodology of the State-associated fisheries research, but also that of what it is focusing on. In this respect, Aliou Sall gave an example of the tuna-centred Senegalese fishery research. No doubt, multi-species fisheries typical of the small-scale sectors are more difficult to study and assess, than large-scale single-species ones.

Simplistic models

The very conditions under which studies must be carried out are much less comfortable, systems to be studied are much more complex, and they do not lend themselves to simplistic bioeconomic models. Moreover, they deal with a resource of little interest to big business, and, thus, do not attract sufficient funding.

I would only like to emphasize that one should not generalize about fishery scientists. There are fishery biologists, oceanographers, and economists and other social scientists, who, for many years, have been warning and protesting in various ways, although, perhaps, not loudly enough, against the prevailing, mathematical-models-based fishery science, so favoured by privatization-oriented management. They have been calling the fishery science to return to the real biology and ecology studies at sea, and aboard fishing vessels, and to study and account for fish-habitat inter-relations, major and minor environmental fluctuations, and their effects on fish and other marine life. They have not been heeded, but with the many debacles of that management paradigm, their time may soon come.

I think that we would all agree that while it is trying to maintain, successfully or not, healthy resources, fishery management is willy-nilly mainly about the allocation / distribution of the benefits derived from fish resources among various interests. The management means that the authorities use determine to whom the benefits go, and they choose them according to whose side they are on. Aliou Sall's account of Senegalese legislation includes excellent examples: a government that gives access to its coastal waters to foreign fleets of large trawlers and purse-seiners, bans monofilament nets used by only the small-scale sector, or closes the octopus fishery for stock-management reasons only to artisanal fishery and not to the industrial sector.

Small-scale fisherfolk's struggles worldwide have been mainly against those governments that have been allocating in various manners their traditional resources and inshore and coastal fishing grounds, partly or fully, to industrial, outside and foreign fleets and interests. In some cases, they forced the authorities to call off, delay or diminish such blows to their existence, and all three authors of *Conversations* give ample examples from their countries.

In this respect, I must disagree with Michael Belliveau as to the uselessness of litigation to fishermen's organization. In fact, in some cases, litigation has helped to change or amend governments' policies and actions, as, for example, in the cases reported by Nalini Nayak.

Quotas and especially individual transferable quotas are good for capital-strong enterprises and corporations. As Michael Belliveau quotes a Canadian fisheries minister, a promoter of the ITQ system, the excuse is: "Better to have two fishermen do well than ten to starve." We had a fisheries director who used to say: "We better have fishermen in 30 boats making a modest living, than half of them growing rich in 15 boats." The difference: our fisheries director used to be a commercial fishermen, and I would bet that the Canadian minister was never one, nor would he have ever made a fishing trip at all.

Management by input (effort) control can better serve small-scale fishermen and help them to stay in business. Not once have I witnessed them not co-operating in identification and implementation of effort-control means; rather, they have even prompted and initiated some. The management of the lobster fishery described by Michael Belliveau is an excellent example.

The 'tragedy of the commons' is an often-cited excuse for the fishing rights privatization paradigm. In *Property Rights, Resource Management, and Governance: Crafting an Institutional Framework for Global Marine Fisheries*, published in 1998 by the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, India, John Kurien demonstrated, in a brilliant intellectual exercise, that the term 'tragedy of the commons' was a misnomer. In fact, he says, that tragedy is one of open access, for commons does not have to be a free-for-all, open-access property regime.

Complex systems

The problem of open access is still prevailing in most Southern countries and in those Northern countries whose laws prevent limiting people's right to work of their choice. While the latter sidestep their own laws through complex systems of licensing and quotas, in other countries, including most of the Southern countries, at least in the inshore sector, access limits, if any, have been a matter of tribal, or

community-based, traditional management. In the inshore fisheries of those countries, Northern-type licensing and similar access limitations in the small-scale sector are, with a few exceptions, non-existent, under consideration or still in their embryonic state, and altogether do not carry too much promise in the near future.

