



1. Introduction:

After the February Revolution in the Philippines which ousted the Marcos Administration, child labour became a more discussable issue. The new government specifically President Aquino herself has showed a growing concern over child prostitution in particular and the need to formulate national policies to combat the growing tide of child workers in general. In response to this call, government and non-government agencies conducted sectoral studies on the working and living conditions of children and developed programs designed to eliminate child exploitation.

This article which was undertaken to provide an overview and synthesis of various articles and studies on child labour is an offshoot of a study conducted on the working and living conditions of child workers in the deepsea fishing industry (the Muro-Ami Fishing Corporation.) The Muro-Ami issue received much attention following the broadcast of the film "Slave ships in the Sulu Sea" by the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on the American and Australian television and publications of some articles in the Philippine dailies. An inter-agency Task Force was established by the national authorities involving governmental, non-governmental as well as international organizations to further explore the issues involved and to work out practical solutions for the protection of workers, especially child workers in the Muro-Ami fishing operation.

The first section of this paper will provide an overview of child labour in the Philippines. Specifically it tries to assess the incidence of child labour, its importance to the family, and the work arrangements as well as environmental conditions found in the informal sector. Government policies and regulations as well as options and issues of possible intervention by both government and non-government organizations are likewise highlighted. The second part deals with child labour in the Muro-Ami deepsea fishing operations. It emphasizes the importance of the fishing industry in the local economies of the fishermen's communities and as a source of income to the households. It also touches upon the organization of the Muro-Ami corporation, who recruits and who is recruited as fishermen as well as what the actual working and living conditions are on board. Finally possible governmental intervention in this special case are analysed.

Secondary information, specifically the available literature on child labour in the Philippines is the basis of this study. Also interviews with government and university representatives were carried out. Finally fact-finding missions were undertaken to the hometowns of the fishing crew in Cebu province (Central Philippines) and on-board visits of the Muro-Ami fishing vessels operating near the island of Palawan (West Philippines).

2. An Overview of Child Labour in the Philippines:

2.1. The Incidence of Child Labour in the Philippines

Philippine Labour Statistics which cover the working population in the age brackets 15 to 65 years do not provide an accurate picture of the labour situation in the country. An examination of the local economy reveals that a substantial part of the population under the age of 15 years is actively engaged in economic activities. Consequently no reliable data are available. However some estimates on the number of child workers were made. Recently UNICEF assessed that the Philippines has about 5 million working children in the age group of 5 to 14 years of which almost 3.9 million came from the rural areas. This seems to be a rather conservative estimate as it is assessed that in the garments industry alone over 2 million girls are employed.

Considering the absence of reliable information and the fact that most children are employed in the informal sector, estimates may notably differ depending on the definition of a child worker. In the Philippines a consensus exists regarding the age cohorts of child labourers which is 5 to 14 years and which implies that in the Philippines case the potential population is approximately 12.6 million (NCSO, 1980). Yet the definition of child labour is not clear on the number of hours a child is supposed to work each day to be considered as child labour except for those working full-time.

Although not fully in concurrence with the data of the National Census and Statistics Office, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECS) offers some revealing statistics. According to MECS, the total population in the age group 7 to 12 years was 8.2 million persons in 84/85 of which 7.8 million were enrolled in private or government schools. Around 4.9 million were 13 to 16 years of age of which 2.6 million pupils were enrolled. Assuming each child who is not attending school is a full-time working child, then based on these statistics roughly 2.7 million are full-time working children within the age brackets of 7 to 16 years; most of them are aging 13 to 16.

However many children are part-time workers, that is they work and study simultaneously. In Manila for instance, children are street vendors in the morning but attend school in the afternoon and consequently are registered in school. In the rural areas school attendance is subject to the agricultural cycle. During periods of high labour demands (harvest and planting seasons) children interchange temporarily school for work. In the vegetable producing Benguet Province, children assist parents in their farms during the 3 to 4 harvest seasons each year. Also in the rural areas, girls assist their mothers to accomplish the quota as set by the garments sub-contractors. The picture becomes completely blurred when dealing with children whose jobs do not interfere with their studies such as occasionally the case may be of street vendors and those engaged in the agriculture and garment industries.

Consequently estimates on the number of working children in the Philippines may range from as low as 3 million to 8 million depending on the definition used. It is important to note however, that not each working child is a child labourer.

## 2.2. The Importance of Working Children for Families

The incidence of child labour can be attributed to low income levels of working adult family members as well as the instability and irregularity of some jobs. As a result children at the age of 12 to 15 years work because of their determination and the parents' encouragement to help augment the family income.

Generally child labour is viewed positively by both the parents and the children. On one hand, skills, knowledge, proper attitude and values are instilled in these children while on the other hand it gives these children a feeling that they are responsible family members. Children regard their work as necessary not only because of its contribution to the family budget, but also because it enables them to be with friends or to meet new ones.

Children's contribution to the family income is very substantial. Although reliable statistics are not available, it is estimated that their total income constitutes 25 to 35% on the average of the total household budget. However in some cases the amount may be greater than 50% depending on the number of children per family engaged in income generating activities and the share they contribute to the household. Studies indicate working children belong to households where 3 to 5 members are employed of which one to four are children. In a Muro-Ami fishing families for instance, the women take care of agriculture, men and sons are engaged in the fishing operations, while daughters may be employed as domestic helpers. Besides family expenditure, children spend their earnings on school supplies, tuition fees, food consumed outside the house, soft drinks and sometimes even clothes.

In the rural areas , boys and girls are employed as domestic workers (sewing and embroidery), fishermen and as agricultural labourers. On the other hand in the urban sector child workers are engaged as househelpers, in street trades and informal/unregistered small-scale industrial enterprises (furniture, souvenirs etc). Children's work range from the simple and ingenious (smocking, embroidery) to the labourious and dangerous jobs.

Child labourers are usually paid on a piece rate basis. In the garment industry the weekly take home pay ranges from ₱20.00 to ₱150<sup>1</sup> while in small urban industries it is approximately ₱70.00 to ₱100.00 weekly. Street vendors earn up to ₱200.00 weekly, domestic helpers have a maximum income of ₱100.00 per week while fishermen may earn ₱200.00 to ₱300.00 a week.

