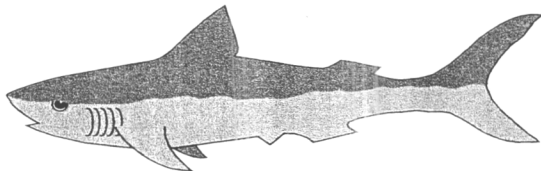


WORLD FISHERIES DAY

21st November 2004



SET MY PEOPLE FREE

INTRODUCTION

In the world of Fisheries, especially the **small scale sector** and in the **traditional sector**, the feeling of helplessness and uncertainty of the next fishing season, nay of the present time, has never been as marked as it has been and developed since the advent of globalization. The cascading torrential effect of a market economy with all its nuances of liberalization and privatization has left the **small fishworker** in a quandary. Mechanized Industrial fishing vessels boast a higher catch/yield; the small fishing communities are mauled. The effects on the life and family of the fishworker are far from truly easy and comfortable. In fact within the fishing sector exploitation is rampant by way of mechanized international fishing companies depleting the ocean and consequently depriving small and local fishing communities of their livelihood. It is a known fact that one **Industrial fishing vessel**, fishes in **24 hours** what it takes 1000 **small canoe boat/plank boat** (in south India called the "Kattu Maram", i.e. logs of wood tied together) to fish in **one full year!** Creative thinking in order to survive with a hope of another successful fishing season seems the only experiment worth trying as a way out.

Some of the other major constraints that a small fishworker in South Asia faces are:

- the ill effects of **aquaculture** in and around their fishing villages
- the establishing of **polluting factories** on the river beds and sea coasts
- the **grabbing of coastal community land** in the guise of developing "Eco-tourism"

FISHERMEN PRISONERS

It is a known fact that due to political tensions between the major players in **south Asia** there are repercussions on the economic front of the small fish workers in the region. Are we going to a **war zone port**, is a familiar question international sailors ask while entering south Asia waters. Fishing vessels are constantly on tenterhooks and often stray with fish for whom there are no boundaries. Coast guards in the region have too negative a mandate to 'chase and arrest' rather than to admonish and understand. '**Guard and protect**' is unfortunately interpreted as **entrap and capture!**

- Between **India and Pakistan** there is a constant "**exchange**" of **fishermen prisoners**. The game goes on. The books must show "arrests"! The label of 'terrorist' even if one possess a knife to clean the fish that one must eat while out at sea for a week, could fit you and me!
- Bobbing with the tides, towards their ultimate deterioration in the Willingdon Island harbour in Cochin, India, are several boats of "captured **Sri Lankan fishermen**."
- The India Coast guard, off Kolkata, with its surveillance in the jagged fish rich waters of the Bay of Bengal's '**Sunderbans**' are labeling all those poor, who fish in those waters as "**infiltrators from Bangladesh**". Transient Indian fishermen too have been arrested in this area.

We cannot be satisfied but to work in search of the **liberating forces** that will **set our people free**.

OUR CHALLENGES IN SOUTH ASIA

For us in South Asia our challenges seem to be charted by the volatile situations we experience. We have had troubled times over the past fifty years and more - the partition of **India-Pakistan**, the establishing of **Bangladesh**, the ethnic struggles in **Sri Lanka**- We are constantly struggling with issues and concerns in the ocean over fishermen. They stray into each other's waters. They are arrested. Then efforts are made to release them. Poverty and deprivation is a constant companion especially of those who eke out an existence from the ocean by **traditional methods** of fishing.

AN APPEAL

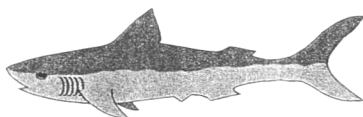
On behalf of the **International Committee on Fishing** set up by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, Vatican City, we appeal to all **Governments of the South Asian Region** to look into the following matters urgently and alleviate the burdens of the fishing community:

1. To establish the **rights of fishing communities** to their customary territories in the coastal zones under their national jurisdiction.
2. To establish on an urgent basis a **"common fishing ground" policy** between neighbours so that clashes may decrease and the work of the coast guards may be made more humane.
3. Even in the event of arrests; to ensure a **maximum thirty-day limit on holding** them and disposing of their cases with humanity and understanding. After all they belong to their families!
4. To protect fishing communities, fish resources and fish habitats, such as coastal zones, water sheds, mangroves; from land based sea based and air-based threats. These include **displacement by tourism**, pollution (including the use of the sea for dumping toxic wastes) destructive industrial aquaculture, over fishing and destructive fishing practices.
5. To protect food security, both locally and worldwide, by **sustaining fish stocks** for the future, and by preserving fish for human consumption.
6. To make sure that states and transnational corporations comply with relevant international agreements and to **oppose trade agreements that threatens the livelihood of the traditional fishing community**.

ALL ARE CALLED TO SET FREE

On World Fisheries Day, Nov 21st 2004 all are called to bring to every fish worker and fishing community especially those that are poor, the assurance of solidarity and friendship in their struggle.