Nalini Nayak's analysis of the social and political situation of the fishing peoples has led her to a very wide-reaching approach: many problems of inshore fisherfolk are one consequence of the expansion of capital-intensive fleets owned by powerful interests that, under an uncurbed free-market regime, are trying to privatize fishery resources. I may be wrong, but the conclusion Nalini Nayak seems to be drawing is that fisherfolk's organizations from all over should join forces on a common cause, extending beyond fisheries—a cause of all poor, exploited and oppressed people worldwide, endangered by "globalization and its destruction of human societies".

I had the feeling that Nalini Nayak is crying over spilt milk of a failed promise of a comprehensive *a*lternative to capitalism, and is frustrated by lack of a realistic alternative to globalization. But, it seems that such alternatives are either absent, or unfeasible in the foreseeable future. In my opinion, we ought to focus our efforts on a corrective to the prevailing uncurbed corporate capitalism and to globalization, which is biased towards the former. In the fisheries sector, we should support the small-scale entrepreneurs, their families, employees and communities, whether they are canoe fishermen in Senegal, *kattamaram* fishermen in India, or lobstermen in Canada.

This is because most fisherfolk do not employ the intellectual depth of analysis and breadth of approach of political-social thinkers, but rather prefer to worry about their living and survival today and tomorrow. A whole fishing season is a lot of time. Thus, while it would be quite difficult to mobilize fisherfolk to international or global struggles, they are not strangers to more restricted politics, for they, more than anybody else, understand that fishery management is predominantly a matter of access to resources, and of distribution of the benefits derived from those resources among sectors. Michael Belliveau gives examples of such perceptions and of fisherfolk's political responses.

He writes about a development dilemma, about how any development comes at the expense of somebody. Nowadays, this dilemma has become even more complex than that. Because of the many stocks that are either fully exploited or overfished, development has become, in the view of many, a manifestation of evil. In the eyes of such people, fisheries must be curtailed and reduced, and, in some cases, closed down altogether. The question to be asked is on whose expense such reductions should come. I have no problem with the development dilemma, when development helps small-scale fisherfolk to recover or improve their access to inshore and coastal waters resources, otherwise fished by fleets from outside their area, country or even continent.

In my contribution to India's national workshop on low-energy fishing in Kochi in 1991), set forth what I call the MB-Y's Allocation Principle:

i) all fish that can be caught by artisanal fishermen should be caught only by artisanal fishermen;

ii) all fish that cannot be caught by artisanal fishermen, but can be caught by small-scale commercial fishermen, should only be caught by small-scale commercial fishermen;

iii) all fish that cannot be caught by small-scale commercial fishermen, but can be caught by medium-scale commercial fishermen, should only be caught by medium-scale commercial fishermen;

iv) only such resources that are not accessible to any of the above fishery sectors, or which cannot be feasibly caught, handled and processed by them, should be allocated to industrial, large-scale fisheries.

I recognize, of course, that this sets a rather ideal standard, but it should do as a guiding principle.

I think that the gist of the discussion in *Conversations* is the the role of organizations and the issue of outsider organizers versus external factors such as governments, sponsors, antagonist interests and rival organizations, on the one hand, versus their actual and potential members, as well as the people at large, on the other. I found myself more interested in the latter subject, well illuminated by Aliou Sall, when he said that he doesn't remember being ever asked by fishermen to come and help them, which raises the question of activists who think that they're indispensable.

Here comes the eternal question—is it the calf that is hungry, or the cow that wants to feed it? It seems that in our case there are more cows coming in with their udders full than calves eager to suckle. And there are many historical and other reasons for this situation, a wrong sort of milk being only one of them.

Over 800 years ago, Maymonides, the great Jewish physician and philosopher, wrote an instruction to students of medicine. A doctor's first and foremost duty, he wrote, is not to cause harm to his patients. The same commandment should be reiterated to outsider organizers and activists: do not cause harm to fisherfolk. Erroneous development projects may cause fishing people to invest their scarce resources in wasteful equipment or unfeasible ventures, while adventurous and violent protests may cost them their lives. Those who suffer, economically and otherwise, are the fisherfolk. We, the outsiders, who have unintentionally misled them won't have to reduce food intake because of their failure, and our children won't have to go to school barefoot. These are our 'clients' who have to pay for our mistakes.