### 2.3. Working and Studying

An interesting feature of child labour in the Philippines is that many children succeed to combine schooling with working. Education is considered a prime aspiration of these children. Relatively few children under the age of 15 become full time workers. Public elementary schools conduct classes usually half days, either a morning or afternoon session which enable children to work the other half day. In private schools however this type of arrangement is not possible since learning is a full-time process. But since tuition and school fees are higher and beyond the capacity of the families to pay, it is safe to assume that the poorer strata of the Philippine population are enrolled in the public schools only. Statistical findings reveal that part-time employment interferes to some extent with the child's schooling, since most working children complete their elementary education at

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<sup>1</sup> 1 US\$ is approximately ₱20.00

the age of 14 to 16 years (if at all). Further during the school year 1980/1981, 1.7 million boys dropout as against 1.2 million girls (MECS). However many school drop-outs, enrol the following year or in the subsequent schoolyears. This especially true in the rural areas. During the secondary level both at government and private schools children found difficulties combining work with their study since classes are conducted the whole day and school fees are higher. Alternatively many child workers are inclined to work full-time to augment the family budget.

As important as the characteristics of the educational system is the nature of the informal sector. The flexibility and high employment capacity of this sector facilitates the entry of the semi-skilled or unskilled workforce, while employment in the non-organized sector requires low capital inputs as well. Sometimes work can even be carried out within the family compound. Yet the high absorption capacity is coupled by a decreasing marginal productivity and income.

The flexibility and absorptive nature of the employment in the non-organized sector enables and attracts children to combine schooling with working and playing (the latter pertains to the situation of children below 5 years of age which is actually a gradual inclusion into the labour force). Unlike in the formal sector the number of working hours and

work schedules are very flexible, and to some extent are conditioned by the seasons. This is particularly true in the agriculture and fishing industries as well as when subcontracting arrangements are involved. In the case of street vendors, earnings are dependent on the sales receipts and indirectly on the efforts exerted and hours worked. Newspapers may be sold early in the morning before school and flowers may be sold after school hours.

The common belief that children's entry into the labour market endangers the employment prospects of adults workers stems from falsely interpreted characteristics of the informal sector. However this statement may be true for the formal and organized sector but not for the non-organized sector, particularly in occupations like street vending, embroidery, agriculture and fishing. Similarly the conclusions made by several studies that both adults and children of the very families are employed in the same occupation counters this generally accepted belief. Children learn their skills and are introduced to their work by their parents. A child becoming a street vendor does not take the place of his father nor mother, but rather supplements their activities. Although marginality decreases family income does increase with each new member employed in the non-organized sector. A girl assisting the mother in the garment industry does not threaten the employment of the mother but is a means to accomplish the quotas set by the employer. A son working under the same Muro-Ami fishing operator as his father implies a higher income derived from this line of employment which offsets the small decrease of each individual share.

#### 2.4. Work Arrangements and Environment in the Informal Sector

An employer-employee relationship usually does not exist in the non-organized sector. Workers in the informal sector are either self-employed or hired on a contractual basis. Those self-employed are engaged in vending of cigarettes, candies, fruit and food which require low capital inputs, while children who work on a contractual basis sell newspapers, lottery tickets and flowers among others or are in the garment, fisheries (Muro-Ami) and agricultural industries. Generally it is not true that in a sub-contracting arrangement management encourages the employment of children to reduce labour costs since employment contract places importance on work accomplishments and not on the person or age of those who performed the given task.

The employment conditions are commonly set by the workers themselves and inspired by their desire to earn more money. Indirectly these conditions are the result of poverty, an unbridled competition in the labour market and marginality of their productivity and employment. Another others long working days may result during the peak season. Street vendors compel themselves to work under the worst conditions, and are exposed to various hazards caused by speeding vehicles (running after or alighting from moving vehicles), pollution, robberies and payment to gangs in exchange for their security. The work environment in small-scale industries on the other hand is usually dark and poorly ventilated, noisy and dusty,

while the physical facilities are inadequate. Also children perform their duties in uncomfortable and tiring positions, and with the minimum appropriate tools which make the production process more complicated. Workers in the agricultural sector are exposed to chemicals, while fishermen use poor diving equipment which makes their job dangerous. Also both workers are exposed to rapidly changing weather conditions (rainy and chilly weather as well as under the hot sun) with only light clothings and uncovered heads.

Not surprisingly, working children have a poorer physical condition than their school attending peers. Common complaints of working children are kidney problems, colds and fever, respiratory ailments, muscle strains, abdominal and chest pains, failing eyesights (among others caused by strenuous or speedy exertions in the garment industry), bad backs, headaches and dizziness. Children, but sometimes employers themselves, are not completely aware of the implications of the working environment on the labourers' health besides their concern and deliberations to improve this. Many low costs technological innovations could be introduced which would substantially improve the working environment of these working children.

## 2.5. Government Policies and Regulations

The Philippine government has adopted several legislation both to restrict the minimum age of entry into employment and to protect children against work dangerous to their health, safety and normal physical and emotional developments. Aside from the 1973 Constitution which mentions that the state recognizes the vital role of the youth in national building and that it shall promote their intellectual and social well being, provisions in the law are found in the Labour Code, Child and Youth Welfare Code and the International Labour Standards, (such as No. 59 on the minimum age for admission of children to industrial employment; No. 77 on medical examination for fitness for employment in industry of children and young persons and No. 90 on night work for young persons employed in industry).

Article 139 of the Labour Code mentions that no child below 15 years of age shall be employed except when he or she works directly under the sole responsibility of the parents or guardian and the employment does not in any way interfere with his or her schooling. However Article 59 of the same code reads that apprenticeship may start at the age of 14. Article 138 has the same provision as Article 139, however it adds that children below 15 years of age may be allowed to work in any non-hazardous undertaking but only when the work will not

conflict with their education. In these cases, the children shall not be considered as employees of the employers (or their parents or guardians). The Labour Code is very explicit that in no case it allows employment of a person below 18 years in an undertaking which is hazardous or deleterious in nature as determined by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE). The Women and Child Labour Law (Department Order No. 4 of MOLE, 1973) lists down these hazardous occupations which among others include farming, fishing, nursing, transport occupations, craftsmen, service sector, professional, technical and related works, all occupations in which persons have to handle dangerous chemicals, poison, radium etc.

In the Child and Youth Welfare Code, Article 107 states that children below 16 years of age may be employed to perform light work which is not harmful to their safety, health or normal development and which is not prejudicial to their studies. In other words, no child below 15 years of age shall be employed except as apprentices in which the age should not be lower than 14 years and he or she works directly under the sole responsibility of the parents or guardian and performs only light work which is not harmful to the health or normal development and which is safe in nature and does not interfere with schooling.

The legal provisions in these codes however fail to cover the realities of the non-organized sector where child labour is concentrated and child exploitation is most pronounced.

