

**CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM
A CASE STUDY OF THE FISHERFOLK IN KERALA**

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Study Report



CB/CS/SAHAYI
Kerala

RESEARCH TEAM

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M/E372
3/3/2006

MARCH 1999

SPONSORS : THE COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION AND CIVICUS

**CONDUCTED BY: SAHAYI, TRIVANDRUM IN COLLABORATION WITH
NATIONAL PARTNER - PRIA, NEW DELHI**

**SAHAYI - CENTRE FOR COLLECTIVE LEARNING AND ACTION
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When we reach the realm of the co-analysts we get a sharper view with a number of practical suggestions, combining theory and praxis.

All the co-analysts insisted on the need for comprehensive and effective legislation by the state.

Now we shall summarise the findings of the study.

According to the responses a good society is one in which all the members, especially the disadvantaged sections, enjoy social and economic security. The principal characteristics of a good society should be:

- * Full employment, adequate income, availability of basic civic amenities, education, availability of finance, etc.
- * Co-operation and peace
- * Equity and social justice
- * Improved security and participation of women
- * Freedom from social evils
- * Eco-harmony
- * Regard for native culture and ethos
- * Control over resources

Concretely a good society for the fisher people means that their occupations are safeguarded and they are able to lead a comfortable life free from exploitation, drudgery, deprivation etc. They also need to be integrated with the rest of society and enabled to participate in its development processes with dignity.

No one practically believes that such a society exists today.

Though most of the invisibles stated that the individual citizen cannot do anything for promoting a good society the other strata of the cluster group highlighted a set of roles that can be played by individual citizens. They are:

- Lead an exemplary life and inspire the others
- Share knowledge and information
- Educate, mobilise and organise people for the proper cause
- Join existing movements and organisations
- Initiate new movements and organisations

- Start economic ventures
- Play liason and advocacy roles
- Support and help people in need

A number of roles have been assigned by the respondents to the state/ government like:

- ⊙ Enact policies, laws and regulations for protecting and enhancing the life of the citizens.
- ⊙ Enforce the laws and regulations strictly and without partiality.
- ⊙ Ensure clean and effective governance at all levels
- ⊙ End all corruption and atrocities and punish the guilty
- ⊙ Protect the fisheries ecology and the rights of the real fish workers and their families.
- ⊙ Ensure quality and equitable education to all.
- ⊙ Ensure the welfare of all, especially the disadvantaged sections including women.

The respondents also highlighted various roles of the other sectors/ actors such as:

- ◆ The institutions of local self-governance (panchayats, municipalities etc.) have a decisive role in focusing on local, community-centred development. Many of the decisions concerning the development and welfare of the fisher people can be taken by the local institutions of self-governance.
- ◆ Political formations like parties and trade unions can highlight the issues and campaign for the cause of the weak and the dispossessed.
- ◆ The voluntary organisations can educate and mobilise the people and function as catalytic agents of change. Their role of advocacy is great. They can also undertake socio-economic programs.
- ◆ The religious communities can inspire and motivate the people to lead a good and creative life. One has to make a distinction between spiritual religion and its counterparts. Religious institutions with their enormous resources can and should play important roles in improving the socio-economic conditions of the fisher people. In the life of the traditional fisherfolk religion has often played a negative role. The religious institutions must correct their mistakes and come forward with constructive programs.
- ◆ The business sector can provide employment and enhance the earnings of the country.
- ◆ The media could play an impartial and important role in mass communication and policy lobbying.

Factors limiting the playing of such roles

Among the factors which limit/ block the effective playing of such roles by the various sectors are forces like:

- Corruption
- Inefficiency of governance
- Communal prejudices, tensions and clashes
- Selfishness of individuals
- Economic insecurity
- Social injustice
- Unprincipled politics and wrong electoral system
- Globalisation and the new economic policies
- Aping of the west
- Divisive and fissiparous tendencies
- Low social awareness
- Negative attitude of financial institutions

Factors enabling the individuals to play their role

Certain changes in the socio-political set-up like the following will enable the individual citizens to play their role more effectively:

- ◆ Re-orientation and re-structuring of the educational system, giving focus to work-orientedness, secularity, holistic vision and approaches
- ◆ Overhauling of the political system, rooting out corruption, reforming the electoral procedures, limiting the number of parties etc.
- ◆ Delinking of party politics from development
- ◆ Strengthening of the Grama Sabha
- ◆ Ensuring economic security through full, gainful employment

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis, findings and conclusions we put forward the following recommendations for action by the following groups:

CITIZENS AND THEIR ENABLERS

The citizens and their enablers have the most important role to play in transforming the society. They should focus on the following actions:

- Building up of groups and networks of like-minded individuals and organisations with a view to accelerating the tempo of positive changes. There are several organisations and fora concerned with the fisheries sector. There should be a common platform for them all to meet, interact and give shape to action plans.
- Stepping up the Information-Education-Communication (IEC) activities with a view to creating favourable public opinion and strengthening advocacy efforts.
- Educating and training the fisherfolk to learn from experience and rationalise their living with focus on sustainable living. The fisher people should be educated to save and make wise investments.
- The fisher people need also to be trained to develop their cultural sensibilities. A big drawback of the community is that the people do not know how to relax and use their leisure time creatively. A non-formal education program geared to the needs of the fisherfolk, giving importance to the integrated development of the individuals and the community should be implemented in collaboration with government agencies like the literacy mission. Social awareness, self-development, leadership development, gender concerns, aesthetics, ecology etc. should be included in the curriculum of this education.
- Actively participating and facilitating the active participation of others in the local people's fora like the grama sabha and systematically highlighting the issues of the fisherfolk and seeking their sustainable solutions.

GOVERNMENTS

The following actions may be taken by the government:

- Revise and re-structure the laws governing fisheries resources and practices with focus on the interests of the active fish workers and their families and the regeneration of fish stocks and implement them effectively. Define the fish worker and frame appropriate laws and regulations to reserve the right of fishing only to the genuine fish workers.
- Promote fish workers informal co-operatives in all the fishing villages. Most of the co-operatives are not functioning properly. The fisheries co-operative sector has to be revamped and made functional and effective. Eventually all the collective fishery operations can be routed through these co-operatives. To improve the quality of fishery co-operative movement systematic training has to be given to the personnel.
- Regulate and control the transportation of fish from other states into Kerala.
- Gradually put and end to all trawling operations including the trawling done by the out-board engines used by the traditional fishermen. But to start with ban night trawling with immediate effect.
- Encourage controlled aquaculture by individuals and small groups belonging to the fishing community. Aquaculture by others need not be banned. But special subsidies should be given to the members of the traditional fishing communities.
- Immediate action should be taken to regenerate the mangroves on the verge of extinction
- Wet lands should be protected from encroachment and pollution.
- Integrated farming of rice-fish cultivation either simultaneously or one after the other should be encouraged on a large scale in fields where rice cultivation is becoming uneconomic and integrated farming methods are possible.
- The poor fisher families living on non-fisher's land should be given housing sites and rehabilitated with decent houses.

OTHERS

Prominent among the other actors are civil society organisations. They may undertake the following activities and initiatives:

- Undertake an intensive de-education-re-education campaign with a view to correcting the anomalies in the perception of people and enabling them to view life and the world in a holistic and eco-friendly manner. Such a campaign may be called 'Vision for the New Millennium' or something similar. In this education program it should be insisted that the problems of the fisheries sector alone cannot be resolved on a sustainable basis, since the

fisheries issues are intertwined with the issues of the rest of the economy and the primary factor of any sustainable economy is the attitude of the people. People should be slowly weaned from the consumeristic, anthropo-centric mode of thinking and educated to follow the holistic, cosmic approach.

- Intensify advocacy role activities in favour of the traditional fish workers. To reap maximum benefits, these efforts should be networked at the local, state, national and global levels.
- Competent VOs should undertake experiments and demonstrations in the area of integrated farming with the aqua culture component.
- Deriving inspiration from the example of the collective fish farming initiative of the dalits of Chandiroor, VOs should try organising the fisherfolk, particularly the inland fisherfolk, into societies and informal co-operatives for taking up group fish farming enterprises.
- Religious institutions should play a greater role by providing proper assistance/ facilities from improving the socio-economic conditions of the fisherfolk. They should also promote communal harmony among the people.
- The media have a crucial role to play for projecting the issues of the fisherfolk and creating favourable public opinion.

ANNEXURE - A**LIST OF RESPONDENTS, PLACES AND DATES**

No.	Name	Place & contact details	Date
Invisibles			
1.	Mr. Shanmughan V.P	Valluvanattukala Veluthullikayal Colony, Chandiroor, Alapuzha	13.11.98
2.	Mr. P.S.Parameswaran	Puthenthnikathil Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
3.	Mr. A.K.Sahadevan	Alathara Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
4.	Mr. K.J. Kochappan	Kattithara Nikarath Veluthullikayal Chandiroor , Alleppey	"
5.	Mr. P.A.Sahadevan	Puthuval Nikarth Veluthullikayal Chandiroor , Alleppey	"
6.	Mr. Velayudhan.K	Kambi Veliyakath Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
7.	Smt. K.K.Usha	Kichupurackalthara Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
8.	Smt. Shyla.N.P	Puthuval Nikarth Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
9.	Smt. Kavitha.K.K.	Kochupurackal thara Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
10.	Smt. Radhamani J	Manchadikunna Kalam Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
11.	Smt. Kunjupennu	Puthuval Nikarath Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
12.	Smt. Indira.J.R	Thundi Nikarath Chandiroor, Alleppey	"
13.	Mr. Soman.J	Thundi Nikarth Chandiroor, Alleppey	13.11.98
14.	Mr. K.J. Rajan	Thundi Nikarath Chandiroor, Alleppey	"

15.	Mr. Prakash.K.D	Kaithavoloppil	13.11.98
		Thiruvambadi, Alleppey,	
16.	Mr. Raju.R	Koottungal, Thiruvambadi, Alleppey "	
17.	Mr. Prushan.K.C	Kaithavalappil, Thiruvambadi	"
18.	Mr. Dharaneendran V.B	Valappil, Thiruvampadi, Alleppey	"
19.	Mr. Remesan K.V	Koothungal, Thiruvampadi, Alleppey "	
20.	Mr. Rajappan.P.V	Panackal Purackal, Thiruvampadi	"
21.	Mr. A.B.Sasi	Arayan Parambu, Thiruvampadi	"
22.	Mr. Sathiyapalan	Arappayil, Thiruvampadi, Alleppey "	
23.	Mr. P.V.Prasanna	Panackal, Thiruvampadi, Alleppey	"
24.	Smt. Thulasi A.B	Arayanparambil, Thiruvampadi	"
25.	Mr. Satyaraj.A	Aryanparambil, Thiruvampadi	"
26.	Smt.Sunanda	Arayan Parambil, Thiruvampadi	"
27.	Smt. Thressiamma	Charangattu, Thiruvampadi	"
28.	Mr. Joy Das	Panackal, Tiruvampadi, Alleppey "	
29.	Smt. Rajeswari	Kaithavilappil, Thiruvampadi	"
30.	Smt. Kamala	Veliyil, Thiruvampadi, Alleppey	"
31.	Sri. Marian.P	Thaivilakam, Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
32.	Mr. Nelson	Thaivilakam, Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
33.	Mr. Joseph.A	Vettukad, Trivandrum	13.11.98
34.	Mr. A.Desai	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
35.	Mr. Vincent.V	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
36.	Mr. Stephen.F	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
37.	Mr. S.R.Sebastian	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
38.	Mr. V. Philip	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
39.	Mr. Xavier.G	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
40.	Mr. A.john	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
41.	Mr. Marcose.S	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
42.	Mr. M. Antony	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
43.	Mr. A.Simon	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
44.	Mr. George .T	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
45.	Mr. Joy.S	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
46.	Smt.Mariakutty	Kappackal, Kozhikode	12.10.98
47.	Smt. Khadeeja	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
48.	Smt. Aisha	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
49.	Mr. Rajan	Rajan Villa, Kaippuzha, Kozhikode	"
50.	Mr. Shaji	Chamakandathil, Kozhikode	"
51.	Ms. Jessy	Chamakandathil, Kozhikode	"
52.	Mr. Monchan	Jose Bhavan, Kaippuzha, Kozhikode	"
53.	Mr. Biju	Ullamoor, Kozhikode	"
54.	Mr. Samuel	Sreeragam, Kozhikode	"
55.	Mr. Nazir	Parayil Veedu, Pandalam	"
56.	Mr. Naziruddeen	Periyalam, Pandalam	"

