

News Round-up

Harassed foreign crews

In Taiwan, the Fishermen's Service Center of the Presbyterian Church continues its advocacy for foreign crew, particularly Filipinos, in Taiwanese distant water fleet.

Through media exposures and ecumenical partnerships, the Center highlights the social problems of hiring cheap labour.

Last year, Chinese workers were also smuggled into Taiwanese ships meant to provide them with illegal entry into the United States.

Six boats with hundreds of Chinese nationals were caught. These episodes have further ruined the reputation of Taiwan's fishing industry, says the Center.

The Center also established ties with the Japan-based organization Peace, Health and Development.

In Argentina, a new branch office of the Center began networking with

overseas Taiwanese to intervene in detention cases in that country.

Artisanal fishermen organize

Earlier this year, a few thousand traditional artisanal fishermen of Madagascar got organized under the banner of Federation Chretienne des Pecheurs Artisanaux de Madagascar (FECPAMA).

The Federations secretary-general is Christian Nestor Velo.

A legendary heroine inspires...

During the days of colonial rule in India, the British sought to collect a tax from the local people navigating in the lower parts of the river Ganges in West Bengal. Even the small-scale fishermen were not spared this levy.

There was, however, one person who fearlessly challenged the British—and she was a woman, Rani Rasmoni. Using her leasehold rights, Rasmoni blockaded the river with two huge chains.

This prevented the passage of cargo ships through her lease area and allowed the fishermen to fish freely.

The enraged British were thus forced to negotiate new terms with Rani Rasmoni.

Not surprisingly, her memory is today held

sacred by fishworkers. They regard her as a special friend of fishermen.

...a meet of Indian women fishworkers

Recently, what Rani Rasmoni stood for served to inspire women in the fishworkers movement in India.

On the occasion of Rasmoni's 200th birth anniversary, Calcutta, West Bengal's capital, was the venue for a training programme for 17 women participants from the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and West Bengal.

This was part of the Women in Fisheries programme of ICSF, aimed to create a core group of women activists within the fishworkers movement in India.

Traditionally, only in Kerala do women play any significant role in fishworkers' organisations. This is despite the fact that women participate actively in fisheries-related work.

According to Aleyamma Vijayan and Nalini Nayak of the Women in Fisheries programme of ICSF, the Calcutta training was an

integrated process commencing with our analysis of development, the gender question and social analysis related to the fisheries context. Since the participants came from four different language back-grounds, multiple translations took time. But the use of visuals aided the process. This also gave the organizers a better feel for such training tools.

The programme also discussed organizational processes, while simultaneously giving the participants exercises on developing leadership skills.

It was possible to share and learn from others experiences since some had been working for long in the field while, others were new.

The issues of leadership and power also came in for serious discussion. The participants inquired into alternate models which are more democratic and participatory.

According to Vijayan and Nayak, the most animated discussion took place around the question of women's participation within the fishworkers movement.

Some had very hard and demanding experiences trying to integrate women's issues into the movement.

Others faced personal isolation. Often the women's units were sought to be separated from the larger fishworker movement.

Vijayan and Nayak report that finally, after a serious debate, the group arrived at the conclusion that we

women have to be part of the larger movement, work for structural change within and, for example, ask for a 50 per cent representation for women at the decision-making level, and continue to fight to integrate the women's issues into the larger struggles.

On this note, each group took back an action plan. This, hopefully, will help the women integrate into their working lives some of the ideas and skills they learnt at the training programme.

A new journal launched

Artisanal fisherfolk of **Senegal** now have their own mouthpiece.

The Collectif National des Pecheurs Artisanaux du Senegal (CNPS) has just published the first issue of its information journal, called, La Pirogue Gaal-Gui.

...and a new coalition

Last November, eight NGOs of **Europe** took the initiative to form the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA).

It is aimed to petition the European Community (EC) to establish a framework for fisheries agreements between EC fishing companies and less developed countries, especially African/Caribbean/Pacific States. Such a framework is intended to have a wider development perspective.

The Coalitions concerns encompass the sustainable use of fish

resources for the benefit of fishing communities who depend on them for their livelihoods and subsistence, and the conservation of global fish stocks for future generations.

ITF embraces small-scale fishworkers too

The International Transportworker's Federation (ITF)

Fishermen's Section Conference has resolved to expand operations in the fisheries sector.

The concluding session in Benalmadena, **Spain** on 26 March gave a call to organize the unorganized as a response to the current world crisis in fishing.

The conference discussed the question of trade union organization and ITF membership of fishing organizations.

There was general agreement on the need for trade union protection for small-scale fisheries. Delegates agreed to try to bring small-scale fisheries workers into the ITF.

It has launched a recruitment campaign to boost its membership.

No fish, no future

The Canadian Oceans Caucus has launched a No Fish No Future campaign to help re-establish sustainable fisheries and coastal communities, and to

raise awareness of this national crisis.

The Caucus is a coalition of over 50 environmental, fishing and community groups in Atlantic **Canada** and across the country who are involved in marine issues.

As part of the campaign, the Caucus is circulating throughout Canada a petition which will be presented to the country's Prime Minister. It calls for parliamentary action to address the devastating result of overfishing and gross government mismanagement.

Fishing away poverty

Hundreds of fish culture projects are meant to help the poor. Yet few have really improved food supplies or raised incomes for the poor, especially the landless.

To find out why-and how to change the situation- the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) and the Association of Development Agencies in **Bangladesh** organized a workshop for NGOs in Dhaka on 25-26 October last year.

A report of the workshop, just published, proposes actions on both the technical and socio-economic areas. These include better project appraisal

methods and quality seed/feed inputs, as well as financial credit and marketing support by NGOs.

ITDG hopes that the report and the workshop recommendations will help to further the debate on poverty-focused fish culture development in other areas of the world too.

Battling the police

The police station of the village of Flacq in **Mauritius** was recently besieged by hundreds of fishermen and two hundred of them were arrested.

This happened after the fishermen had removed buoys installed by Sun Resorts Limited during dredging operations carried out for the Touessrok Hotel.

Earlier, fishermen had demonstrated against the denial of access to fishing grounds in the lagoon. The entire village fears that ultimately only corporate power will triumph.

Policing truant vessels

ICSF has recently formed a task force to look into living and employment conditions aboard industrial fishing vessels.

The co-ordinator of the task force is Jean Vacher from Mauritius.