The articles of both codes assume explicitly an employer-employee situation and try to regulate its labour relations. Article 140 of the Labour Code for instance (prohibition against child discrimination) provides that no employers shall discriminate against any person in respect to terms and conditions of employment on account of his age. The existing labour laws generally do not include the areas of self-employment and contract basis which is most commonly found in the informal sector. Aside from some scattered approaches (Social Security Act, Civil Code, Right on Self Organization), no comprehensive laws exist to cover these labour relations. Also children who work in their early adolescences are commonly goaded and guided into most of the situations as provided by Article 138 by their parents and older siblings. Technically therefore one might argue that the employment of these children fall within the provisions of the Labour Code.

Although Labour Laws are more a reflection of the formal sector, even here effective protection is not always guaranteed. The apprenticeship program aims to promote and improve the employability of training manpower in the organized sector, but in reality they are used as a ready pool of cheap labour. It is even argued that the equality of the 1973 Constitution has failed to work in favour of children and youth in employment. Adherent to the principles of social

justice and equality and the subsequent adoption of a general approach in labour administration have meant that very few programs deliberately addressed to the working children and youth exist. Legal provisions of the law made specific programs directed to improve working conditions of children not a priority of the government. Although protection of child labour is guaranteed by law these specific programs may even violate the laws, since legally working children under the age of 15 do not exist.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) is entrusted to implement the relevant laws. MOLE's mandate is to promote employment and to protect workers through improved terms of working conditions. Within the MOLE Office, the Bureau of Women and Minors is the focal point in serving the needs and requirements of young workers in general and child labourers in particular. Aside from some legal inadequacies, the possibilities for the application of the full legislation, especially in the unorganized sectors are severely limited by structural and institutional constraints. Firstly BWM does not have any representative at regional level which poses a serious handicap in the implementation of labour laws while top-down and feedback communications within the MOLE Ministry is poorly organized. Also a lack of trained manpower with proper logistic support makes labour laws pertaining to child workers a paper dragon.

## 2.6. Options and Issues of Interventions

In the past child labour was of little interest to the government and non-governmental organizations. The few fragmented programs that were implemented overlapped and duplicated each other.

The new government however has made child labour as one of its priorities. Government agencies like the Ministry of Social Security and Development (MSSD) and the MOLE/BWM showed a renewed interest in the topic and new approaches emerged in the surface. Also local NGOs have included specifically child workers as one of their concerns. Unfortunately a pronounced scattered approach and little coordination still exists among the executing agencies.

Programs on child labour commonly have a strong educational component besides some welfare facilities and services. The skills and vocational trainings are designed to provide the children improved life-time opportunities while job placement services are supposed to facilitate the entrance into the labour-market. Welfare and service facilities tend to be family-oriented to make the households more receptive to the programs. Very few programs aim to provide child workers some protection against work that is dangerous for their safety, health and development (only some dissemination of information

takes place about hazardous occupation). Especially non-governmental organizations fear to disturb the community dynamics in the areas of subcontracting in which some kind of employer-child employee relationship exist. Contractors or sub-contractors are small-scale entrepreneurs who have put up their own establishments through own savings and who usually live in the same communities as the child labourers, they may even be related to them. Their establishments are mostly family owned, unregistered and small-scale in terms of capitalization and operations. Likely this is also the reason why most programs are biased towards street children (which are usually self-employed and found mainly in the cities where community dynamics are less pronounced) and child prostitutes. Few programs direct attention at the enterprise level, the agricultural and fishing sector and the domestic workers under the subcontracting arrangements. However, exactly in these areas their efforts might be most fruitful in the long run. Not each improvement of working condition is unacceptable to the employers or subcontractors. Both parties have common interests as well. Improved ventilation or lighting, appropriate tools and equipment introduced and even the existence of a toilet does not only benefit the (sub)contractors but also the (child)labourers. The government could extend technical services to small-scale enterprises which would make these establishments less

vulnerable to market fluctuations. Such services should be attached to improved working conditions. Information dissemination on occupational health and safety standards then becomes part of a package approach in which the main components are formed by technical and financial assistance. Such an approach should then be backed by a proper organizational set-up with a delineation of areas of responsibility among government agencies and between the authorities and NGOs which is presently lacking. Research should identify further areas of intervention which in the long run may give the most fruitful results.

3. The Muro-Ami Operations: A Practical Example of Child Labour in the Deepsea Fishing Industries

Several publications in local and national newspapers on the issue of child labour in the Muro-Ami fishing industries provoked the interest of governmental, non-governmental organizations as well as the general public. There was a general outcry on the Muro-Ami operations and a general demand for its immediate ban. Representatives of the clergy, civic organizations and government agencies underlined that "the safety and welfare of children employed in the Muro-Ami fishing are at stake."

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR/MAF) emphasized that this type of fishing causes damage to the country's natural habitats of fish. Along the same lines, the Ministry of

Tourism (MOT) and scuba-diving organizations sought an immediate ban because of the perceived destructions of the coral structures. Representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) particularly those coming from the religious sector expressed their concern over the moral issue on the use of minors.

A politician of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan-Cebu criticized the Muro-Ami operator of victimizing young boys between 7 and 15 years old by exploiting and exposing them to grave dangers and early deaths. Another politician expressed the desire for a strict implementation of the law, regardless of the consequences to the displaced families.

Concerned officials wanted to solve the child labour issue in the fishing operations as soon as possible. However their short term objectives overshadowed long term strategies and their policy and recommendations were often based on scanty information. There was a clear need for more substantial background information.

### 3.1. The Fishing Industry Operative at Village Level

The Muro-Ami Fishing Corporation recruits approximately 5,000 to 6,000 of its 7,500 to 8,000 fishermen from Oslob and Santander, two villages or barangays located at the southern part of Cebu Island (central Philippines). The main sources of income of the 23,000 population are fishing and agriculture.

Fishing involves employment in the commercial Muro-Ami operations, hook and line fishing as well as spear fishing. Fishing near the coast is not considered viable and employs only a few people since the local grounds have been depleted because of overfishing in the past.

Agriculture on the other hand is mainly in food crops for home consumption. On small plots of land (0.5 - 1.0 ha) owned by the families without land titles, mostly women cultivate corn, mongo and root crops like cassava and camote. In their compounds the family undertake backyard gardening planting fruits like papaya and banana. Although the villages are self-supporting in its agricultural produce the primary production does not warrant a balanced diet. Also expansion of the agricultural base is difficult since the soil is rocky and not very fertile. On the other hand, small-cattle breeding (poultry and pig raising) are limited and remained undeveloped due to credit and marketing problems.