57.	Mr. Zakir	AM House, Pandalam	12.10.98
58.	Mr. N.A.Ravuthar	Pandalam, Pandalam	"
59.	Mr. Shanavas	Pulayamadam, Pandalam	"
60.	Mr. Shakeer	Kulamayil, Pandalam	"
61.	Mr. James.P.	Thevarazhikam, Kollam	"
62.	Mr. Shake Abdulla	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
63.	Mr. K.Abraham	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
64.	Mr. V.V.Muhammed Koya	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
65.	Mr. V.P.Joseph	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
66.	Smt. Rajeena	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	12.10.98
67.	Mr. Oommerkoya.N.P.	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
68.	Mr. N.P.Muhammed	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
69.	Smt. Vijayalekshmi	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
70.	Smt. Shameera	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
71.	Mr. K.N.Jyothi Prakash	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
72.	Ms. Sajini	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
73.	Ms. Khadeeja	Puthiyakadavu, Kozhikode	"
74.	Mr. N.V.Hussain	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
75.	Mr. T.P.Rafeeq	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
76.	Mr. N.V.Mustafa	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
77.	Mr. N.V.Ali	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
78.	Mr. N.V.Nazar	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
79.	Mr. T.P.Hamza	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
79.	Mr. T.V.Abdu Rehiman	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
80.	Mr. T.V.Rasad	Ninan Valappu, Kozhikode	"
81.	Mr. K.Usman	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
82.	Ms. Kairali	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
83.	Ms. Shareena	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"
84.	Mr. George.P.M.	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
85.	Mr. Satheesh	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
86.	Smt. Martha	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
87.	Smt. Thresyamma	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
88.	Smt. Baby	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
89.	Smt. Filomina Varghese	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
90.	Mr. Joseph.P.R.	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
91.	Mr. Titus.P.A.	Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
92.	Mr. Antony	Mariyanad, Trivandrum	"
93.	Mr. Gilbert	Mariyanad, Trivandrum	"
94.	Mr. Mariyadasan	Mariyanad, Trivandrum	"
95.	Mr. Salim	Mariyanad, Trivandrum	"
96.	Smt. Mariyam	Thaivilakam, Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
97.	Mr. A.Joseph	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
98.	Mr. A.Denny	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"

99.	Mr. B.Vincent	Vettukad, Trivandrum	12.10.98
100.	Mr. S.Vincent	Vettukad , Trivandrum	"
101.	Mr. A.Xaviar	Vettukad , Trivandrum	"
102.	Mr. E.Philip	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
103.	Mr. A.John	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
104.	Mr. A.Simon	Vettukad , Trivandrum	12.10.98
105.	Mr. Vincent Claramma	Puthiyathura, Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
106.	Mrs. Margarat Varghese	Kochupalli , Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
108.	Mrs. Gracy	Kochupalli, Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
109.	Mrs. Silva Picha Mary	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
110.	Mrs. Mariya Pushpam	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
111.	Mrs. Zelin	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
112.	Mrs. Sisili Mary	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
112.	Mr. L.C.Joseph	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
115.	Mrs. Thankamma Dasan	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
116.	Mrs. Thresya Dasan	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
117.	Mrs. Sisili.K.	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
118.	Mrs. Christudasan Mary	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
120.	Mrs. Lourde Mary	Cheriyamattom, Trivandrum	"
121.	Mrs. Mariyamma Varghese	Cheriyamattom, Trivandrum	"
122.	Mrs. Wifreda Berchman	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
123.	Mrs. Rani Silva	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
124.	Mrs. Nirmala	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
125.	Mrs. Violet Mary	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
126.	Mrs. S.Prabha	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
127.	Mrs. R.Ruby	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
128.	Mrs. Mary Muthappan	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
129.	Mrs. Porklin.R.	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
130.	Mrs. Mary Rose	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
131.	Mrs. Agnes.V.	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
132.	Mr. B.Johnson	Pallaparampil, Kollam	"

Visibles

1.	Mr. Moideen Koya	Kappackal, Kozhikode	12.11.98
2.	Mr. Suraj	MCITRA, Kozhikode	"
3.	Mr. Zeenath	MCITRA, Kozhikode	"
4.	Mr. Gopinathan	MCITRA, Kozhikode	"
5.	Mr. Usman Koya	Kappackal, President, Kozhikode	"
6.	Mr. Siddiq	Prog. Asst, SIFFS, Kozhikode	"
7.	Mr. Teelar	Prog. Exe., SIFFS, Kozhikode	"
8.	Mrs. Safia	Kappackal, Kozhikode	"

9.	Mr. Soman.K.	Kochupurackal Chira Chandiroor, Alappuzha	12.11.98
10.	Mrs. Rathiamma.K.	Veliyil, Beach Ward, Alappuzha	"
11.	Mrs. Thulasi.A.O.	Tharayaparambil, Alappuzha	"
12.	Mr. Michal	Valiyaparambil, Kattoor, Alappuzha	"
13.	Mr. Jerome.I	Prackulam. Kollam	"
14.	Mrs. Lourde Mary	Pulluvila, Trivandrum	"
15.	Mrs. Leela	FIDES. Trivandrum	"
16.	Mr. Vincent	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
17.	Mr. S.Nelson	Vettukad, Trivandrum	"
18.	Mr. Iby	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"
19.	Mrs. Candlea	Pulluvila. Trivandrum	"
20.	Mrs. Suseela	Poonthura, Trivandrum	"

Interlocutors

1.	Fr.P.J.Augustine	Socio Religion Centre, Kozhikode
2.	Adv. P.J.Mathew	FREED, Alapuzha
3.	Mr. Aloisious Fernandez	Jana Jagrity, Alapuzha
4.	Mr. Peter Thayyil	ADS, Alapuzha
5.	Mr. Ben	Prakulam, Kollam
6.	Mr. Alosious Yohannan	Kollam
7.	Mr. T.O.Rajan	Thaiparampil, Trivandrum

CO-ANALYSTS

1.	Dr. John Kurien	Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum
2.	Fr. Thomas Kochery	National Fishermen Forum, Trivandrum
3.	Dr.Sanjeeva Ghosh	Asst.Director, Fisheries Department Govt. of Kerala, Trivandrum

Annexure B



← A view of the fish farm at Veluthulli Lake, Alappuzha



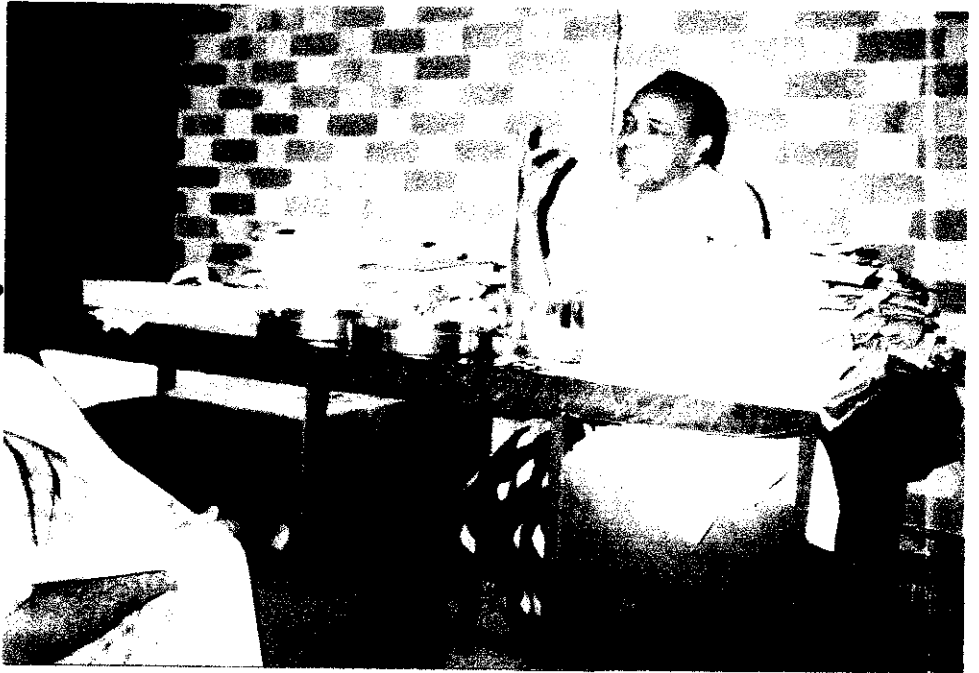
Focus group discussion with a section of inland fishworkers, Alappuzha →



← Group discussion with marine fish workers, beach ward, Alappuzha



← A focus group discussion in a fishing hamlet in Trivandrum



Dialogue with an Interlocutor at Alappuzha →



← Dialogue with another Interlocutor at Trivandrum

ANNEXURE - C

C. Bibliography

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ANNEXURE - D**CASES/ CASE STUDIES****The woes of Cicily Markose**

Cicily Markose is a widow from Pulluvila in the district of Trivandrum. Her husband died 26 years ago, leaving her two young children. Cicily has been living a life of destitution ever since. For a living she takes to occasional fish vending. With no support either from the community or from the government, she has been having a hard time in her struggle for survival. For solace she turns to religion. " My only comfort comes from the words of Jesus: Come to me all you who are suffering and over burdened , I will comfort you", she said. She put her woes in front of the Panchayat, but there has been no action. Said she: "They did not have even a word of consolation for me." The grama sabha meeting was conducted near her house. But "the politicians arrange everything for their party people", she complained.

Case of Suicide

Molly Evangelisa was a young woman wedded to a fish worker by name Xavier. Xavier was an insensitive and irresponsible husband, who was quick to spend and slow to work and earn. The result was growing debt. Molly's gold ornaments began to disappear one by one. Finally she had only the wedding 'thali'. The creditors used to pester the family for repayment. Finally the husband demanded for the thali. On his insistence she parted with the last trace of gold on her. " Everything is gone, finally this thali too", she cried. To the husband who was leaving for the pawn broker's shop she added: " On your return you may not see me". She kept her word. The husband returning home that day saw Molly's lifeless body. She was pregnant. This happened very recently in the fishing village of Poonthura.

The Bane Of Chandiroor

The Hindu on Feb.1999 brought out the following story;

Fed up by the miseries heaped on them by the stinking Chandiroor Puthenthodu, which should qualify for the honour unanimously if an award were to be instituted for the dirtiest canal in Kerala, a group of locals have constructed a bound and prevented the flow of the toxic, polluted water to the western side of the Chandiroor Bridge.

Hundreds of locals took part in the operation conducted by Eramalloor Consumer Bureau. The canal, nearly three-km long, has ended up in the present 'stinking state' with a host of sea food processing plants and prawn peeling units situated in the region, the heartland of Kerala's seafood processing industry, discharging their wastes into it.

Peter Tayyil's example

Peter Thayyil, 44 years and father of two children is at present functioning as the co-ordinator of Matsyathozhilali Vikasana Samithy, an independent organisation to safeguard the interests of the poor traditional fish workers. Belonging to a traditional fisher family he has been an active fisherman from 1971 onwards. Now because of his social engagements he goes for fishing only occasionally.

Peter reminisces his childhood days of utter poverty and starvation. There were days when the entire family went to bed hungry, without having eaten even a single meal. Catches were often poor also the price was very low. They- father and son- used to walk 15 kilometers at night from Thottapilly to Alappuzha trying to net some fish. Often they returned empty handed. The earning they had in those days was the income from the sale of coir yarn made by the mother. Similar was the situation in most of the fisher families.

Having personally experienced the pangs of hunger and seen the poverty and hardships of his people at close quarters, Peter developed an acute sense of compassion for the suffering and a determination to do something to alleviate the miseries of the fisher people. He was much pained by the fact that nobody was really interested in helping the poor fisher people, who were despised and looked down upon as the smelly, despicable people.

Peter was encouraged in his determination to work for the betterment of the fisherfolk by Fr. Paul Araackal, a progressive catholic priest from the fishing community, who had valiantly fought for the cause of the fisherfolk and founded a trade union for them. Peter joined the union and became a member of the central committee in 1974. He eventually turned out to be a successful organiser and a good speaker. For about a decade Peter was at the forefront of struggles for protecting the rights of the fisher people and travelled extensively along the Kerala coast, co-ordinating, educating, motivating and inspiring the fisher people to stand united in their efforts at improving their living conditions.

From 1980 to 1986 Peter functioned as a member of the All Kerala Independent Fish Workers Federation, a network of all the like-minded organisations in the fisheries sector in Kerala. In 1993 a new organisation with the name Matsyathozhilali Vikasana Samithy was formed and Peter has been its co-ordinator.

The Samithy undertakes a wide range of development and welfare activities for the benefit of the traditional fisherfolk, including protest agitations, education, income generation, group building, skill development, advocacy and so forth. Peter is happy that all his life he has been dedicated to the cause of the fisherfolk and his efforts are bearing fruit.

It has been quite some time since the canal became the waste bin of the seafood processing units. The 'water' in the canal is a slimy liquid giving out an unbearable stench, which has become the identifying mark of Chandiroor for those who travel by road or rail through the region.

The canal does not have any aquatic life because of its toxicity. Whenever the canal has overflowed into the polders used for aquaculture on the occasion of high tide, mass fish death has resulted.

The canal, which has gifted several diseases, especially ling affliction to the local inhabitants, still continue to do so, as a comprehensive cleaning up operation is yet to materialise.

Eventhough the district panchayat had sanctioned about Rs. 10 lakhs to the canal, the bane of the Aroor panchayat, only that stretch lying to the east of the Chandiroor Bridge had been cleaned under the scheme. Two bunds built after the cleaning operation to prevent the inflow of polluted water from the remaining portion of the canal, are now on the verge of collapse.