Several times have fisherfolk had to tell the outsiders to go away and not come back, sometimes before and sometimes after they had done damage to them, their cause or their community, willy-nilly, of course, and always wishing well. Quite recently, an anthropologist came to a fishing community, was well received and had very good intentions to be helpful with the fishermen's struggle against government's management methodology leading to their dislocation.

But the fisherfolk were very angry when they found out that the anthropologist had co-authored a study alleging that the fishermen's claim to traditional fishing rights, and to their right to maintain their traditional way of life, is questionable, because it needs more generations to create the 'tradition' that that fishery can historically claim—as if what is tradition depends on chronology rather than on people's own perceptions.

Sometimes, people get up spontaneously, as Nalini Nayak reports from India, and only then are joined by outsiders, who help them to organize into formal groupings. Spontaneous people's movements are, as a rule, motivated by actual, tangible needs perceived by the people, and hence carry a promise of wide and fast recruitment of members. Such real needs would also determine the membership composition and character, and the agenda and the reach of the organization.

Various models

Models of organizations that may be valid for fishing people vary: trade-union-type organizations, small-owner associations, credit schemes, co-operatives, marketing societies, mutual-insurance groups, and so on. The choice should depend upon the

existing social norms, traditions and culture. Various traditional groupings may successfully become frameworks that assume new agendas. In my view, the organizers' success depends not only upon the sort of organization they settle on, but also on how careful and intelligent was the identification of the respective client groups.

For example, most small-scale boatowners, themselves hard-working and low-income, are, in fact, employers with a capitalist outlook. Even if they struggle for, or receive, off-season dole, I believe that defining them as 'working class', meaning proletariat, is delusive and unproductive. Their employees, usually share-fishermen who are working-class indeed, may only partly have 'fishing proletariat' interests as against their employers' profit-making orientation, because, especially in the Southern world, some of them may be children or other relatives of the owner. They would rather stick to their employers than get organized in any group antagonizing them.

In many cases, to make a meaningful impact, organizers must concentrate on such small-scale employers. These people, who, in some Southern countries, may be themselves poor, especially by Western standards, want to keep their fishing businesses going, so as to make a living for themselves and their crew, however meagre.

Fishing people usually do not tend to maintain their organizations just for the sake of staying organized. Whether an organization's demise comes upon the conclusion of core issue, or it keeps existing and acting, depends on specific conditions of place, time and people. And, as Michael Belliveau wrote, an organization's failure may take a generation to recover. However attractive to outside leaders, association or identification with other groupings, organizations and institutions that have wider national or international or non-fishery agendas may be opposed by local leadership, as has happened in India, according to Nalini Nayak. And I am in agreement with Michael Belliveau that association with extraneous bodies that may enter in conflict of interest with fishing people, such as 'green' non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or any government-associated institutions may be repelling to some of its potential and actual members. So, for whoever comes to support fisherfolk, the first thing they should ask is what the fisherfolk themselves consider to be the most important issues, then arrange those into a working agenda, and just help them to tackle it.

Outsider activists must recognize that they are under continual scrutiny by the

fisherfolk. Some of them are misled by the external appearance and low educational levels of so many small-scale fishermen. But only if they realize that they have to deal with people who are, as a rule, brave, intelligent and wise, do they have a good chance of being accepted. Fishermen must be brave to go to sea, intelligent to find and catch their fish, and wise to stay alive and remain in business.

A reality that social scientists and activists, whether researchers or intervening 'agents of change', often meet in fishing communities, and which, to simplify their perceived and expressed feelings, they often 'don't like', is social and economic stratification among the fisherfolk. Nalini Nayak has talked about its development in India, following the introduction of modern technology, especially, fishing craft motorization. Michael Belliveau told about another reason for stratification: exclusive access to a rich snow-crab fishery by relatively few, but influential, boatowners.