Thus outside the commercial deepsea industries, the employment prospects in these barangays are rather dim. Presently about 60 to 65% of the people are directly or indirectly dependent on the Muro-Ami operations for their income.

The Abines Family who started this Muro-Ami fishing industry has multiple economic linkages with the communities. Through their fishing operation they provide employment for people with a total of 20,000 dependants in the barangays, yet

they are also engaged in transportation (busliner, ferry boats) agri-agriculture (over 200 ha planted mostly with coconut) and general merchandising (stores in Oslob and Santander). Furthermore the Abines Family has a clinic and a rural bank in Santander while in Oslob they are the local distributor of rice and corn for the National Food Authority (NFA, a government organization which is in charge of the regular supply of staple food against guaranteed and fixed prices)

The Muro-Ami income is very important for the fishing families not only because other sources of employment are scanty but also because they are considerably paid. A master fisherman earns ₱50,000.00 and above, his Assistant Managers ₱30,000.00. Checkers and treasurers have an income of ₱10,000.00 while divers earns ₱8,000.00 and the several groups of swimmers ₱2,000.00 to ₱6,000.00. A full fledged carpenter earns during the same period of 10 months between ₱4,800.00 and ₱5,000.00, while working on other peoples' farms as labourers will not generate more than ₱2,000.00. Taken into consideration that besides the father often one sometimes even two or three of his children are employed by the same operator, the actual importance of the commercial deepsea industry as a source of family income is much higher than the brackets given before.

Fishermen are paid after completion of the contract which takes 10 months. This manner of payment increases the budgetting problems for the families since household's expenditures is a daily issue. It compels them to take credit in kind called "vale." Households in Oslob and Santander take a monthly vale of one bag of rice and corn and one sack of piggery food in one of the Abines stores. By means of this credit line financing of food is not considered to be difficult. On the other hand the practice serves as a very important registration of customers while simultaneously it allows overpricing since employment and credit lines are interwinded: vales are given only when fishermen are assured to leave for the Muro-Ami operation.

The "vale" or credit in kind is deducted from the income of the fishermen. Deductions range from 30 to 40%, but there are cases where it goes up to over 100% compelling the fishermen to join the next Muro-Ami trip as well in case he cannot redeem his debt immediately after the balance has been made.

Although the fishing families spend most of their income on food items, most difficult to finance however are all extra and sometimes unexpected expenditures like school fees, hospital bills and death cases. Obviously credit lines are very important here. Also in this respect the Abines group plays an important role. They may give food and money for

weddings, free hospitalization in cases of sickness, accident and deaths of which the expenses cannot be born by the families. In return for these services, the people do not always seem to have to redeem their debts in monetary terms, but by obeying the orders of the Abineses and by giving them full (political) loyalty, the so-called "utang na loob" (debt of gratitude). Aside from the Abines group, other sources of credit are sari-sari (general) stores, neighbours, friends and the family. The fishermen's collateral is the future income derived from the Muro-Ami operation. Neighbours, friends and family do not demand a collateral but in all cases debts have to be repaid after the husband and son(s) return from sea.

The family's financial and budgetting performance is induced by an absence of rural savings opportunities (rural banks are not found or not accessible to small incomes) which compels the households to spend the money quickly before it is stolen or deprived by other family members. A substantial amount of their income is spent on improvements of their houses or on payments for fiestas. The latter should not be falsely interpreted as a lack of will on the part of the families to save. Subsequently, after some months, the households are hard up to make both ends meet and they have to rely on credit again for their day-to-day subsistence. This is the time, the operator through the master-fishermen recruits his new crew for the next Muro-Ami operations and most fishermen are attracted to join because of the advances given to them.

Thus the Muro-Ami operator not only provides the people with employment but also with a kind of "social security" (credit in kind and cash assistance in emergency cases) which are lodged through their agents and so the local populace regard the Abines Family with a deep respect since they do not deal with them directly. The community perceives that credit is provided by the Abines while the conditions are set by the agents. In sum the Abines Family has much control over the local economies which binds the people to them through employment, credit and "social security" in return for debts of gratitude. The Muro-Ami operator has virtually a monopoly in these fields, which has to be reckoned with in any alternative employment and income generating strategy.

### 3.2. The Organisational Set-up of the Muro-Ami Fishing Corporation

Some 30 years ago, the Abines Family adopted the Muro-Ami fishing method from the Japanese who introduced this fishing gear in the Philippines in the 1930s. The Muro-Ami gear is a very efficient method of fishing. In the decade from 1965 to 1975, this method is said to have registered the highest average annual production per unit vessel in commercial fishing. It is also said to be virtually impossible to operate Muro-Ami at a loss.

Today the Frabal-Abines Muro-Ami partnership stipulates that the former provides the operation of vessels like motherboats and carriers (fishing boats which transport supplies - ice, corngrits- to the mother vessels and the catch from the fishing grounds to the home port Manila) fuel and the shipping crew while the Abines' is responsible for the necessary accessories like fishing nets, net-mending materials, scarelines, non-motorized bancas or barotos (boats used in setting up the Muro-Ami gear and bringing the fishermen from the motherboat to the fishing areas), the operational station (medical doctor, bunkhouses for the fishermen, toilets, entertainment facilities) as well as the recruitment and labour management of the fishermen. Of the total sales, 70% accrue to Frabal, 10% to the Abines and 20% to the fishermen.

After a short crisis in the early 1980s due to an increase of oil prices, the Muro-Ami operations are flourishing again. Currently a fish production of is estimated at 8,400 to 9,000 tons during the 10 months season. The average annual take per vessel is equivalent to 15 million pesos. The operation's annual profit is conservatively estimated at over P20 million. Since the 1985 season, Muro-Ami fishing products have been exported to Singapore. Presently the corporation has 7 carriers, 21 motherships and 126 bancas (small boats).

The Muro-Ami fishing corporation operates from Talam-  
pulan, a small island belonging to the western part of the  
Calamian group in between Palawan and Mindoro. From this  
basis, vessels leave for the Sulu Sea and the South-China Sea.  
By mid 1987 however, the operational basis will be shifted  
from Talampulan to Horse Island (an one hour trip by banca  
from the present basis).

The fishermen's hierarchy in each vessel is headed by one  
master-fishermen or manager (consequently there are 21  
managers) who is in command of the entire fishing operation.  
He decides when and where to fish and who does what on board  
(excluding the shipping crew however). The master-fishermen  
are well-to-do people who live in nicely furnished houses,  
own cars and they send their children to schools in Cebu City.