The latest action of the locals is in effect a mark of protest to the inaction of the authorities concerned in cleaning the rest of the canal. The pollution control Board officials had suggested long back that all peeling units should be made to construct concrete tanks so as to collect and chemically treat their effluents. The establishment of a Central Treatment Plant to collect the partially treated effluents was also proposed. However, these suggestions still remain on paper and the misery of Chandiroor's inhabitants continues unabated.

Dalit Woman leader beaten to death

It happened in October 1998 in the 6th ward of Aroor panchayat in the district of Alappuzha. An influential land lord belonging to the high caste had the temerity of encroaching on a piece of public land which was used by the nearby dalit families as a passage to the nearby main road. A dalit woman leader by name 'Tresa Arunpabi' led an agitation against the landlord, demanding the opening the passage and giving up possession of the common land. While she was leading a protest rally she was attacked from behind with iron rods by the landlord. The woman succumbed to injuries. The man after sustained agitations was finally arrested for murder and the case is pending in the court. This incident had a very demoralising impact on the dalit community. Some of the respondents thought that individuals are helpless, because they will not get the required support from their own people. " There are elements who enjoy pulling the rug under your feet", explained a young man.

K. Moideen Koya

Moideen Koya, 45 years is the district president of the Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Union, an independent trade union of the fish workers in Kerala. He is an active fish worker.

Moideen Koya took to fishing as a young boy after finishing his 4th standard, following the occupation of his father. He started his public life as a member and activist of the Muslim League, a political party exclusively for the muslims. Later on the advice of a friend of his he joined the Indian Communist Party. In 1995 he became an active member of the All India Trade Union Congress (CITU). He functioned as an active worker of the party (CPI) for 15 years.

During 1997-98 Moideen Koya began to develop differences of opinion with the party leadership. What irritated him most was the unethical practices of some of the party members. Eventually he left the party and joined the Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Union in 1998. In 1991 he was elected the secretary of the district unit. Currently he is the president of the unit.

Moideen Koya thinks that a 'good' life / good society means a number of things like education, conservation of fish resources, protection of environment and ecology, enlightened leadership, social awareness and community feeling among the people, the ending of exploitation of the people by the political parties. "First thing is education. Education will lead to improvement in living conditions" he emphasized.

The story of V.V. Mohammed Koya

The 55 year old V.V.Muhammed Koya of Kappackal village in the Kozhikode district narrated his moving story. Eldest son of a traditional muslim fishing family, Mohammed Koya was forced to discontinue his education at the age of 9 due to the sudden death of his father. He was at that time studying in the 4th standard. The responsibility of providing for the family of four members fell on his slender shoulders. The inexperienced young boy worked hard as a coolie in the fishing boats. His meagre earnings were supplemented by the income from the sale of beaten rice made by his mother. Life has always been hard for him. Only two months ago he became the owner of a small fibre boat bought with a loan from Matsyafed, a government institution for the welfare of the fish workers and their families. He has at present a debt of Rs. 96,000, which he finds extremely difficult to repay from his inadequate income. "Matsyafed is a blood sucker company, that has been my experience", said Mohammed Koya. " While you have to pay only 18 percent interest to the commercial banks, Matsyafed is charging 24 percent interest from the poor fish workers" he complained and went on to give the break up of this plunder which consists in 16 percent interest and 8 percent commission (4 % for Matsyafed and another 4 % for the co-operative society). Matsyafed is also indulging in shameless exploitation and corruption, further fleecing the poor fish workers, commented Mohammed Koya and narrated his bitter experience of being robbed of spare parts worth Rs.4,000 by the officials, who illegally broke open the seal of the new boat and removed items of spare parts before handing over the new boat to him. Mohammed Koya was furious and gave a bit of his mind. But the officials were too thick skinned. "This is sheer cruelty to the fish workers" he said. Mohammed koya is skeptical about the future of the fish workers. Said he: " I often think about the plight of the sea in the next millennium. There will be no fish. The trawlers are ensuring that".

The basic role of the individual citizen is to facilitate the processes leading to the emergence of the aspired for good society, explained one of the interlocutors. That means the individual functions a social catalyst, passing on information, 'bringing together different sections of the society together and co-ordination their activities, explained Tom Kocherry, who said he has played this role very successfully and the result has been the formation of organisations and movements such as the World Fishermen's Forum, World Fish Workers and Harvesters Forum.

What the individual can do is to have a clear vision, absorb the basic human values and lead an honest, sincere and simple life, providing a n example to others, was the response of one interlocutor. The individual should also protest against injustices, he maintained.

An important role identified for the individual by another interlocutor is undertaking, innovative, experimental action calculated to motivate people to think in the lines of transformation and basic re-orientation of life in the desired direction. An example that came to his mind is the experiment being conducted by D.Pankajakshakrup, Alappuzha, who for decades has been organising community living and sharing sessions. " The individual can provide inspiration to the masses', he said.

Co-operative fish farming by the dalits

The co-operative fish farming experiment conducted by the Ambedkar Welfare Society at the Veluthulli Kayal, in Chandiroor in the district of Alappuzha under the guidance of the Form for Environment and Economic Development (FREED) in Alappuzha is hailed by many as a model of voluntary action by marginalised communities.

Chandiroor in the Chertala taluk of the Alappuzha district is blessed with several inland water bodies called 'kayal'. Once upon a time paddy used to be cultivated in these places. Later on due to factors like the rising cost of production and poor returns, greed for money from pink gold (prawns) rice cultivation was given up and the fields were turned to aqua farms. The fields were owned by rich upper caste families and the work was done by the poor dalits. Some of the kayals belonged to the government. The rich people got these for a song by bribing the officials and made enormous profits. The workers who had to do hard, slavish work got a pittance. The assetless dalit families living on the banks of the kayals lived a life of poverty, indigence and helplessness.

The poor plight of the dalit families of Chandiroor was noticed by the leaders of FREED. They started organising and educating the dalit people. Slowly an organisation by name 'Ambedkar Welfare Society' was formed. The members of the society after prolonged deliberations decided to experiment collective-co-operative fish farming in some of the lakes, which were being auctioned out to the public and which the prawns companies got at throw away rates through manipulations.

The trick they played was to project the name of a dalit as the bidder and get the auction in his name at low rates, because the dalits were entitled to concessional rates. Once the bid was secured the capitalists would give some bribe to the dalit and do farming on their own. According to the government laws the dalits had the priority claim on the lake. But due to their ignorance and lack of organisation they were always tricked and lost their legitimate rights and opportunities.

It was to redeem the dalit people from their predicament of subjugation and exploitation that FREED organised them and a society was formed in 1994. The 30 member Ambedkar Welfare Society took part in the auction and took the bid. The government also gained in the process, because the bid amount went up by 10 percent. With the technical support of the marine Products Development Agency (MPDA). The initial capital was provided by FREED.

For the past 4 years the society has been managing the prawns farm effectively and profitably. The workers get their wages (Rs. 75 per day and the members get a share of the profit. In addition loans at low interest rates are given to the members. Also educational assistance and medical aid are arranged for the members of the society. The entire management of the farm is in the hands of the society members.

HC orders demolition of structures on beach

The Kerala High Court today directed the Somatheeram Ayurvedic Beach Resorts, Manaltheeram Beach resorts, Suriya Samudra Beach Resorts and the Bethsayatha Beach Resorts to remove all constructions on the Pulimkudi - Chowara coastal stretch near Kovalam put up in violation of the Supreme Court's order regarding the coastal zone regulations. Mr. Justice P.K. Balasubramanyan, allowing two petitions seeking a direction to remove illegal barricades and fences in the coastal area, directed the State Government to ensure that the Environmental (Protection) Act and the CRZ notification were implemented by all local authorities, other administrations, individuals and institutions.

The judge directed the Pollution Control Board to take effective steps to ensure that no constructions were made in violation of the coastal zone regulations and other notifications issued under the Environmental (Protection) Act.

The Union Government was directed to take all positive steps to ensure that the coastal zone regulations were implemented in the States. The court directed the Kottukal Panchayat to take steps to ensure that constructions not authorised or permitted or sanctioned under the Environmental (Protection) Act and rules and the CRZ notification were not permitted.

The court also directed the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) to ensure that no power connection was given to the constructions resorts or buildings that were not strictly in compliance with the Environmental (Protection) Act, rules and the CRZ notification.

According to the petitioners, the Kerala Swathanthra Malsya Thozhilali Federation, Neyyattinkara taluk committee and others, the Supreme Court had in 1994 directed all the State Governments not to permit the setting up of any industry or construction of any type on the area at least up to 500 metres from the sea water at the maximum high tide level.

The court said it was clear that constructions had been made by various respondents within the prohibited distances and in violation of the Supreme Court directions. It was the prime duty of the State Government and all authorities under it to protect environment and implement the notifications issued under the Environment (Protection) Act.

The court said the Kottukal panchayat, under which the are came, had shown "a total lack of commitment" to the implementation of the notifications.

The court said it was necessary for the State Government to ensure that no grant or other monetary assistance had been extended to the local authorities and panchayats which refused to strictly implement the notifications.

The judge said the Pollution Control Board must "active itself" with a commitment to the cause and shed its "attitude of no-concern" in the enforcement of environment protection laws. The court opined that the KSEB should ensure that it did not aide of abet those who flouted the environmental laws. (The Hindu, 9th March, 1999)

Clashes between the workers

The issue of clashes between different groups of fish workers and the consequent loss of peace, assets and life have been highlighted by several invisibles. The most tragic of these clashes is the one that happens between the workers in the mechanised boats and the workers in the traditional boats (often fitted with out-board engines). These clashes over the rights of fishing and the complaints that the big mechanised boats ruin the equipments of the smaller country boats some times reach pathetic proportions ending up in the capture and killing of the opponents. The women respondents at Sakthikulangara lamented about the loss of life and property of the workers in the mechanised boats at the hands of the small boat workers and their owners. Some even went to the extent of saying that this has assumed the nature of piracy, the small boat workers and owners with the support of local politicians and law-enforcing machinery create situations of conflict and capture the mechanised boats, from which they remove very valuable article and demand huge amounts as ransom for the release of the boat and the workers.

ANNEXURE - E

Study Report by

- ◆ Thomas Kochery

Paper by

- ◆ John Kurien

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are extremely grateful to the Commonwealth Foundation and PRIA for entrusting us with the task of conducting this research study.

We recall with gratitude the support extended to us by various individuals and groups belonging to the different cluster groups and individuals, during the data generation process. A special word of thanks to the Co Analysts Dr. Sanjeev Ghosh, Fr. Tom Kochery and Dr. John Kurian who have helped to enrich this study with their valuable insights.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the services of the Co-Researchers Mr. P.M. Dev and C.S Marcel and other staff members of Sahayi.



G. Placid

Director

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CHAPTER I

CONTEXT PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1.a. Context of the Study

The Genesis of the project goes back to the first Commonwealth Forum Meeting held at Harare in 1991. In the meeting it was decided to conduct a project which would have an impact on the policy makers in creating an enabling environment for NGOs. Accordingly a wide consultation across the Commonwealth Countries was carried out and a study report on Non-Governmental Organisations: Guidelines for Good Policy and Practice was prepared. This document was further endorsed by Second Commonwealth NGO Forum (1995) and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in the same year. It was followed by a series of workshops to discuss various aspects related to NGO - Government relationship and a pan - common wealth seminar just before CHOGM in 1997. The project on "Civil Society in the New Millennium" is the furtherance to the above process.

b. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the project was to analyse factors promoting/ hindering citizens initiatives and to identify ways and means to strengthen, promote, encourage and catalyse a wide range of initiatives by citizens to address the issues and problems they have been facing in their daily life. It was hoped that the nature of civil society, the relationship between the citizens and state it will emerge from this. Ultimately, the project is focused on action for developing a realistic framework of priorities and recommendations for citizens, their various organisations, governments, the private sector and the Commonwealth Institutions.

c. Scope of the Study

At present the project is being carried out in 49 Commonwealth countries and a wide range of consultation exercise was organised in different countries. The task of conducting the study was entrusted to National Partners in each of the participating countries. The project aims at reaching citizens group at community level. This will include those people who voices are rarely heard and individual citizens involved in social action initiatives.

The findings and recommendations of the study will be shared in the World Assembly of CIVICUS during September, 1999, the third Commonwealth NGO Forum in November, 1999, and will be presented at CHOGM in November, 1999. an expanded version of the

project can be used as a document for the preparatory process of the UN Millennium Assembly.

Organisers

The project is organised by the Commonwealth Foundation in Partnership with CIVICUS, an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizens action and civil society throughout the world. A national partner was identified in each of the participating countries for organising the study. In India, the national study has been carried out in collaboration with regional partners covering different cluster groups in various states.

A pan - Commonwealth Task Force has been established by the commonwealth foundation to oversee the project and to analyse the findings. A support group of eminent personalities has also been established to provide advice to the Task Force.

Time Frame

The project started in 1998 by initiating a process of designing and organising regional workshops and will be over by the 1st of January 2000 with the publication of the report.