- **SOLIDARITY** is based on our fundamental belief of the **dignity of the human person**- even if they have become prisoners.
- **SOLIDARITY** is an **ethics of relationships**, not of hierarchy nor of duty, but springs from the realization that we are intimately bound to other. Fishermen in themselves are bound to each other on a good relationship in the south Asian region.
- **SOLIDARITY defends human rights** because it recognizes that rights are intrinsic to human nature- the right of every prisoner to be set free.



World Fisheries Day 21st. November 2004



AVENUES OF ACTION 2004:

A. For all in general:

1. On Nov 21st join fishing communities world wide in “**no fishing**” “**no buying/selling fish**” “**no eating**” – aimed at our gesture of **conserving our resources**. This feature is common to this day every year.
2. Offer **solidarity and support** to protect, defend and **strengthen communities** that depend on fishing for their livelihood. Offer solidarity especially of fishermen prisoners.
3. Identify in your area and region **ecological movements** and human rights groups who may be involved with the fishing community. Give some of your time per week or per month to understand what they are doing.
4. Participate especially to support and **enhance the role of women** in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the fishing community. Wives of fishermen prisoners may need your special attention.
5. In any organisation you belong to, especially if you are part of the Small Christian Communities, always make a sincere effort to bring into focus **factors of globalisation which injure the poor** and alienate them from the mainstream of society. Plan actions that will reach out to these individuals.
6. Use your best connections with appropriate **government officials** to see that what is mentioned under “**An appeal**” in the message above, is achieved. Even a small bit of success will count for the larger interest of the fishing community!

B. For Residents of City Parishes

1. If you are involved in any way in **Prison ministry**, outreach to Prisoners etc identify any fisherman from any of the neighbouring countries, who may be in the prisons you Visit and send a note to stellamarisindia@yahoo.com
2. Keep track of the **newspapers in your city for the month 15th Nov to 15th Dec;** (even beyond and regularly) record and keep cuttings of any events you see related to prisoners from any of the south Asian countries, especially the release of them from prisons. Send these on to the Apostleship of the Sea, south Asia coordination, 876, Alto Porvorim, Goa. 403521. India.
3. Find out about the **Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPPFD)** in your area. This group celebrates its 10th anniversary this year 2004 and has been involved in Peace Initiatives with our worthy neighbors. Join them to lend your voice for the **release of fishworker prisoners** in each other's countries. <www.pipfpd.org>

Message issued by Apostleship of the Sea, AOS South Asia and India, 876, Alto Porvorim, Goa, 403521. India. <www.workers-solidarity.org> <www.wffp.org>

Jimmy Nail- *Big River*



Walking on cobbled stones, little bits of skin
and bone
Jumping on a tramcar for a ride
I can remember when, I was a just a boy of
ten
Hanging around the old Quayside.
Now all the capstans and the cargo boats
And Stevedores are gone
To where all the old ships go
But memories, just like the sea live on

'Cause that was when coal was King
The River was a living thing
And I was just a boy but it was mine
The coally Tyne.

This was a big river
I want you all to know
That I was proud
This was a big river
But that was long ago
That's not now, that's not now

My father was working man
He earned our living with his hands
He had to cross the river every day
He picked up his Union card, out of the
Neptune yard
Mouths to feed and bills to pay
There came a time for him to sail across the
sea and far away
And finally when the war was won
They brought him home and home he stayed

And when his days were done
Under a golden sun
They took him back to where he longed to be
Back to the sea

This was a big river
I want you all to know
That I was proud
This was a big river
But that was long ago
That's not now, that's not now.

The Neptune was the last to go
I heard it on the radio
And then they played the latest number one
But what do they do all day
And what are they supposed to say
What does a father tell his son?
If you believe that there's a bond between
our future and our past
Try to hold on to what we have
We build them strong, we built to last

'Cause this is a mighty town
Build upon solid ground
And everything they've tried so hard to kill
We will rebuild.

This is a big river
I want you all to know I'm so very proud
This is a big river
But that was long ago
That's not now
This is a big, big river
And in my heart I know it will rise again
The river will rise again.

"There is still a dark side to the shipping and **fishing** industry: low pay, hard working and living conditions, lack of safety and social security.....On the bright side, the recent ILO maritime session on fishing and the proposed consolidation of "**more than 30 Maritime Labour Instruments**" into the new ILO Convention presents a new and great hope for the maritime and fishing communities. If these revised norms concerning the fishing industry were adopted next year, they would benefit 90% of the fishing people around the world, compare with the existing juridical instruments that cover only 10%. That is why it is important **that each government and Flag state be encouraged to assume its responsibility and speak for the rights or the people of the sea.** They must ratify the new conventions and also see to their implementation in their maritime and fishing industries as well as in their Exclusive Economic Zone."

- Stephen Fumio Cardinal Hamao, on the occasion of Sea Sunday 2004.