The manager is assisted by the 2nd, 3rd and 4th in com-  
mand. Each vessel has 3 of these assistant managers  
supervising a group of about 100 fishermen assigned to them.  
One treasurer and three to four checkers (llamador) on board  
also form part of the fishing crew. The latter is in charge  
of recording the catch as well as the attendance of the  
Muro-Ami fishermen during any given operation. Master  
fishermen are also assisted by the so-called yamadas, persons  
who echo instructions from the master fishermen to divers and  
swimmers as to when and where to set the fishing nets, how to  
drive the fish etc. Finally, each banca has one "arise", the  
"captain" of the baroto or banca.

The divers numbering 20-40 per vessel are fishermen responsible for the bottom reconnaissance and setting up of the bagnet and the two detachable wingnets. They are in charge of the most hazardous tasks performed during the whole operation. They dive up to a depth of 100 feet to attach the nets to the coral reefs. The lowest rank in the hierarchy are the swimmers, the fishermen whose main function is to drive the fish towards the net through the use of a scareline. There are about 300 to 350 swimmers per vessel. Although most functions are open to all ages, it is usually the children and youngsters who form the bulk of the swimmers and divers. Children in the age of 12 to 14 years start to join the Muro-Ami operations as swimmers. The more experienced and best qualified among them become the future divers when they are in the age of 17 to 24 years. Needless to mention, that both swimmers and divers are the most vulnerable groups in the whole operation.

### 3.3. Recruitment and Working Conditions

Although the Abineses are in charge of labour recruitment this is actually done by the master fishermen. Principally, the Abines family pre-finances the recruitment only. They give credit in the amount of 2 to 2½ million pesos to the 21 master fishermen, who in turn utilize the sum to attract enough swimmers and divers by issuing cash advances of ₱300.00 per fisherman, upon signing of a working contract with the operator. (Yet fishermen with families may get up to ₱750.00).

Approximately 3,500 to 3,800 fishermen are recruited this way from Santander and another 1,500 to 2,000 from Oslob. Other areas of recruitment are Negros Oriental, Siquijor island and even Mindanao where they are approached by the master fishermen coming from those areas as well. Besides the recruitment, the master fishermen determine the working conditions and payments of the salaries/bonuses.

During the recruitment period, the managers are assisted by the so-called canvassers who commissioned on an ad hoc basis announce the fishing trips and the departure of boats to the fishermen and their families. Although the canvasser is paid by the operator, he also receives a share in the bonuses accrued to the fishermen's group he has convened. After the announcements have been made those interested to join the Muro-Ami operations approach the master-fishermen to inform them about his intention. The fishermen must be able to swim and be willing to complete the 10 months trip and follow all orders given to them in order to be recruited.

Fishermen join on their volition or through the family's prodding, no one is forced to join. Sometimes divers and swimmers are convinced by their friends to join. Children are not supposed to be a financial burden to the family, but instead encouraged to augment the household's income. Children's attitude towards work is also determined by their desire to contribute to the family's budget.

Consequently recruitment of children is not a problem to the master fishermen. Likewise, the advantage of employing children instead of adults is that young workers obey instructions more easily. Approximately 15% of the recruit are less than 15 years of age, 45 to 55% are in between 15 and 18, while 30 to 40% are older than 18.

The family socialization plays a very important role in developing interests for the fishing operations as well as in acquiring the necessary skills by the children. Sometimes, at the age of 7 to 9 years young boys join their father during the trips. This way they familiarize themselves with the operations, they learn how to swim and dive and soon join their father in the actual operations. It is a logical subsequent move to become a full fledged fishermen at the age of 12 to 14.

This also explains why many children in Oslob and Santander voluntarily join the Muro-Ami. Many of these children left school because of financial problems. Oslob for instance does not have a public highschool, while the privately owned highschools have higher enrollment and tuition fees than government schools. An estimated 50% of the schoolboys in Oslob join the Muro-Ami operations after grade 4 or 5. Some of them return to school at an later date.

The terms of employment are determined by the master fishermen (and not by the Abines family) and discussed with the fishermen before embarkment of the vessels. These contractors live in the same communities as the recruited and are sometimes even kinship related to them. Some master fishermen use written contracts stating the duration of the trips, duties and responsibilities of the fishermen, regulations on board, earning etc., while others use verbal agreements only.

Aside from swimming and diving, the fishermen are supposed to assist in the hauling of the catch and sewing of nets. No extra payments are given for these activities since they are considered to be part of the normal duties and responsibilities of the fishermen.

Working days of 12 hours are common, but not exceptional when compared to other areas of economic activities where child labour prevails. Working hours are also determined by the nature of the fishing operations. During days when weather conditions favour a good catch, long working days may result. On the other hand, during poor weather conditions when fishing operations is impossible, fishermen mend the nets (although this is not an activity carried out by the swimmers) or are free.

The diving equipment is minimal and consists of locally made wooden goggles, long sleeves and long pants only. With 300 to 400 people on one vessel, the living conditions are very congested. Still fishermen do not seem to bother about their sleeping space and have adapted themselves remarkably well to their conditions.

Laundry can only be done after 30 days and their cereals are cooked without proper cleaning. Food on board is mainly third class fish (sinigang) and corngrits, meat is seldom served.

Most common illnesses are rather due to the congested and unsanitary living conditions than to the working conditions. Common diseases are typhoid fever, gastro-enteritis, "beri-beri," (i.e. vitamin B deficiency) respiratory ailments like T.B.C., bronchitis and pneumonia, headaches, fever, coughs and epidemic dysentery. Illnesses and injuries related to work are ruptured eardrums, damaged auditory nerves and attacks from needlefish and sometimes sharks. An average of 4 to 5 fatal accidents (drowning cases) are recorded during each season. Most divers who drown have black outs while carrying out their duties because of too much carbon dioxide in the lungs or due to drinking and smoking before diving.

Beri-beri is caused by an unbalanced diet which consists mainly of corn grits and which is not supplemented by rice. Respiratory ailments like pneumonia is due to frequent wearing of wet clothes and the coldness of the nights.

Gastro-enteritis, typhoid fever and endemic dysentery are caused by drinking unboiled water and poor hygienic measures observed during cooking (e.g. plates are washed in dirty seawater). Other respiratory ailments, ruptured eardrums and damaged auditory nerves are caused by diving up to a dept of 80 to 100 feet.