Expected Outputs

Following are the envisaged outputs of the project at **Commonwealth level**:

- A video film will be produced comprising the outputs derived from the people, mainly the invisible citizens.
- A summary report.
- A summary of the summary report to be presented for CHOGM.
- Full report.
- National reports

At the regional level two outputs are envisaged:

- Pamphlet in Malayalam on the study
- Final Report in English
- A Malayalam version of the final report

1.2. KERALA CONTEXT/ SCENARIO**a. Geography**

Kerala, one of the 25 states of India and one of the smallest administrative units, lies at the south-western tip of the Indian peninsula. It has only 1.8 percent of the total area of India, but has 3.4 percent of the national population. Currently the population is around 30 million. The density of population is 747 per sq. km, the second largest in population density among the administrative units of India.

Kerala may be divided into three geographical zones: the highlands, midlands and the lowlands. The highlands, marked by elevation and lying in-between mountain ranges, is the region of plantations of cash crops like tea, coffee, cardamom; the midland, characterised by undulating terrain with hills and valleys, is characterised by intensive cultivation of various crops like rubber, coconut, cashew, arecanut, cassava, rice, banana, ginger, pepper, sugarcane and vegetables of different varieties; the lowlands are the coastal areas, made up of river deltas, backwaters/ lagoons and the shores of the Arabian sea, and are marked by the presence of occupations of fisheries, coir etc.

Kerala is blessed with abundance of water sources in the form of rivers, ponds, lagoons and the sea. The state has 44 rivers, numerous backwaters like the Vembanad Kayal, which has an area of around 200 sq kms and a coast line of 590 kms.

b. Socio-economic Conditions

Kerala accounts for more than 90 percent of India's rubber, about 70 percent of India's coconut, 60 percent of tapioca and almost 100 percent of lemon grass oil. The state is also the largest producer of several other crops like banana, ginger.

Coir and cashew are the largest traditional industries. However the state is not industrially developed.

Kerala is noted for several peculiarities and paradoxes. It has the highest literacy, according to official version, almost total literacy on a par with the most developed countries in the world. Other indicators of development like sex ratio (1040), PQLI (70) are also high in the state. Kerala's natural resource base has been also rather strong.

On the other hand Kerala has the highest rate of unemployment, with around 4 million educated youth awaiting jobs. The percapita income of the state is one of the lowest in India. Kerala is also one of the least industrially developed states in India. For a few decades now, production in the agricultural, fishery and industrial sectors has been stagnant. Growth rate of the state domestic product in the eighties was 2.2 percent compared to 5.2 percent at the national level.

The marginal growth in the SDP was on account of the tertiary sector. In the period 1950-51 to 1990-91 the per capita income in Kerala at constant prices rose from Rs.378 to Rs.1706 as against the national level increase from Rs.466 to Rs.2199, a clear indication of the very poor performance of Kerala's per capita income growth.

Producing less than 50 percent of the food requirements, the state terribly suffers from lack of food security. Kerala is also rated as having high incidence of poverty, because of the lower level of calorie intake.

The redeeming factor in all these years has been the substantial Gulf remittances, which comes to around half of the state income. But this income has no sustainability.

d. The 'Kerala Model'

The much talked about "Kerala model of development", consisting in the achievement of a relatively high level of life despite economic backwardness or high social development with economic stagnation, has recently come in for severe criticism, mainly on the grounds of its unsustainability. The chronic and intense fiscal crisis faced by the state and the high rate of unemployment are clear indicators of the unstable condition of the state economy. In fact the spread of literacy and education have only contributed to the high incidence of unemployment, since the younger, educated job seekers are not willing to engage in 'low status' activities even if the wage rate is high. Education has also led to the erosion and loss of traditional institutions and values, undermining the native ethos and neglect of environment. This throws much light on the negative type of social dynamics that are at play in Kerala.

Even within the controversial Kerala model of development, there are the 'outlier' communities like the fisherfolk, the dalits and the tribals, where there is no paradox at all, since low incomes are associated with low quality of life in these communities.

Another related paradox is that high literacy and education status are not matched by commensurate social and environmental awareness. Yet another paradox is that though the women are educated, they do not enjoy as much participation in decision making. Male domination still rules the day. Several studies, conducted on the status and performance of women members and presidents of panchayats in Kerala, reveal that men resent and even smother the initiatives by women.

e. The political paradox

The Keralites also are attributed with a high degree of political consciousness. However this is not an unmixed blessing, since self-centred, sectarian party politics has become the number one enemy of genuine development. The fact is that while consciousness of one's rights is very high, it is not matched by the awareness of one's responsibilities. This is again a paradox.

The earlier political instability has been partly solved by the formation of coalition governments, which for all practical purposes steer a centrist line. The state has suffered from the lack of enlightened political leadership with a long-term perspective and commitment. Political opportunism has been the state's legacy for decades.

1.3. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE FISHERFOLK

Kerala is a state blessed with abundance of water bodies and resources, both marine and inland. The state has a coast line of about 590 kms. It has also numerous lagoons and rivers.

Not only in the matter of water bodies, but also in the quantity and variety of fishes, Kerala stands first among the states in India. The inshore waters within 50 m depth and measuring 13,000 kms has a high productivity of 270 kg/ha. Kerala's marine fish productivity is 30 as against the national average productivity of 12.

Naturally, fishing has been the traditional occupation of a large number of people in Kerala from ancient times. The fishing community is divided into two categories: marine fisherfolk and inland fisherfolk. The marine fisherfolk far outnumber the inland fisherfolk, since there are more than 10,00,000 of them while the number of the inland fisher people is only around 50,000.

The coastal belt is inhabited by over one million marine fisherfolk distributed in the coastal districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Trissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasergod. The highest concentrations of marine fisherfolk are found in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Alappuzha.

Kerala is supposed to have high levels of quality of life. However it has been acknowledged that the quality of life of the fishing communities is far below the state average.

The most visible aspect of the poor quality of life of the marine fisherfolk is their huddled settlement pattern due to high density of population, the coastal belt having an average density of 2162 per sq.km as against 729 per sq.km which is the state average. An added reason is the lack of adequate land holding. Many houses are situated in tiny plots of half a cent or so. Sixteen percent of the households do not have any holding at all. They live in huts in plots not owned by them. Many have their huts beyond the cadestral survey and are exposed to the risk of being "eaten by the monsoon sea". Those with land below 5 cents account for 32 percent. The number of fisherfolk owning land between 1 and 5 acres is a mere 1 percent. Apart from the aspect of crowding, the housing conditions are far from enviable. Inadequacy of space, cleanliness and amenities is characteristic of the marine fishing community.

The poor housing conditions are reflected in the poor health of the fisher people. Contagious diseases and epidemics are common afflictions of the coastal villages.

The literacy levels of the marine fisher people are also far below the state average, which comes to around total literacy. The average literacy rate of the fisherfolk is 67, that of women being a low 44 percent.

Increasing depletion of fish resources is a matter for serious concern in the fisheries sector, both inland and marine. Over fishing, use of destructive fishing technologies and environmental pollution are the root causes of this aquatic resource depletion. Varieties of fish have vanished from the coastal seas salt water lakes and the fresh water bodies.

The traditional over dependence of the fisherfolk on the fisheries for their survival has left them with no alternate means of livelihood. Diversification in the occupational patterns is a crying need of the fishing communities in the state.

Poverty has its other manifestations too, the most cruel of them being starvation. From the dialogues conducted with the respondents it became clear that starvation is a regular visitor to many a family in the coastal belt as well as in the inland fishing hamlets.

CHAPTER II

STUDY PROCESS, SAMPLE, METHODOLOGY

2.1. The Study Processes

The State level processes started immediately after the South Asian National Partners meeting held at Kathmandu in Nepal in August 1998.. The first step the publication of the Malayalam version of the English pamphlet published by Commonwealth Foundation. It was followed by the chronicling of secondary data related to the cluster group. Simultaneously a checklist based on the three main research questions was prepared. The next step was primary data generation from the sample respondents. The data processing and analysis followed the completion of the data generation process from various categories of the cluster group. This was followed by the preparation of the draft report of the findings, conclusions and recommendations to be presented at the Indian National Partners Synthesis Meeting held at PRIA, New Delhi. Based on the comments and suggestions of the meetings, the final study report was prepared and submitted to PRIA the National Coordinator of the study.

2.2. Methodology

a. Sample

The fisherfolk cluster group was divided into four categories - invisibles, visibles, interlocutors and co-analysts. The invisibles are those, whose voices are not heard, the visibles are the community people, who are capable of speaking up for the community, the interlocutors are those, who play advocacy role on behalf of the marginalised groups and the co-analysts are experts in the subject.

Further, the respondents were divided into traditional fisherfolk marine mechanised sector boat owners and workers and inland fisherfolk. A purposive random technique was applied to select the samples from among the above groups. In all these groups gender ratio was strictly followed and individuals from various age-groups were included.

Special focus was also given to choosing more people from those areas, where the cluster group population is high. Accordingly, the districts of Trivandrum, Kollam, Alappuzha and Kozhikode districts were selected.

The three co-analysts were Tom Kochery, President World Fish Workers Union and internationally recognised champion of the fish workers' cause, Dr. John Kurien, noted Fishery Economist and Associate Fellow, Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivandrum and

Dr.Sanjeeva Ghosh, Fisheries Scientist and Joint Director, Department of Fisheries, and special officer of People's Fish Farming Project, Government of Kerala.

Altogether 162 respondents were selected, comprising of invisibles (132), visibles (20), interlocutors (7) and co-analysts (3).

b. The research questions and checklists

The three major research questions were framed around three central ideas:

- What is your view of a good society? To what extent does such a society at present exist in your view?
- What roles are best played by citizens and what roles are best played by state institutions and other sectors in such a good society? What limits the playing of such roles in today's society?
- What would enable citizens to play their role in the development of the good society more effectively in future?

Keeping these basic concepts in mind, the following checklist was prepared in the local language (Malayalam) for the semi-structured dialogue:

- Could you share with us your current life experience- living conditions, problems and issues, their causes and remedies etc.?
- All of us entertain thoughts, fantasies, aspirations etc. about a good life/ good society. Could you explain your idea/ dream/ aspirations about the good life/ society?
- Do you think such a society exists in Kerala today? If it does, could you elaborate? If not what are the reasons for it?
- What roles could ordinary individuals like us play in such a society? Could you explain?
- Have you ever played such roles? If yes, what was the result? If no, why? What do you think are the factors hindering the citizens from playing their roles?
- What are the roles of the government, please explain?
- How far has our government succeeded in playing these roles?
- What are the factors hindering the playing of these roles by the government?
- Apart from the individual citizens and the government what are the other actors that can play decisive roles in the good society? Please comment on the roles of the Political parties, Trade unions Religious institutions, Panchayats/ Municipalities, Voluntary organisations, Other sectors.

- In your view what factors/ changes would make it easy for the individual citizens to play their role effectively?
- What sort of a society do you envisage in the near future?

c. Data Collection Techniques/ Tools

The secondary data collection process includes identification and selection of relevant materials and accession of the materials from various sources, like research studies, case studies, news letters/ journals, reports, news papers.

Semi-structured dialogue and small focus group discussion using the checklist, were widely used for generating primary data from various categories of the cluster group. With regard to interlocutors and co-analysts, individual dialogue was the only method used.

d. Time Frame

The study processes started in October, 1998 and was completed in the second half of March, 1999.

e. Limitations

It was possible to cover only a very small sample from the cluster group due to the time constraints. Even then, we were able to cover samples of different categories of the cluster group, covering different districts of the state, which ensures a true representation of the cluster. In general mixed small/ focus group discussion was the technique used in data generation. Though some discussion were held with large groups of women, it has not been possible to segregate the responses of men, women and youth, so that we are not able to highlight the differences of the perceptions, ideas and suggestions of those categories separately. In general we found that the views are more or less the same.

Another limitation, the research faced is regarding the visual documentation of the process. Sensitivity to the sentiments of the people in several places photography had to be given up.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1. VIEW OF A GOOD SOCIETY

a. INVISIBLES

The invisibles, for the most part, did not speak in conceptual terms. They were led by the pressure of their immediate physical needs and spoke in terms of concrete requirements/ facilities/ amenities. Following are the major consensus/ ideas of the invisibles.

i. Economic security

The overriding factor in regard to a good society as seen by most of the invisibles is economic security involving a number of factors. The issue of economic security was mentioned in all the groups and all the individuals dialogued with. The important conditions required for economic security, as highlighted by the respondent groups, are the following:

Gainful/ Alternative Employment

- The primary condition of economic security is the availability of full gainful employment to all the members of the community, including women.
- Sustainability of fish resources and restriction in fish depletion activities. Both the marine and inland fisherfolk spoke about their concern in this regard.
- Restriction of the encroachment of non-fisherfolk business class in the fishing activity.

Often it happens that the fishing trips end up in economic disaster, because the vessels return with nothing at all and incurring heavy loss by way of increasing operating costs. The unemployment situation on the shores is all the more pathetic, because, to quote a fisherman, "We depend entirely on the sea for survival. We know no other work". Many have suggested that alternative employment avenues be opened for the fishing community, "Else we will slowly die of starvation", said a fisher woman.