Stratification represents a major difficulty for organizers, who must face intra-community conflicts of interests and the resulting deterioration of solidarity, and even hostility. Such stratification has frustrated many fishery and community development projects, as well as fisherfolk organizers everywhere. More often than not, the 'bigwigs' assume the role of speakers for, and leaders of, the whole community, and outsider-activists looking for in-community 'counterparts' fall easy prey.

Not less dangerous to innocent activists are internal frictions within, and between, fishing communities, stemming from frequently old, clan, tribe, or extended family conflicts. I have seen whole fishing villages burning for reasons that had nothing to do with the social, economic and political problems the organizing efforts or projects intended to solve, but as a result of inter-religious, inter-tribal or intra-community strifes.

I think that the discussion in *Conversations* about the role of women in fisheries could have been more fruitful, if not for the attempts to generalize. Here I fully agree with Aliou Sall, who opposed such generalization, insisting "that the participation of women in the process of social movement and organization, and their capacity to participate, depends on the role they actually play in the fishery", and on the "general social condition of women", which doesn't have to do with fisheries directly.

Take, for example, West Africa's fish processors and fishmongers, almost all females, the famous 'fish mammies'. Although, their standards of life and working conditions are, on the whole, much lower than those of the women in Canadian fishing communities, their relative status, compared to the mainly male fishermen is, in my opinion, stronger. As soon as the fishermen beach their canoes, the women carry away the fish for smoking in their homes. They not only smoke the fish and take care of firewood supply, but also carry the fish to sell in the market or to wholesalers. Women help to finance fishermen's gear and fuel, and, in general, fishermen are indebted to their own wives, sisters or other women, who thus 'buy' the right to take care of their catches. In short, the fish mammies are the ones who hold the purse strings.

From the social point of view, every one of them is—or tries to be—an independent entrepreneur, a small-scale working capitalist. Some of them succeed, becoming 'vertically integrated' enterprises, owning one or more canoes, or even larger fishing craft. When they deem it necessary, they organize into such groupings, as 'market-women associations', which, usually, have strong leadership, and concentrate on narrow, well-defined objectives.

Nalini Nayak reports from India about similar associations, and Aliou Sall wrote how women worried of supply of sardinella—a fish that is the mainstay of their processing-marketing activities—forced a general union to stand up against the Senegalese government's granting European Union fleet access to the sardinella resource.

Appalling conditions

Most of those women, however, work under appalling conditions while handling the open smoking kilns. The

whole operation carries the danger of fast-spreading fires—which have devoured many African huts, houses and whole villages—and health risks, such as frequent eye ailments (leading to eventual blindness) and lung diseases.

No one organization has done for the fish mammies more than the women of the Ghanaian village of Chorkor, who, back in the 1960s, introduced into wide practice a smoking kiln designed by Bentzion Kogan, a fish-processing expert from Israel, who worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

This kiln, now well known all over the West African coast as the 'Chorkor' kiln, ingenious in its simplicity, has, to a large degree, eliminated the above troubles, and, additionally, has considerably reduced the firewood consumption per unit of smoked fish, and improved the product quality. Based on the simplest local technology, it did what a whole array of imported smoking kilns could not—improve the working conditions, health and income of its operators. It was very fast perceived by the users as 'appropriate technology' and became widely accepted. Credit schemes that would provide fish-smoking women with small loans to construct such kilns in their own yards, after well-executed demonstrations, would lead to many more takers. This could be an example for an organization for women for concrete, achievable goals. Joining a general organization with membership of both gender will not help the fish-processing women. Their needs are different from those of the male fishermen, and their interests often conflicting.

One example, also from Africa, is the establishment of fishermen's co-operatives, widely supported by both, international aid agencies and NGOs. But some of those co-operatives have taken over the marketing function from individual small-scale businesswomen and given them to the men who run those co-operatives. I found that at least in some cases, as on the shores of Lake Victoria, this had been a hidden agenda of the local (male) co-operative activists and managers.

We have to face the reality of the irreversible development of more and more efficient technology, based on unstoppable scientific and technical progress. We need a new strategy that, without ignoring, or attempting futile Luddite-type struggles, would enable the preservation of coastal communities and the well-being of inshore fisherfolk.