Whenever possible, these illnesses are treated on board of the vessel. The manager or captain takes care of the patient and gives medicines he considers appropriate as a treatment from the first-aid-kit. The more serious cases are brought to the nearest hospitals which is either in Manila, Talampulan, Cuhon, Brooke Point or Puerto Princesa in Palawan.

The hospitalization expenses are shouldered by the individual fisherman and deducted from his share. Only in cases where the medical expenses are beyond the repayment capacity of the fishermen the Abines family pays the full amount without the condition of later repayment. Medical expenses on board are considered part of the common expenses and thus deductible from the amount of the gross catch.

### 3.4. Contracts and Payments

The contract agreement between the fishermen and the operator does not stipulates an employer-employee relationship, but rather pinpoints to a partnership based on a certain sharing mechanism of the profits made. Consequently, the fishermen are not entitled to the Social Security System (SSS) benefits. Also the contract stipulates that payment will be made upon termination of agreement.

The operators computation of the fishermen's share is not known to the swimmers and divers. Of the total gross income Frabal receives 70%, the Abines 10% and the fishermen 20%. Before the 30% of the combined Abines/fishermen's share is paid, overhead expenditure like the costs of food on board, employment of 12 cooks per mothership, transportation, rental of bancas, medicine and other fishing paraphernalia expenses (scarelines etc.) plus maintenance are deducted. Of the balance, the fishermen are paid according to their individual performance and the fisherman's rank. The "arise" and the master fishermen determine the performances of each swimmer and diver, while the checker reports the absentees.

A very detailed report is kept to determine the personal performance. The total fishing season is fixed at 160 working days. During each trip, an individual record is kept of the number of days, swimmers and divers are absent due to sickness (fever, diarrhea) or for any other reason. When a diver or swimmer misses one drive, he is recorded absent for the whole day. All these days are deducted from the 160 working days.

Theoretically, the master fisherman receives 12 shares at the end of the season, the second in command  $11\frac{1}{2}$ , the third in command 11. The treasurer, the checker, arise and divers get each 10 shares, the 7 grades of swimmers 4 to  $9\frac{1}{2}$  shares. (Peso value of one share depends on the amount of the catch during the season). A good performance determined by the master-fisherman and assessed along the lines of skills, attendance, work attitude, leadership is rewarded by a promotion in rank and so by an increase of the number of shares. In case of poor performance, swimmers and divers are treated to be send home.

Yet of more importance than the number of shares received are the bonuses paid at the end of the season. Here the real differences in remuneration between the master-fishermen and the swimmers come in. Bonuses paid may double or triple the income of the master fishermen, while swimmers are excluded

from entitlements to the bonuses. Bonuses of the master-fishermen vary from ₱12,000 to sometimes ₱40,000. It is the manager/master fisherman who determines the individual entitlements to the bonuses (including that of himself).

Of a particular interest is the sources from which these bonuses are paid. Although no definite information could be gathered, it can be deduced that both Frabal's and Abines' shares fluctuate rather than that it is fixed at 70% and 10% respectively of the total catch. Both partners do not want to take any risk due to fluctuating prices of fish in Manila, thus, they take a fixed amount as their share during a particular operation, regardless of the value of the total sales. (Consequently their percentual shares varies as well). This implies that the actual marketing risks is shouldered solely by the fishermen. Subsequently, it is reasoned that bonuses are paid from the favourable sales in Navotas and Divisoria. So when quantity demanded and prices are high the percentage share of Frabal and Abines decreases, while those of the fishermen increases.

From the individual entitlements (share plus bonus), the loan and vales are deducted (the vale on board like salt and cigarettes as well as the vale taken by the families at home). Although the master fishermen determine the total monetary entitlement of each recruit, it is the checker, the treasurer and the arise who do the handing over of the money.

The stipulation of the terms of employment and the enforcement of these terms have resulted to a negative attitude towards the master fishermen and was the main reason for (mainly the elder) fishermen to leave their operator and turn to agriculture, join another Muro-Ami fishing operator, try to find a job in a city factory or enroll schools. Yet many of those who left the Muro-Ami rejoined after one or two seasons because of difficulties encountered in finding alternative employment and/or because they lost their credit lines with the Abines group.

The areas of discontent are the manner and amount of payment. The sharing system is not understood (yet also in the municipal area Muro-Ami, the details on the distribution of profits between the partners is unclear) and is considered to be too low. Other reasons advanced to stop the Muro-Ami is the physical maltreatment (forced stay in the sun although less frequent nowadays) and the hectic working conditions imposed by the master-fishermen which compel the fishermen to dive and swim even when they do not feel well. Also high risks involved like frequent accidents and drowning cases have made divers and swimmers reluctant to joint the Muro-Ami. The number of death claims has already warranted the fishermen to organize themselves into associations which provide financial assistance to people in cases of death, illnesses and other emergencies. In the case of death for instance, the

fishermen's association gives 6,000 pesos from the Common Group Fund (i.e. ₱300 per motherboat) to the family of the deceased while the operator gives only ₱2,000, some bags of rice and/or corn, candles and the wood for the coffin.

The sometimes stiff working conditions have also made recruitment of adults more difficult. The canvasser plays a more important role nowadays than say 10 years ago, when recruitment of adults was not considered to be a problem. The mere existence of canvassers, and the inclination to recruit children, indicate the problems the master fishermen have in the enrollment of sufficient numbers of qualified fishermen. In Oslob, the number of recruited fishermen for instance has gone down from 3,500 to 1,500/2,000. The current recruitment policy adopted by the operator to warrant sufficient qualified fishermen are cash advances with the "Memo of Trust Agreement", which binds the recruit to the firm and the application of a continuous indebtedness strategy. If at the end of the contract, it is found that the fishermen were advanced more than what they received as their entitlements, they either have to pay back the deficit or extend their services for another 10 months.

In spite of clear types of exploitation, to the majority of fishermen stays with the Muro-Ami fishing operation, or return after one season resulting in a low labour turn over. Most children in Oslob and Santander work

for about 4 consecutive years while those coming from other places stay only for 2 years before going back to school or working in Cebu City or Manila. They do not perceive their Muro-Ami experience as something they regret or abhor but rather as part of the maturation process. Busted eardrums, bleeding nose is something one has to experience otherwise one never had joined the real Muro-Ami operations. The children never thought about whether they were exploited or not.

### 3.5. Policy Option and its Implications

#### 3.5.1. The Issue of Banning

A total banning of the operations most likely will provoke a very strong negative reaction from the people of Oslob and Santander who are economically dependent on the Muro-Ami deepsea fishing. Banning would not only deprive them of an important source of income, but it would also cut them off from certain credit lines like in sari-sari stores (unlikely, it will cut them from their credit line with the Abines group).