The fisher people have not been specific about the type of alternative employment they would require and the methods of organising such ventures. Some have pointed out the need for skill development of the fisher youth and offering a fair share of employment opportunities available with the government and the private sector to the fishing community.

Accessibility to institutional finance at affordable interest rates was also mentioned in connection with ensuring the economic security of the traditional fish workers.

Indebtedness

Another related issue mentioned by the respondents is freedom from perpetual indebtedness. The loans taken from the moneylenders are transferred from generation to generation and with every passing year the debt noose gets increasingly tightened around the poor family. Dialogues with the workers and owners of the mechanised boats revealed that the weight of debt is several times higher on the owners of mechanised boats, who had to borrow lakhs of rupees from banks for getting the mechanised vessels. What happened is that as the fish catches became more and more meagre and the operating costs kept rising, the owners found it impossible to make the repayment and ran into debt traps. "We are left with no option but end our life", said a desperate boat owner. He cited the instances of several people who have taken the extreme step of committing suicide and said several are thinking about it.

Control and rationalisation of market

One of the measures suggested by the respondents in several places to ensure the economic security of the artisanal fisher people is to control and rationalise the fisheries market. (As explained in the first part, the selling price of the coastal fish catch has been coming down due to influx of commodities from other states. Immediate and stringent action must be taken to remedy this situation and ensure fair price for the catch of the local fish workers.)

Bringing down the cost of production: The cost of production has been steadily increasing out of all proportion to the output and income. For instance, the hike in prices of diesel, Kerosene, spare parts etc. has increased the operating cost.

The main reason for this run away increase in production cost is to be found in the price rise of fuel (kerosene) and spare parts. The ration quotas for the fish workers have been drastically cut down over time, so that the workers have to buy kerosene from the open market at escalated prices. On the other hand there have been allegations that often the permits are issued in the name of the owners, who sell the fuel at open markets making a profit and the workers have to procure fuel at their cost from wherever it is available. In any case the prevailing arrangement is against the interests of the actual fish workers.

These findings from the responses of the invisibles are well supported by the learnings from the secondary sources. To quote from an article written by Dr. Sanjeeva Ghosh, Asst. Director Fisheries Department, Government of Kerala: "The socio-economic conditions of the fisherfolk are still very pathetic. A wide variety of problems like economic insecurity, indebtedness, poverty, no proper housing, health problems, low level of education are behind this condition".

“Loss of employment days, dearth of fish, not having own equipments, getting more and more entangled in the meshes of indebtedness, getting involved in clashes while fishing, being always at the mercy of the middlemen, having no rights of sale over the catch, not getting proper price for the catch... long is the list of the fisher people’s problems.” (ORA, Vol.16, issue 6, Nov.1998).

Higher production, increasing poverty

The following paragraph taken from a secondary source further emphasises the paradox of high production and increasing pauperisation of the fisherfolk.

“Investment was hiked with a view to increasing export. as a consequence the number of fishing equipments also increased leading to an increase in the total quantum of fish caught. But the proportion of catch per vessel pathetically came down. In other words productivity came down and the burden of debts increased.

On this situation A.C.Agarwal, Judge of the Supreme Court on June 23, 1993 made the following comment: “Since independence the number of traditional fisherfolk grew to 20.8 percent. But the fish production of the average fish worker was reduced 50 by percent. Therefore 98.5 percent of the fisherfolk are living below the poverty line. Out of the total fisher people 89 percent is constituted by the traditional fisherfolk. But 11 percent of fisher people, who use modern equipments, catch 92 percent of the fish. This situation has created a lot of law and order problems both at sea and on the land”.

ii. Availability of Basic Civic Amenities

All the fisherfolk dialogued with were emphatic about the urgency of addressing the need for basic civic amenities/ facilities, such as decent dwellings, clean surroundings, safe drinking water, electricity, primary health care, elementary education.

Healthy environment

In places like Poonthura, in the district of Thiruvananthapuram, the respondents lamented the lack of vital space, families of up to 8 members living in tiny houses in congested areas, with the average household having not more than 0.75 cents of land, leaving no space for privacy, waste disposal, not to speak of space for children to play.

Environmental hygiene is a major social problem in the coastal villages, with no sewage disposal arrangements.

The women of Pulluvila in Thiruvananthapuram complained about the absence of adequate toilets and about the harm done by the owners of coconut groves, who dump compost near the houses and pour stinking dirty water as manure for the coconut trees, not bothering about the health of the fisherfolk in nearby houses. The result is bad smell, breeding of pathogens and disease vectors like mosquitoes. The dreaded disease of filariasis has already made its inroads into these settlements.

Health care amenities

Quality primary health care should be made available within walking distance of the communities was another concern voiced by fisher people in several places. The fisher people feel neglected in this aspect too. The primary health centres are distant from their settlements and are ill-equipped with facilities and personnel. In Ninan Valappu, in the district of Kozhikode, for instance, the fisherfolk have to travel 3 kms by bus to get primary medical care.

Safe drinking water

Safe drinking water is the most sought after commodity in several places.

Take the case of the inland fish workers community of dalits at Veluthullikayal, Chandiroor in the district of Alappuzha. The water available in their settlement is brackish. Good water is available in the lands of the upper caste people, who due to caste prejudices, will not allow the poor dalits to draw water from their wells. Though representations have been made, neither the state government nor the local panchayat, have paid sufficient attention to solve this long-standing vital problem. Said an old woman: "My greatest wish is to have a draught of good water before I die".

Education facility for children

Facilities for the elementary education of the children has been pointed out as a primary need of the fishing community in several places.

Adequate transport and communication facilities

Another basic facility mentioned, mainly by fisher women, is related to providing facilities for transporting fish to the markets for sale by women. The prevailing conditions are deplorable. Some of the respondents suggested that following the example of the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, certain buses be provided with extra fittings, so that fish can be transported without inconvenience to the passengers.

Let us now listen to what the fisheries experts have to say in this matter (culled from secondary sources):

"The living styles of the fisherfolk are determined by the kind of work they do. The density of population in the fishing villages is 2162 per km, while the average state population density is 729 per km". (Dr.Sanjeeva Ghosh)

iii. Feeling of insecurity

Several of the fisherfolk families (45) in the Beach Ward in Alappuzha are living in perpetual fear of being evicted any time. These families uprooted from their dwellings on the shore due to sea erosion are temporarily settled in the land acquired for the National High Way. The government has turned a deaf ear to their repeated appeals for providing them alternative housing sites. Their priority need is own land for housing. Possession of 'patta' (land title) is a basic requirement for benefiting from government schemes and bank loans. Many of the fisher families do not possess the patta.

A related issue is the wrong interpretation of the Coastal Zone Regulation (CZR) Act, which restricts construction of permanent buildings within 500 meters from the shoreline. The irony is that this rule made to protect the fragile sea shores from the intrusion of industries, is used against the fisherfolk who are the natural protectors of the shores and in favour of the industries, which are the real culprits. The fisher people are rightfully angry that the governments adopt a step-motherly attitude towards them at every turn.

Some have complained that the indiscriminate construction of sea walls, without taking into account the interests of the local fish workers has adversely affected their fishing activities, since the granite wall structures obstruct the smooth landing of fishing crafts.

iv. Pollution Free Environment : Pollution free environment is another concern of the fisherfolk for a good society. Pollution is a major problem in the inland water bodies. It has also become a serious threat to the marine ecology. Based on the dialogue with the respondents a couple of instances are narrated in the boxes.

1. Pollution at Veluthulli Kayal

The inland fishing community of Chandiroor recounted the story of the pollution of the water in the Veluthulli Kayal (lake) lake from the untreated waste water from the prawns peeling factories in the area. Though the factory regulations demand treatment of the effluent water, the factory management do not follow them. During the peak season the entire area smells foul and those who bathe in the water get skin diseases. The waste water coming out of the more than 40 peeling sheds in the panchayat poses a serious environmental problem for the families residing on the banks of the lakes. Though complaints have been made to the pollution control officials no action has been taken. It is no secret that the officials have been bribed.

The people at Chandiroor also complained of having no approach roads to their settlement. Often they have to carry their sick on their shoulders and walk through harsh and narrow lanes to reach the nearby bus stop.

2. Oil slick in the Ashtamudi Kayal

The inland fisherfolk of Prakkulam in Kollam district, living along the banks of the Ashtamudi Kayal, have complained against the insensitivity of the state tourism department, which permits the use of motorised tourist boats in the lake, causing heavy pollution of the lake water through oil slick, which endangers the fish population in the lake. The pollution has reached such proportions that fish caught from the lake sometimes smell of kerosene. The lake pollution is aggravated by the use of motorised fishing boats. The fisher people were of the opinion that all motorised boats should be banned in the lake. They may be permitted to work in the adjacent sea, where the oil leaks are diluted in the massive volumes of sea water.

3. Titanium Pollution

Industrial Pollution has been a nagging tormentor for the fisher families of Vettukadu and nearby settlements in the coastal belt of Thiruvananthapuram. Here the effluents of the Titanium Products, a public sector industry, are let out into the sea untreated. The sea pollution is visible in the patch of coloured water seen along the beach for a few kilometres. Fisher people who come into contact with the polluted water develop skin and other diseases on account of the high concentration of sulfuric acid and other toxic elements of the affluent water. It is an understatement that no aquatic life can flourish in this part of the sea.

The available secondary data corroborate this view of the fisher people. Says a study: "A substantial reduction in the species diversity (number of species) of the commercially important fish wealth in the inshore zone of the three pollution-affected fishing villages has been noticed over the last four decades. For example about 40 years ago approximately 50 different kinds of fish species and related animals were landed in these three fishing villages. At present this diversity has been reduced to 16. It is evident that about 68 % of different fish species have totally or partially disappeared from the inshore waters of the pollution-affected villages over the past 40 years". (A summary Report of a multi-disciplinary ecological and socio-economic preliminary study on air and inshore marine pollution from the Travancore Titanium Products (TTP Ltd.) Trivandrum, 1990.)

v. Conservation of fisheries ecology

Some of the invisible fish workers contacted were perceptive to point out that the foundations of a good society for them consist in the conservation of the fisheries ecology, which is

being ravaged and ruined by intruders. The night and day trawling without let up has destroyed the fish habitats. Several species of fish have become extinct in the area, several are endangered. An immediate halt of these anti-ecological practices is one of the first steps to be taken to ensure a good future for the community, felt many of the respondents.

To quote from a secondary source document: " The destruction of water bodies has become rampant in the state. The salt water lakes have been the hardest hit in this. Three decades ago Kerala had 2,42,600 hectares of salt water bodies. They have been reduced to a mere 65,000 hectares today. The fishing pressure exerted on the inshore waters of the state is several times higher than the permissible one. There is no doubt that this will lead to the extinction of fish stocks in the inshore seas." (Dr.Sanjeeva Ghosh)

vi. Ensuring women's security

The women contacted were eager to point out that a good society cannot exist unless women are safe and their tears are wiped out.

Women's Views

Atrocities against and neglect of women cannot go along with a good society. Men have to change their ways and they should be given education towards that. Alcoholism was singled out by many as the biggest curse of the families. Tomorrow's must be a world free of alcohol, declared some. The existing laws regarding the production and consumption of alcohol came in for sharp criticism. By banning country liquor the government has made the situation worse. Now men go for the other brands which are more costly, thus further depleting the family income. Not only that. Men have travel to distant places to get the stuff, which they will any way find. Women at Poonthura said that their men wade through the river to get to the liquor shops found in far off places and meet with accidents. They cited the instance of a drunkard who drowned in the river. What is required is total ban. Partial ban is even more dangerous and problematic to the families.

One girl was eager to point out that drunken fathers are the curse of the families. They not only squander the resources. They also ruin the peace in the family. With tears in her eyes one girl lamented that drinking destroys the future of the children, who are not allowed to study their lessons. On the conclusion of a focus group discussion a girl pleaded: "Please, note this down- drinking is our biggest problem. There can be no good society unless this evil habit is curbed".

A middle-aged active fish worker from Kappackal in Kozhikode summed up his dream of a good society in these words:

“A society in which nobody starves, nobody is forced to roam around for getting work, where people’s basic needs - water, electricity, health care - are met and there are no social evils such as the practice of dowry and women are given more freedom and participation”.

None of the people dialogued with said that the good society of their dream exists.

b. VISIBLES

The responses of visibles have been , as was to be expected, more elaborate and sharp and rising from the concrete experiences to conceptual understanding of the wider implications. The visibles are the leaders in the fishing community, who have come to this position by dedicated and hard work.

- (i) Central quality of a good society should be equality - doing away with all the forms of inequality, particularly bridging the gap between rich and the poor.
- (ii) Another requirement of the good society identified by this group is the weakening of the consumerist trend. Economy should be based on need and not greed, as pointed out by mahatma Gandhi.
- (iii) Yet another characteristic of the good society is universal brotherhood and compassion for the suffering and the less fortunate.
- (iv) Individualism must come to an end and people should be concerned about the welfare of their fellow beings.