I will divide the problem into two: one is about the perfusion of modern technology throughout the artisanal and other small-scale sectors, and the other is about resources allocation.

There has been a lot of discussion during the second half of the past century about what is appropriate technology. While various agents of change, technologists, social scientists, development experts, consultants and political activists were having the time of their lives writing books and learned papers, arguing with one another, and attacking each one's approach, the fisherfolk were quick to make their choices. Their criteria appeared to be quite different from those of the outsiders—both those who tried to introduce new equipment and methods, and those who opposed modern technology.

Fisherfolk had quickly recognized and absorbed, in particular, outboard motors and nylon netting, because both boosted returns on their investments, and increased their incomes. Outboard motors, as Aliou Sall also writes, have revolutionized the artisanal fisheries in Southern countries, and "permitted the artisanal fishermen to extend their territories and compete with the industrial fishermen". Other examples of up-to-date technologies that are considered appropriate by many Southern world's artisanal and small-scale fishermen are echo-sounders and global positioning systems (GPS), not to speak of cellular phones. John Kurien in his essay published in *MAST*, 2003, writes on the spreading of GPS in India even across the *kattumaram* fleet.

Level of support

Those manufacturers who were able to supply reliable machines and reasonable or, at least, best-available level of support services, enjoyed the development of

extensive markets. The discussion whether outboard motors represent appropriate technology or not quickly lost its relevancy. The real problems have been how appropriate has been the manner in which these technologies have been introduced, maintained, financed and serviced, and how to minimize their negative social consequences.

I do not believe that there is any ideology and realistic strategy able to arrest this march of modernization—strongly supported by the younger and better-educated fishermen—into the small-scale fishery sectors. Fisherfolk's organizations and their outside supporters should, therefore, focus on two issues: how the improved technology should best be used for their benefit, and how to improve the financial and technical conditions of their acquisition and maintenance.

I have seen several ways how new technology spreads across artisanal and small-scale fisheries in Southern countries. In too many cases, fishermen must pay very high interest rates for the money they need to acquire the desired equipment. They sometimes return their debts by cash payments, but, most often, by delivering their catches to their respective moneylenders at prices below those they would be able to get on a 'free' market. Outsider-supporters may not like the 'march of technology' into fishing communities, but by leaving things as described above will not stop the technology, but will only maintain the tough conditions for its acquisition. Therefore, one way of supporting fishing people would be to help them organize financing at regular, official banking rates for their technical advancement, on the one hand, and to assist them in their competition over access to fishing grounds and resources against outside, large-scale fleets, on the other.

The process of globalization seems unstoppable. More and more countries are going to participate in it, and it is going to be more and more profound. Its character would most certainly keep changing, while the self-serving approach of the powers represented by the World Trade Organilzation and its neoliberal economics, kept at bay at the moment by Southern countries and in-house opposition, would eventually give way to more equitable strategies. Trying to stop globalization is like trying to stop technology—all the more difficult since they both interact successfully.

Free exchange

One of globalization's more important components, the Internet, enables world-reaching new personal, business and political bonds, and free exchange of information, knowledge and opinions. It is one of the mainstays of globalization, and, at the same time, bears the seeds of

constant change and further development. Is there a way in which various national and subnational organizations of fishermen / fishworkers / fisherfolk could go global, too?

As is well known, some attempts eventually failed, for reasons already described in past issues of *SAMUDRA Report*. My feeling is that that schism was due—apart from the South-North leadership argument—to excessive expectations as to the degree of unification, and agenda specifics. So, is such worldwide co-operation really needed, and if yes, what should be done?

No doubt, wherever issues involving fisherfolk's interests are dealt with on the global arena, a united, multinational body could assume an important position, as a supporter of their causes. Such a body can be, at least initially, a loose federation of national and international groups and organizations, centred on an agenda that is vague enough to enable the various groups to feel comfortable under its umbrella. It can have a co-ordinating secretariat composed of representatives of all member organizations, with a revolving chairmanship.

Such a structure would eliminate most potential points of friction, and enable all members to have an equal position, say and appearance, on the one hand, and maintain full independence, on the other. It even may survive and be active for many years.

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