The perception on the Muro-Ami issue by the local people is another factor that has to be taken into account. Labour conditions on the ships have to be seen in a broader socio-political and cultural context. In a patronage system

which is so strongly developed in both places and which binds the labourforce to the Abines group, labour standards are of a minor importance in their relationship with the patron. Their fathers and sometimes even their grandfathers have worked under these conditions and have learned to accept them. This does not mean that improvements of labour conditions are not in their minds, nor that this is not feasible. Yet the moment these improvements conflict with their patronage relationship, most likely the fishermen will safeguard the latter (i.e. their perception of their most pertinacious "social security"). This in turn implies a need for an intelligent approach for the improvements of labour conditions which can be accepted by both the fishermen and the master fishermen/Abines/Frabal group, rather than a total banning of the whole operation. The approach adapted should be one of pinpointing those improvements which do not have (immediate) effects on the profits but do imply substantial betterments of the labour standards.

Banning of the child labour in the Muro-Ami will not be welcomed by the fishermen families as well since child labour is a widespread phenomenon in the Philippines and is tolerated in other economic activities. Likewise, children's income augment the budget of the poorest families. Although the Muro-Ami is not a isolated case, it might be argued that it is more hazardous than other types of child labour. However in terms of remuneration a substantial difference can be observed between income derived from fishing relative to those received by vendors or domestic helpers.

Although banning child labour is in line with the labour laws, yet simultaneously it will displace economically some of the fishermen families. Banning will not be understood by the people neither on legal grounds nor on practical or ecological grounds.

### 3.5.2. Alternative Income and Employment Programs

Alternative employment programs have been introduced in the villages in the past. Government organizations like MSSD and NMYC have trained people in repairs of radios and other simple electronic equipment. The project failed because no support service was given, especially in the field of credit supply. But perhaps of an even more importance was the absence of a market for radio repairs and even if this is available remunerative employment can be provided to only a few families. Also cottage industries were introduced but failed mainly because of the same principal reasons: credit and marketing problems.

Skills training and alternative programs will be effective if developed within the proper framework of the conditions and constraints existing in the localities (local resources, local needs, marketing potentials). In general conditions do not appear very favourable. Programs in agriculture are handicapped by rocky and bare, unfertile soils.

Agricultural production in both places is not sufficient to meet the needs of the local populace. A favourable condition though is that the land available is well distributed among the fishermen's families. The fishing grounds adjacent to both towns are poor in production due to overfishing in the past and does not provide fishermen enough income. Although fish prices are high, fresh fish cannot be bought in the local markets. Fishing operations at a greater distance require more seaworthy vessels and more sophisticated equipment. However, lack of credit facilities has hampered the fishermen to venture into this type of operations.

Skilled human resources are limited as well. The more educated people sought employment in Cebu City, Manila or in other countries. Since, fishermen have only skills related to their present job, alternative programs would require manpower training. However the local community is not receptive to any alternative employment. They either view other jobs as impossible, since they do not possess the necessary skills, or deny that such employment opportunities exist. Alternative employment is perceived to exist outside the villages only and would entail migration. Likely the perceived combination of another job somewhere else has discouraged most of the people to change their present status.

Income generating programs directed to the women should reckon with the fact that at present these women perform household responsibilities; do small-scale vegetable gardening as well as piggery and poultry raising. The women's activities in agriculture enables them to combine household work with income generating activities. Alternative programs have to provide a solution to the problem of taking care of the children (kindergarten) or they should enable women to combine these newly created activities with household tasks.

Alternative programs should provide the families with remuneration which is comparatively as high as those received in the Muro-Ami operations to attract the fishermen. Equal important is that programs will give them an immediate income. Very promising crops which generates income after 3 to 6 months will not be rewarded since family expenditure has to be financed immediately and daily.

Alternative programs should not imply heavy investments nor marketing (at least at the initial stage) since poor people generally are risk-aversed. Provision of credit to finance the projects should not lead to (further) indebtedness of the families concerned. Due to the unfavourable geographical situation of the villages, marketing to Cebu City, the only potential market, will be a problem due to higher transportation costs as compared to other villages closer to Cebu City. Marketing the products from Oslob and

Santander needs to tackle two very important issues: (a) transport management and (b) marketing outlets. The means of transportation are available (buses, pick-ups even trucks) yet there is no organisation of these transport facilities to assist in the marketing. Products from both barangays do not have any reliable market outlet. The whole marketing structure is yet to be established. Only with a superior transportation organisation and reliable market outlets, will make marketing of products to Cebu City feasible in the long run.

The aforementioned conditions pose severe constraints to alternative income generating activities. The programs have to be very diversified to avoid the bottleneck in marketing, given the limited local market size. Twenty to thirty families involved in salt making industries require marketing to Cebu City while less than 10 families could make a living out of sari-sari stores (leave aside the credit problems to start such a store).

Income and employment generating activities which could further be explored (as well as feasibility studies) are in the fields of salt-making industries, creation of fishponds, fish processing, processing of seaweed, sari-sari stores, carpentry, changing fields of coconut palmtrees into foodcrops (rice and corn for instance are more labour intensive and most probable give an higher income per ha), coconut processing, livestock (poultry, piggery, goats.)

Presently there is already an upland rice project in Cebu City which is incorporated into a bigger agricultural and reafforestation project to control erosion.

These income and employment generating activities should be preceded by vocational training programs to create awareness among the villagers of alternative employment opportunities as well as to upgrade their skills (entrepreneurship training). These programs however should be intertwined with an emergency and savings program. Since most of these programs will only generate the income after several months, a food-for-work program should be launched to assist the families in the first non-earning months. A savings program would help the families in easing their family budget as well as in providing the beneficiaries with some type of "social security." Presently lack of savings facilities induce families to take up credit to finance their unexpected expenses. Finally programs would have to be developed for the "displaced" children. In Oslob a public school would have to be established. Also free lunches could be provided to the pupils. Practical oriented vocational training has to be given to those children who do not want to attend school full-time. A youth center should be established which will serve as a venue and would provide a focal point for social gatherings and sports activities of the youth.

### 3.6. Improvement of Muro-Ami Operation

Most likely a more viable solution to the Muro-Ami issue is the improvements of the operations from the ecological as well as the labour conditions point of view.