One of the visibles contacted had a pragmatic view and said that in the aspired-for society the fisherfolk should be able to live a comfortable life from the income of their fish catch. This is possible if the selling price of the fish caught by the traditional fisher people is regularised. This of course pre-supposes an integrated marketing system, he explained. To ensure adequate catches, the trawling must be banned.

- (v) He also said that in the good society the fisher people will live on a par with the members of other communities.
- (vi) The best responses came from a woman leader, who put the ending of all discriminations as the sinequa non for the blossoming forth of the desired good society. **No castes, no classes, no gender prejudices. It is a society in which every one gets an opportunity and sufficient space for developing into integrated and creative persons.**
- (vii) **More concretely, every one must have work and the required means of production. He/ she must have the right to fix the selling price of his products. In such a society there will be perfect gender equality, women getting opportunities on a par with men in all the spheres of life. Decision making powers, starting from home, should be equally shared between the two genders. This demands that serious action should be initiated to remove the inferiority feelings of women and enable them to appreciate themselves and dare forth**

into creative fora. The narrow mindedness of the current society should give way to the universal outlook, embracing everybody, everything. In such a society there will be no room for luxuries and extravagant spending. She was referring to the current practice of squandering money on marriage celebrations, when large sections of the populations go to bed hungry.

- (viii) Finally the environment and the natural resources would be protected in the good society. "One would not have to pay for clean air", she said.
- (ix) For yet another leader the foremost requirement is to eradicate starvation from the coastal belt. He was speaking from his own experience of having encountered poverty on all sides. The plight of the people he was serving was not different. Said he: "I cry when I see the fisherfolk have to starve to day". "A society in which there is no starvation, no exploitation and the people are self-reliant", he concluded.
- (x) Gainful employment for all, housing, land title, environmental cleanliness, safe drinking water, electricity, health care etc. are the other important requirements of a good society.
- (xi) Another woman leader put congenial atmosphere so that children can study peacefully at the head of the requirements for a good life. For this houses should not be crowded the way they are now, there should be enough space within and outside the house, the environment should be clean and noise-free.
- (xii) Another leader's vision of the good society is on the lines of a "socialist pattern of society", which means that all the means of production will be controlled by the community and everyone will have ample opportunities for development. Such a society will ensure basic amenities of life like nutritious food, housing, health care, drinking water, educational facilities. In this society characterised by social and environmental harmony people will be self-confident and self-reliant.
- (xiii) According to a male leader from the inland fishing community the first thing for a good society is the feeling of security, both social and economic. This means regular work and income along with health care facilities, freedom from occupational health hazards, safety of occupation etc. The workers must have the sense of unity and solidarity and should get organised for solving their problems.

All of these visible respondents agreed in one thing that such a society does not exist in their area.

c. INTERLOCUTORS

The discussions with them have yielded a mine of informations.

According to Aloisius Gonsalves, founder leader of Janjagriti, a progressive organisation for promoting people's vigilant action for the creation of a just society, a good society should

have sharing as the central value, leading to creative co-operation. In such a society there will be no discrimination whatever, socio-economic or gender. The good society will be eco-friendly and will provide basic amenities to all and safeguard the fundamental human rights of all the citizens. Additionally, the production and marketing of the products should be in the hands of the workers. The fisher people should have control over the market.

P.T. Augustine, a Jesuit priest and social worker with rich experience in working with the coastal fisher people and championing their cause think that basic human values such as brotherhood, fellowship, freedom, joyful community sharing and celebration should form the base of the good society. For instance man should 'eat to live and not live to eat', he explained.

As for the existence of such a society one of them said it exists rudimentarily in individuals and groups which sincerely aspire for it and make endeavours towards it. The others thought that it does not exist at all except as a vision.

3.2.2. ROLE OF CITIZEN

a. INVISIBLES

"What can isolated individuals do? Nothing". is the refrain that came in response to the question regarding the role of citizens in bringing about the desired good society in many places. The dalit inland fisherfolk at Veluthulli Kayal, Chandiroor, justified this negative attitude by saying that it was their bitter experience that if an individual tries to do something to ameliorate the conditions he/she would be victimised. In support of this argument they had the following story to recount:

Positive action: On the other hand quite a number of the respondents thought that the individual citizen can do certain things to pave the way for the good society. Many said that individuals can undertake charity and relief work, helping the needy and those in distress. The group of fish workers in the Beach Ward in Alappuzha narrated a number of incidents of such humanitarian work done by individuals and small groups of people.

Helping Hand

There was the case of a girl, who was about to commit suicide, because for want of adequate cash, her marriage was cancelled on the previous day. Some of the local people acted swiftly and collected enough money from the local community and got her married. there were also cases of helping people in distress by putting up temporary sheds for those rendered homeless due to natural calamities and so forth.

Some of the initiatives possible for the individuals include **small savings, self-employment activities, starting production units, joining social organisations and groups, providing and promoting leadership, information dissemination, protesting against injustices, leading an exemplary life etc.**

Though some individuals are doing good work in this area, **there is a dearth of such initiatives, felt most of the respondents.** The reasons attributed include factors like **selfishness/lack of sensitivity, opposition from others, feeling of insecurity and diffidence etc.**

b. VISIBLES

Most of the visibles contacted think that **the individual citizens can do an awful lot of things to pave the way for the good society** Some have said that **individuals can undertake voluntary action.** The individual can **start social change starting from his own place.** Individuals can come together to **plan and implement common programs,** said one. Another was of the view that **the individual's main role is to improve himself and lead an exemplary life.** Some of the women leaders responded that **the individual can spread ideas and make the people reflect in a friendly and informal way.** An elementary way of serving the community is to **help in the education of the children by providing tuition and counselling to the students,** said one of the women leaders.

A small group of leaders contacted suggested that one of the effective ways of serving the cause of the desired good society by the individuals is to **enquire into the causes of the social problems and arrive at rational solutions.** This means serious study and reflection which is best done by individuals and small groups. There are ever so many examples of individuals and small groups achieving wonderful results and initiating revolutionary movements, they pointed out and cited the examples of persons like **Gautam Buddha, Socrates, Jesus Christ, Karl Marx, Sreenarayana Guru.**

Another area identified by this group of leaders in the fishing community was **initiating nature conservation, starting from one's own homestead, where trees and plants can be planted and protected.** Yet another area of action they suggested was **public interest litigation.**

The pity is that **the individuals are not doing what they could have done.** The reasons for this inaction by the individuals, according to them, are **lack of security for one's life, lack of support from the family and peers, lack of co-operation, and opposition from the society etc.**

The first thing the individual should and can do is to **rise above petty politics,** said one of the leaders. "Any good for society can be done only after that", he maintained. He also said that there is a dearth of enlightened leadership, which individuals can provide. Asked whether he

has played this leadership role he said no and attributed his economic insecurity as the reason for his failure in this role.

c. INTERLOCUTORS

One of them, a professional lawyer cum social worker, who has initiated several movements and schemes for the benefit of the traditional fisherfolk, is of opinion that the **individual can make a difference by Initiating innovative action, by creating public opinion, providing information, motivation and inspiration.** He narrated a number of innovative actions he inspired including a co-operative fish farming venture by the inland dalit fish workers, fish workers' co-operatives, prawns peeling units by the fisher women, coir making units, food processing units etc. etc.

A seasoned leader with more than 30 years involvement in the cause and struggles of the traditional fisher people was of the view that the first thing the individual should do is to **get free of individualism, which is the root cause of most of the problems.** The other things that the individual can do according to him are **sharing of knowledge and material resources, taking more interest in community matters. Individuals can also initiate institutions and associations like self-help groups.** Yet another area of action is **giving counselling and guidance to people in need.** Also a lot of liason work can be done by individual citizens, he said. He is a person who has practising all along what he has been preaching.

Another interlocutor has provided a very inspiring example of some of the things that can be done by individuals. Recently (1998) he directed and produced a feature film on the problems of the traditional fisherfolk. The film titled 'Meenthoni' (fishing boat) depicts the burning issues of the traditional fishing sector through the observations and interactions of a girl research student, who arrives in a fishing village for collecting data for her thesis on 'fish and the fisher people'. As she proceeds to dialogue with the people and unravel the intricacies of their sufferings, she ceases to be a mere researcher, becomes one of them, educates and organises them and joins their struggle for justice and liberation from the hands of the oppressors and exploiters.

3.3. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

a. INVISIBLES

According to most of the invisible respondents, the **biggest role in this lies with the state, represented by the governments. It is the primary responsibility of the governments to ensure prosperous and peaceful lives to their citizens.**

The primary responsibility of the governments, according to a large section of the respondents, is **making appropriate policy decisions and scrupulously and impartially implementing**

them. In particular with regard to the fisherfolk, the governments should see that the fish resources are protected and the traditional fish workers get fair price for their catch. This involves steps like banning trawlers and setting up marketing arrangements.

Some people suggested that viable economic programmes be implemented through agencies like the Matsyafed (Government agency for promoting the welfare of the traditional fisherfolk). But the loans should be given directly to the individuals and not through the societies, which misuse the money and do not repay, remarked some of the fish workers. Many have suggested that the government provide loans and subsidies for self-employment, housing, education etc., besides giving relief assistance to people in distress, rehabilitating those displaced by natural calamities like sea erosion.

One of the fish workers was categorical. "The government has the responsibility of protecting the fisherfolk, who make tremendous contribution to the country's economy by earning foreign exchange and creating employment opportunities to thousands, who are involved in the fisheries economy in one way or another", said he. Another fisherman was adamant: "By all means the government must come to the rescue of the fisher people".

Some of the groups contacted identified as one of the central roles of the government as initiating rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations in times of calamities and thus providing security to the families.

The women at Poonthura had this to say: "The government should close all the liquor shops and end all corruption, especially by the police and the officials of the excise department".

It was also suggested that the government can easily find the resources if only it cuts down the extravaganzas of the Ministers.

b. VISIBLES

In the perception of most of the visibles the primary role of the government is enactment of pertinent laws and their strict enforcement. These should have their main aim the protection of the fisheries resources, the regularisation of fisheries marketing systems and development projects and schemes for the benefit of the fish workers. All destructive practices including trawling, both large and mini should be effectively banned. Cooperative movements (non-political movements) should be promoted and given control over all the processes of the fisheries economy. These organisations should be controlled exclusively by the active fish workers. Active fish workers should be represented in all the fisheries departments and agencies. Another related suggestion is regarding the availability of loans from banks and other public sector financial institutions.

A prominent leader insisted on the need for ensuring welfare measures, social security, law and order etc. In particular the Coastal Zone Regulation (CZR) laws should be strictly

enforced, he felt. Another important role of the government identified by him, is to **promote voluntary organisations and initiatives.**

A distinctive responsibility of the government pointed out by some of the leaders is the **protection of indigenous ethos and culture.** This assumes great importance in the present context of the invasion of foreign cultures and modes of living into the coastal zones through the expansion of tourism and consumerism. The possible harm to the culture of the fishing hamlets is immense and the government has to be vigilant and protect the shores from the invasion of deleterious trends.

A woman leader put the emphasis on education and said that the **government should ensure free and quality education to all.** All the children should be enrolled, those parents who neglect to send their children to school should be punished, she said. Education should be work-oriented and children should be able to earn even as they study and get ready to face life. Another area she stressed is **preventive health care.** There should be **health centres** in all the fishing villages and they should be **equipped with adequate staff, medicines and other facilities.** Environmental cleanliness is also equally important and the government should see that each household has its own sanitary latrine.

c. INTERLOCUTORS

The main job of the government is to ensure democratic governance/rule for the people. Now the government is ruling, but not for the people. **Democratic principles have to be promoted and enforced.** The government has to be the conductor in the orchestra of the good society. **Without a proper government there will be no good society.** As regards the fisher people the government has to **protect their rights through legislation and the enforcement of laws.** Of course the people have to put pressure on the people, otherwise nothing will happen. The government has taken certain positive steps like the banning of trawling and the enactment of the CRZ legislation. But much more has to be done for protecting the fisheries from the assault of the industrialists.

The basic function of the government is **making policy decisions in favour of the oppressed, reversing the current trend of promoting the interests of the big businesses at the cost of the poor and the marginalised.** The government must cancel the fishing licenses given to the foreign companies and implement the fisheries protection laws like the CRZ, suggested another interlocutor.

Another interlocutor emphasised that the **central role of the government is to ensure the effective decentralisation and devolution of political power to the people.** Governance should not be over politicised. As it is governance is by the parties and for the parties. This should end. The focus of governance should be people.

3.4. ROLE OF OTHER SECTORS/ ACTORS

a. INVISIBLES

i. Political parties and Trade Unions

A large section of the respondents felt that nothing good need be expected from the political parties, which are all corrupt and corrupting. said one of the respondents in a group in Thiruvananthapuram: "There is no use at all of the politicians, they fleece you, that is all". Their view of the trade unions was more or less on the same lines.

ii. Religious Institutions

The respondents were sharply divided with regard to the role of religious institutions in bringing about the desired good society. While one group, with greater numerical strength, thought that religious institutions have a constructive role in this, though they are not doing that right now due to various reasons, the other group was insistent it is better to keep the religions altogether out of this business, since they take a reactionary stand and poison the people's mind and create unnecessary divisions and conflicts.

Referring to the Christian churches one observed "In former times, in the days of the European missionaries a lot of good used to be done by the churches. Now the priests have become pleasure seekers".

A comment that came from some of the women from a Christian belt is very revealing and interesting. "Our only solace are the words of Jesus, 'Come to me all who are burdened and suffering". They went on to say that religion gives them the strength to put up with all the misfortunes and sufferings of this life.

"Let us keep the religions and the politics away" was the verdict of one of the respondents.

iii. Local self-governance institutions

A large section of the fisherfolk dialogued with thought that the local self-governance institutions, especially in their new forms, have a decisive role to play in the matter of ushering in the kind of desirable society one is talking about. Both the panchayats in their three tiers and the corporations and municipalities can focus on local problems, they felt.

However a significant section were thoroughly disillusioned by the performance of these institutions, especially the much talked about 'People's Campaign', a process started by the state government to involve the local people in the planning and implementation of development projects. "It was an application of the jungle law, the powerful ones taking

everything and the poor and powerless getting nothing” was the wry response of a young woman. Said another woman “Panchayats are arenas for the rival political factions to fight and establish their might”. The comment of another woman was even more sarcastic: “The politicians must make a few quick bucks. It is a fraud, this panchayat business. They do nothing for the people”.

iv. Voluntary organisations

A number of role have been assigned to the voluntary organisations by the respondents in regard to creating a good society. Their basic role is **conscientising the people and mobilising them**, according to a large number of people. They should also provide training, particularly in the area of skill development.

The role of voluntary organisations VOs is to **bring out unity among the people above the divisive considerations of party politics**, was the view of some people. They envisaged the role of the VOs as an antidote to the destructive power of the misguided party politics.

Some people felt that only if the organisations are united can they achieve any lasting results. “We are not able to make an impact, because our efforts are scattered. With a united front the organisations will be able to exercise power on the government. That is not happening now”, said an office bearer of an organisation.

A small section of the respondents expressed the view that voluntary action is just another fraud practised on the poor fish workers. One woman said that she had been an active member of a prominent organisation for the fisher people for over 16 years and lamented that it was “sheer waste of time”. Another woman who functioned as the president of a unit of a prominent fisher women’s federation concurred with the above view and said that “it all amounted to nothing”. However some of the women were quick to point out that the **women’s self-help groups are of real benefit**.

Members of a focus group said the VOs can and should do very useful work in facilitating marketing. One of the respondents made an innovative suggestion that the organisations on the coast and those on the hill side should work in unison and collaborate in marketing by exchanging the marine products and the hill products to the benefit of the coastal and hill communities.

A very good work that the VOs can do is to **organise people, especially the womenfolk, into socio-economic associations such as the self-help groups**.

Some of the fish workers thought that the best service the VOs can do is to exert pressure on the government and see that the day and night trawling by the mechanised boats is stopped.

b. VISIBLES

The visibles have assigned specific roles to other different sectors like the local self-governance institutions, the voluntary organisations, the business houses, the media, the political organisations. Let us have a quick glance on each of these items.

i. Local Self-governance institutions

Through the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments the self-governance institutions (the panchayats and the municipalities) have been endowed with power to bring about radical social change. Hence they have a tremendous role to play, was the view of several of the visible respondents. They pointed out the People's Campaign for planning initiated by the Kerala government as an effective way of building up self-reliant and sustainable communities. However, this is possible only if the maladies of overpoliticisation and corruption are rooted out from the system, cautioned they.

ii. Voluntary organisations

All the visibles identified important roles for the voluntary organisations in bringing about the desired good society. Educating and conscientising the people, creating public opinion, taking up policy advocacy, conducting studies/researches and disseminating information, promoting people's movements and organisations, implementing development projects where the government is not effective etc. are the main roles pointed out by these leaders. They also cited several examples and models of voluntary interventions.

iii. Business World

Business houses also can and should play their part in the building up of the good society, felt several of the visibles. One of the things that they can easily do is to set apart a certain portion of their income towards poverty alleviation. They can also take up charity and humanitarian work, besides supporting voluntary organisations. Industries have the responsibility of ensuring good quality of the products and the welfare of the workers.

iv. Religious Institutions

Most of the invisibles contacted were emphatic about the positive role of the religions in this regard. To start with, the religions can and should spread the message of the good society. They have better access to the conscience of the people and are better equipped to educate and motivate the masses. They can wield very powerful influence in the area of fighting social evils like dowry, alcoholism, female infanticide. The service of the Christian churches in providing

pre-marital counselling is commendable in this respect. The other religious organisations also should take up similar initiatives. The religions can also play an important role in promoting communal harmony.

c. INTERLOCUTORS

i. Voluntary Organisations

According to the interlocutors the voluntary sector has a 'prophetic' role, which is being neglected in these times of institutionalisation. This means that the voluntary activists are called upon to interpret the meaning of the current times and point out the new directions.

The organisations can promote education through schools and non-formal education channels, pointed out another interlocutor.

ii. Local Self Governance Institutions

Local self-governance institutions have a tremendous role, said all the interlocutors. The new panchayatraj and nagarapalika acts are revolutionary in their scope of promoting democratic processes at the grass root level. The People's Campaign experiment by the Kerala government is a decisive step, felt most of the interlocutors. The new legislation has provided a lot space for people's action, they pointed out.

ii. Religious Institutions

The interlocutors recognised an important role for the religions in the building up the good society. "Religion can be a liberative force", said one. However he cautioned that one has to be extremely cautious, otherwise it can do harm. He distinguished between the "prophetic" tradition, which is liberating and the "priestly" tradition, which is enslaving. He also drew a line between spirituality and religion. **What we need is a spiritual religion.**

'Religion can promote fellowship and sharing' was the view of another interlocutor. He recalled the experience and example of the early Christian community which practised a kind of 'spiritual communism'. **It is important to promote inter-religious dialogue and harmony,** he emphasized.

iv. Media

One of the interlocutors insisted that the media can play most effective roles. The media are double-edged sword, they can heal as well as kill. The media, particularly the print media have played an important role in highlighting the problems affecting the sector, forming public

opinion and inviting the attention of the authorities. In the fisher people's struggles against monsoon trawling the media especially the news papers played a major role, he reminisced.

3.5. OBSTACLES IN PLAYING THE ROLE DIFFERENT ACTORS

i. Invisibles and visibles

In the view of the invisibles and the visibles the main forces that stand in the way of the different sectors playing their roles are:

- Power mongering of the politicians
- Over allegiance to traditions
- Bureaucratic domination
- Corruption
- Over politicisation
- Communal rivalries
- Consumerism
- Poverty
- Hoarding, adulteration and black marketing
- Environmental destruction
- Low level of human resource development
- Low level of skill development and technical know-how
- Selfishness, greed and individualism

ii. INTERLOCUTORS

The possible initiatives by different sectors and actors are hindered by a number of factors and forces, said the interlocutors. They have pin-pointed a few including:

- Lack of unity and solidarity among the people
- Greed of workers and people
- Consumerism
- Globalisation
- Overpoliticisation
- Lack of universal outlook
- Corruption
- Male domination

- Lack of political will
- Divisive forces

“We are in a vicious circle”, commented a prominent interlocutor. What he had in mind was the unholy nexus between the anti-people forces, especially the financial and political institutions, making a breakthrough very difficult. Said he:” Strong historical forces are working against change”.

3.6. ENABLING FACTORS HELP CITIZENS TO PLAY THEIR ROLES

The visibles, unlike the invisibles, had somewhat clear views on the factors of change that would enable the playing of various roles by various actors to facilitate the development of the good society.

They placed education at the head of the enabling factors. The prevailing education is of no value. The entire system has to be revamped and re-vitalised with a new orientation based on equitable and sustainable social development, with focus on work, social amity, environmental integrity, gender sensitivity etc.

The prevailing male-dominated, lopsided ethos has to give way to a more balanced, equitable, gender- sensitive ethos which respects the equal participation of women.

Some were of the view that unless the society is rid of the current degenerated, blind political culture nothing can be done. What is very badly needed is enlightened political leadership, which will allow political stability and guide the state with an integrated, holistic and long-term vision.

Speaking of the fisheries sector better policies and laws are needed -provisions that will safeguard the interests of the active fish workers. Leadership in the fisheries sector has to develop, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The people also must change their attitude of defeatism and despondency and face the realities more courageously and constructively. Spreading of the co-operative movement all along the coast will go a long way in mobilising and developing the resources of the people. Along with socio-economic programs there should be also cultural activities happening in the fishing villages- for example there should be more libraries and reading rooms and the fish workers should be trained to read, study and reflect.

A woman leader was emphatic that the primary factor for change is the development sensitivity and responsiveness in individuals, so that they cease to be helpless victims and passive spectators of whatever is happening, instead respond and take proactive stances in the face of problems and issues. For this to happen there should be effective communication

happening at all levels. Improving the communication skills of the leaders in the fishing community will be a decisive step.

Among the identified factors enabling the individuals to take initiatives for the blossoming of the good society are developments such as the decentralisation processes set in motion with the panchayatiraj law, the recognition given to voluntary action, the emergence of people's organisations like the women's groups.

3.7. VIEWS OF CO-ANALYSTS

i. Fr. Tom Kocherry

According to Tom Kocherry, the basic requirement for a good society is the 'rootedness of the people in their native culture. Also the members of a good society should be able to 'face the problems of the community as a team'. Besides there should be social, economic and political equality, which has to be 'earned through struggle'. Relating this concept to the situation of the fisher people, Tom Kocherry emphasized that 'everything related to fisheries- the water bodies, implements, marketing etc. should be owned and controlled by the actual fish workers and their families'. He was also of the view that the ownership of fish resources and the fishing equipments as well as the marketing of fish and the equipments should be operated through the instrumentality of fish workers co-operatives. Each fishing village should have a co-operative and all the workers should be members of it. This is possible only if the parties have faith in people's planning, he maintained.

Regarding the existence of the good society Kocherry said that one can say that it exists and it does not exist. It exists in those individuals who live the values of the good society, he elaborated.

Individual can and should play their role maintained Tom Kocherry. One of the things that can be done by the individuals is to educate and mobilise the people to resist oppressive forces. He cited his own experiences of organising the fisher people as an example. He could make substantial contribution to the promotion of the fisher people's cause.

ii. John Kurien

Dr. John Kurien, pointed out that the basic issue concerning the fisherfolk is that of deciding the fishing rights. Kerala is blessed with abundance of fish resources. These, contrary to popular views, are not depleted and cannot be easily depleted, since the tropical fish stocks, unlike their counterparts in the temperate zones, have tremendous regenerative capacity. The problem with Kerala fisheries is that the rights of ownership/ use of the means of production (mainly the fishing grounds) has not been clearly defined and appropriate policies implemented.

In the agricultural sector this was done long ago. The farmers have been given their rights on the agricultural land. In the fisheries sector this has not happened, hence the confusion and problems related to fishing rights, the use of fishing gears and equipments etc.

Dr. Kurien was emphatic that clear laws and their strict enforcement regarding the rights of fishing and fixing the first sale of the catch will go a long way towards solving the intricate problems of the sector, by reducing the number of those engaged in fishing, rationalising the fishing technologies and ensuring adequate price for the catches.

“The important thing to note”, he says in one of his writings, “is that there is no shortage of good and proper ideas. What we lack is the proper support to get these ideas implemented”. He goes on to point out some of the wrong ideas which have to be removed, like the idea that creating investments will always lead to development. What we need is to remove investment. In Kerala fisheries we have reached the stage where adding more fishing equipments will only create more problems and worsen the situation. What we require is a better distribution of these assets. Also the idea of catching more and more fish is wrong. What we need is to adopt the methods for improving the quality of what is already caught and ensure that the fishermen get better price for their catch.

Dr. Kurien has outlined some of the radical changes to be brought about in the fisheries sector:

An aquarian reform parallel to the agrarian reform is badly called for. This reform should have the following components:

- **Fishing assets to the fish workers**
- **Rights over the first sale of fish**
- **Greater social control over export**
- **Community rights over the coastal sea and land**

The fishing communities being about two decades behind the rest of Kerala society in terms of their quality of life, particularly in the matter of educational attainments and health status, the fishing communities have to undertake “very strong and focused collective action to ensure that facilities provided by the state are utilised well and for the benefit of the community”. Dr. Kurien thinks that activities like the People’s Planning Program under the new panchayatraj can play a very important role in this.

Alternative employment programs: Dr. Kurien suggests the implementation of planned, systematic, alternative employment activities and training for the same with the long-term objective of getting as many people as possible out of the fish harvesting activity in the next two decades.