#### 1. Technical Modification

A study conducted by V. T. Corpuz et.al. carried out in 1983, indicated that a modified scareline using the truncated 2-eye-2 chain weights and the spindle lead weight with brass rings will reduce the damaging effects on the coral cover by approximately 50%. The truncated 2-eye-2 chain weights is favourable to the spindle lead weights since the former is readily available and cheaper. The use of the truncated 2-eye-2 chain weights is the only technical innovation introduced in the Muro-Ami operations over the last 35 years. This in turn has made this fishing gear very labour intensive. Still simple techniques could be introduced, which do not encompass high investments and which would make the ships less congested and so simultaneously improve the working and living conditions on board. Two divers with a scuba-diving equipment or compressor tank could do the work presently done by 20 to 40 divers. A horizontal tremor-line connecting the vertical scarelines would reduce the number of swimmers needed from 300 and above to less than 50. This clearly implies a trade-off between improvements of living and working conditions on board and

employment. Ironically swimmers and divers, the parties most concerned will therefore oppose major improvements of the working conditions if consequently less people will be employed in the Muro-Ami. Still it is perceived that with a carefully carried out recruitment policy, no fisherman's family needs to be displaced economically. Since in most cases father plus son or sons are working in this fishing industry, the father might be retained as a fisherman only. Because the total share is divided among less fishermen, the increased individual share may offset the loss of income of the son(s). If the sharing system is revised to the advantage of the fishermen, families certainly will benefit. Since the Muro-Ami operations cannot absorb additional fishermen and trends suggest a reduction of the number of swimmers and divers employed in the future concerned organization should strengthen their efforts to plan and carry out youth programmes (schooling, vocational training, sports and other recreational facilities) in the communities of Oslob and Santander.

## 2. Payments.

Payment is based on a sharing system and consequently becomes effective after the operations. The sharing system is not understood by the fishermen. Although they are aware that their share is 20% of the total catch, the value of the total catch (i.e. the trade secret) and that of the value is not known to them. The sharing system should be made

understood by the fishermen. Not only the total catch but also the entitlement of the share of each fisherman should be clarified. Also the sharing of 20% should be made negotiable at a latter stage. In the long run, the sharing needs to be revised to the advantage of the fishermen. In this respect, government intervention might be decisive. The Philippine authorities could namely extend its support to the fishing industries in general and the Muro-Ami operation in particular by a partial lifting of the restrictions in importing spare-parts of the Japanese vessels in use. Also the government could exempt the fishing industries from taxes paid on crude oil. In the case of the Muro-Ami operations however, such support should only be given on specific conditions such as: (a) no children below the age of 15 should be recruited; (b) the sharing and bonuses paid should be made uniform, clarified and explained to the fishermen (c) the sharing system and payments of bonuses have to be altered to the advantage of the fishermen in particular to swimmers and divers so that a substantial part of the government's benefits offered to the Muro-Ami operators will be transferred to the swimmers and divers. Alternatively, the operator could also give the divers and swimmers a fixed salary regardless of the catch (possibly a fixed salary with a bonus depending on the personnel performance). Also an employer-employee relationship would ensure that the fishermen would be covered by the SSS. Payments after 4 to 10 months is not favourable to the fishermen (although some swimmers and divers might

prefer such payments since it entails a kind of forced savings). It greatly increases the problems of budgetting by the households and compels the members at home to take up credit from the operator or any other credit line. Since the value of the consumer goods are not known, it adds to the unclear situation of the actual monetary income derived from the Muro-Ami practices. It is strongly recommended that monthly payments are introduced. Monthly payments can be based on the experience of previous years and could form the basis for this fixed monthly income. The final financial settlement could be made after the contract. However this proposal is very crucial to the whole operations. It affects the very basic foundation of the patronage system. If implemented, the establishment of savings organisations cannot be overemphasized.

### 3. Recruitment

Presently most fishermen are recruited during January when they are in need of cash. Cash advance is used by the master fishermen to convince them to join the fishing operation. The provision of credit involves two documents. The first which is called "The Memorandum of Agreement and Trust Undertaking" between the Abines and the master-fishermen completely binds the trustee to the operator. The second document which constitutes a written agreement between the fishermen and the group leader (i.e. the master fishermen) is

not a contract but states the conditions of the credit supply only. Both agreements are written in legal terms and are not understood by the fishermen, since most of them hardly know how to read and write. Examination of this agreement reveals however that the recruit is completely bound to the conditions set by the master fishermen upon signing.

Besides the provision of savings facilities in the communities concerned (see also 3.5.2) to reduce the need to take up a loan during the recruitment in January, the documents have to be simplified to be understood by all parties.

The labour conditions are not uniform because they are determined by the master-fishermen. Although these master-fishermen may be important persons in the recruitment of the swimmers and divers, their responsibility and power should not extend to determine specific labour conditions. This would allow for an standardisation of labour conditions and contribute to a clarification of the recruitment terms. In practice this would imply that the Abines group determines the general labour conditions and that the role of the master-fishermen is confined to recruitment only.

4. Working and Living Conditions on Board

To reduce the immediate congestion on the boats, the fishing crew of 2 vessels could be placed on 3 motherboats, which means a reduction of the congestion by 33%. To keep a manpower supply of 200 to 250 fishermen per boat economically viable, two vessels could sail together. These two ships have a total manpower of 400 to 500 fishermen which allows for a long scareline and consequently ensures a larger catchment area. Yet trips on seas will be extended by two weeks as well if implemented and so more food and water per fishermen should be supplied for simultaneously. At medium notice, the technical innovations described under (1) could be introduced to lessen the congestion on board. Each mothership should have at least one full-fledged first-aid-kit and a qualified nurse. In some cases a nurse and the medical kit might be decisive in the savings of lifes. Alternatively the captain of the boats and/or the master fishermen should receive extensive periodic medical training to up-grade their present meager knowledge on what to do in emergencies. The diet offered has to be more balanced and supplemented by rice and/or tropical vegetables. Also the observance of hygienic measurements and provision of safe drinking water is not only in the interest of the swimmers and divers, but also to the operator. Fishermen who are healthy will perform better and will catch more fish than swimmers and divers who are ailing.

Although one may try to make recommendations that are as feasible as possible, the real issues to be tackled relate to follow-up and implementation. The follow-up becomes more crucial where the recommendations seem less feasible and realistic. MOLE, MSSD and the coast guard should play a decisive role in the successful implementation of these improvements. A close coordination and delineation of tasks and responsibilities among these agencies is of utmost importance. No matter what plans and activities are made, as long as the responsibilities for resolving this problem is not defined nor the responsible office or agency identified, any recommendation to improve labour standards is likely to fail.

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