“The coastal sea should be deemed the property of the community of fish workers. Who will constitute this community? It should be the workers and owner-workers who have the rights to work and own fishing assets along with their immediate families that form this community. They should then accept the rights and responsibilities for the management of the coastal sea eco-system and ensure the sustainability of the living resources therein”.

iii. Sanjeev Ghosh

Dr. Sanjeev Ghosh, wanted to emphasize the fact of actual fish depletion. He did not totally agree with the view that the tropical fish stocks are stable. Speaking from the point of view of the natural science of aquatic biology, he insisted that the natural resources in the coastal seas of Kerala fall too short of the demands of the current fish worker population estimated at 250,000. The resources are not sufficient for even 80,000 workers, which was the number of active fishermen three decades ago. The pressure on the fishing grounds, with 12,000 boats as against the optimum of 1400 and 7000 ring seines against the permissible 200, is too heavy to allow for regeneration. This means the first thing to do is to bring down the number of people engaged in fish harvesting to below 80,000, which is roughly one third of the existing fish harvesters. Over-fishing has resulted in a situation of serious fish depletion. If the resources are depleted nothing can be done. There is little time left for action to stop resource depleting fishing practices.

Dr. Ghosh insists that a comprehensive fisheries Acts and laws have to be made and implemented. Even after 50 years of independence India is following the ‘Indian Fisheries Act’ made by the British in 1897. Though a few fisheries laws are available in Kerala, they are either outdated or not adequate to deal with all the issues and problems arising in the fisheries sector today.

Dr. Ghosh puts a lot of emphasis on collective ownership and management of fisheries. He thinks that while the government initiatives are bound to fail, community initiatives, along the lines of the grama sabhas and the People’s Plan campaign have a chance.

The fact is that in the fish processing and marketing fields the actual fish workers have no share or representation. These fields are completely in the hands of the rich private industrialists. Since the market is in the hands of the industrialists and the exporters the fish workers do not get adequate price for their catch. The government has to come into this field in a big way and protect the rights and interests of the fish workers. Control should be also exercised on the transport of fish from other states into Kerala, explained Dr. Ghosh. He also commented on the prevailing welfare schemes for the fisher people. “ Today under the three agencies of the Fisheries Department, the Matsyafed and the Matsya Board there are about thirty ‘fishermen welfare schemes’. But on close examination one finds that most of these are mere economic programs, addressing only the aspects of income and neglecting welfare aspects like housing, education, health and hygiene etc.”, he said.

3.8. COMMONALITIES ACROSS THE GROUPS

Comparing the responses of the various groups of persons dialogues with, one finds that there is a basic general agreement with regard to the basic problems and solutions. However, there is also perceptible difference in the way the issues are perceived and the solutions arrived at.

We shall bring together here the main points common to all the groups:

i. Employment and Economic Security

There is general agreement among all the groups of respondents regarding this issue. There is a gradual widening of understanding as one goes through the different groups beginning with the invisibles. The invisibles and visibles naturally tend to magnify it, while the interlocutors and particularly the co-analyst take a more detached and liberal view.

ii. Basic Civic Amenities

Another consensus across the different groups is the emphasis on the need to provide basic civic amenities like housing, sanitation, clean drinking water, transportation, health care, education to the indigent communities.

iii. Peaceful Community Life

All the respondents have in one way or another stressed the need for a peaceful life, devoid of conflicts and clashes between groups of differing socio-economic interests.

iv. Clean and Effective Governance

A central concern of almost all the respondents is the need for a clean and effective system of governance.

v. Improving Women's Participation

A large section of the respondents irrespective of women have insisted on the need for gender sensitive approaches and emphasised the importance of equitable participation of women in all the spheres and at all levels.

vi. Eradication of Social Evils

There is near total unanimity among the various groups of respondents regarding the urgency of eradicating social evils like dowry, alcoholism, drug abuse.

vii. Protection of Environment

Most of the respondents have evinced a rather high level of eco-consciousness and demanded that the natural environment should be protected.

3.9. HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECONDARY DATA

The learnings from published media reports, books, journals etc. on the Fisherfolk can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ Despite clear advantages such as diverse fishery resources, fishing skills, location-specific fish harvesting and processing technologies, creditable research institutions, after four decades of so called 'fisheries development', the fisheries sector in Kerala is facing a deep crisis, characterised by unsustainability and very low standards of living of the fish worker families.
- ◆ A number of reasons such as over fishing, ecological destruction, exploitation by middlemen lie at the root of this sad state of affairs.
- ◆ In brief there has been a terrible lack of clear policies and unscrupulous implementation of the existing regulations meant to protect the interests of the fish workers and the fishery resources.
- ◆ Since one of the problems is the state of uneconomically high investment in the sector, the solution does not lie in the direction of increasing investment as erroneously thought by some. What is required is an equitable distribution of assets. The aim should not be to catch more fish, but to improve the quality of what is caught and ensure better price for the catch.
- ◆ The total number of fish workers should be reduced, so that there is less strain on the fishing grounds and the natural replenishment of fish stocks takes place.
- ◆ It is important to define the 'fish worker' and ensure that only the real, active fish workers enjoy the benefits of fisheries schemes. A list of active fish workers should be prepared by the government and this list should be revised every year. Only those in the list should be given the license to engage in fishing and make use of fishery facilities.
- ◆ It is vital that the water bodies are protected from misuse and pollution. Legislative and administrative steps should be taken to ensure that these resources are kept intact.
- ◆ The co-operative movement in the fisheries sector should be strengthened and streamlined.
- ◆ The existing welfare schemes are actually economic programs and are not designed to look after the overall welfare of the fisherfolk. Welfare policies and schemes should be made and implemented keeping in mind all the aspects of the life of the fisher people including housing, education, health and hygiene etc. Only through the implementation of an integrated and comprehensive master plan the chronic problems of the fisherfolk can be sustainably solved.

- ◆ With a view to increasing the fish resources and ensuring employment to increasing number of people, controlled fish/acqua farming should be promoted.
- ◆ Fisheries development should be linked with the local administration institutions. This will enable the emergence of location specific regulations, practices and technologies, which are very much needed to ensure the smooth functioning of fishing operations, which protect the interests of the fish workers without harming the ecology.
- ◆ From 1976 onwards the fish workers started getting organised under several umbrellas. The most prominent among them was the Swathantra Matsyathozhilali Federation, which conducted several successful campaigns. In 1979 the fish workers organisations in different states got federated under the National Fish Workers Forum (N.F.F.). The Kanyakumari March conducted by N.F.F. in 1989 with the slogan 'Protect Water, Protect Life', was a milestone in the history of fish workers campaigns at the national level. N.F.F. also made significant gains for the fisher people through legal action. The orders of the Supreme Court approving the ban of trawlers during the monsoon months and banning the use of purseines were the result of the Forum's prolonged legal battles. The All India fisheries strike conducted on 4th February, 1994 with the support of all like-minded organisations and movements, two prolonged hunger strikes, blocking the harbour etc. motivated the government to revise its policies. But the 21 suggestions proposed by the Murari Committee have not yet been implemented. The industrialists and the politicians have joined together to defeat the verdicts of the courts by passing laws like the 'Acqua Culture Authority Bill passed on 19th March, 1997. All the political parties are united in this efforts. All the members of the Parliament from Kerala have joined the move to get exemption for Kerala from the Coastal Regulation Zone Act. From 17th to 21st November, 1997 delegates from 35 littoral nations assembled in New Delhi to give shape to the 'World Forum of Fish harvesters and Fish Workers' and 21st November has been declared as World Fish Workers Day'. Organisations from Kerala like N.F.F. and leaders like Tom Kocherry played a major role in the formation of this world organisation of the fish workers.
- ◆ The development of industrial fisheries came in response to an increasing demand and strong rise in the price of shrimp in the markets of several industrialised countries, especially Japan and U.S.A. Investment in specialised vessels for shrimp fishing bottom trawlers, proved to be highly profitable and the number and size of trawler fleets grew quickly. Governments actively supported private efforts through preferential credit schemes and subsidised inputs. The earlier caste bound nature of the fisheries sector ceased to be a barrier to entry. In the new system the main investors were non-fishermen. The artisanal fisheries suffered under the industrial fisheries.
- ◆ Traditional fishing communities have remained aloof geographically, economically, socially and culturally and remained at the margins of mainstream society. The social, economic and scientific achievements of the last few centuries have hardly percolated into the coastal communities. Fishermen and fish vendors have remained more or less untouchables, almost on a par with the scheduled castes. While a lot of attention has been bestowed on the

development of the other weaker sections, the fishing communities have been bypassed by development planners, policy makers and state administrators.

- ◆ Kerala was recipient of three major foreign aid schemes for the development of the fisheries sector: the TCM Aid Program (for small engines to be used in small country boats, nylon nets, insulated vans and fish containers), the FAO Technical Assistance Programme (technical training) and the Indo-Norwegian Project (for integrated fisheries development). Though these projects helped modernise the Kerala fisheries and effected economic improvements to sections of the fishing community initially, their beneficial impacts have not been sustained and in the long run they turned out to be anti-fisher people. On realising that fishing is very lucrative many people not belonging to the traditional fishing community intruded into the sector and eventually controlled the scene. The boat owners who sat on the shores while the workers toiled in the sea were counted as fish workers and enjoyed all the benefits. Eventually the real workers got alienated and pauperised.
- ◆ Towards the close of 1970s the Kerala fisheries sector became infested with problems. Competition and conflicts arose between the traditional fish workers and the new entrants. The government set up several committees (13 numbers) to study the problems and suggest remedial measures. Though the different committees submitted their reports with recommendations, these have not been implemented in substance. By the beginning of 1980s the government implemented a 'motorisation' program, assisting the traditional fish workers to attach small outboard engines to their country boats, with a view to enable them to face the challenge posed by the mechanised boats, which were harvesting all the fish in the sea. This revolutionised the traditional fishing sector. While more catches were being landed, the cost of production started soaring. The engine owning workers became more and more indebted. Motorisation also led to insupportable pressure on the fish stocks. Practically the sustainable, traditional fishing practices have come to an end. The thinking is growing that time has come for substituting the out-board engines with in-board engines.
- ◆ Kerala has a highly resourceful inland fisheries sector. The number of those engaged in inland fishing in the kayals (back waters/lagoons) and rivers comes to around 20,000. The inland fisheries sector too has undergone rapid and undesirable changes. In the sixties the number of inland fish workers amounted to more than 50,000. Today's their number is less than half. Due to pollution and over fishing the inland fish resources have been decimated. A couple of years ago the fishes in the kayals were affected by a mysterious disease called 'episodic syndrome' by the specialists. As a result thousands of fish workers lost their employment. Chemical pollution from the pesticides used in the paddy fields upstream has been identified as the major causative factor. However, no action has been taken to reduce pollution.
- ◆ An essential requirement for the management of any resource is that some people have the rights and the means to control access to it. Clearly defined property rights to resources, enforced through the legal and judiciary framework is the usual way in which this is accomplished. The fisheries resources have traditionally been common property which any one can freely exploit.

3.10. COMPARISON BETWEEN PRIMARY DATA AND SECONDARY DATA

There is remarkable convergence between the findings of the primary data and the learnings from the secondary data. This is especially so in the case of the fisherfolk. There is near total agreement on the basic issues of the sector, their causes and the remedies required. This is explained by the fact that there has been very good exchanges of views in the recent past between the fish workers, the activists, the leaders, the experts, the media etc. Happily many of the experts are part of the fisher people's struggles.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

It was observed that differences in the understanding, outlook and aspirations of various categories of the cluster group were closely linked with their responses.

The invisibles, who form the majority tend to see the concrete/ gross manifestations of the problems, such as starvation, poor housing, unemployment, fish depletion, low selling price, indebtedness, alcoholism, poor educational facilities, poor health and hygiene. During the dialogues most of the time was spent in narrating their misfortunes, woes and demands for improvement. It was difficult to lead them to a discussion on their concept of a good society etc. Their idea of a good society is practically centred round the removal of poverty and availability of basic civic amenities. "A society freed from starvation" was the dominant note in their discourse. They were also pre-occupied with the security of their children, who need to be provided with employment-oriented education and training. In one word the invisibles for the most part were totally engrossed in their problems of day-to-day living. Despondency and helplessness were writ large on their faces and their words were charged with emotions of bitterness and anger.

The visibles, individuals from the same community, who have come up as leaders through much struggle and suffering, said more or less the same thing as the invisibles. They, however, showed a tendency to rise above the field of individual suffering and see things from a broader point of view. Some of them were quite analytical and could arrive at the underlying causes and the methods for removing them. While some decried the anti-people stance of the political parties, others found fault with the wrong policies and schemes of the government. For instance an experienced fisherman was emphatic that the banning of monsoon trawling was ill-timed and ineffective. From his repeated experience in the sea he challenged the official version that the months of June-July marked the spawning time. While most of the invisibles said that the individual citizens could do nothing to improve the state of affairs, several of the visibles were clear about the role of the individuals and said much could be done by them like educating, organising the people and experimenting innovations.

The interlocutors were even more analytical and perceptive about the root causes of the underdevelopment of the fisherfolk and had radical solutions to offer. This group effectively bridged the gap between raw experience and conceptual understanding. These committed spokespersons with ample field experience were successful in drawing a blue print of good society for the fisher people. It so happened that all of the contacted interlocutors emphasized the need for community-based, holistic approaches, giving primacy to values of sharing, co-operation, eco-friendliness, equity, simplicity. They also stressed the need for organisation building and networking.

**STRUGGLES FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE
FOR FISH AND FISHWORKERS IN KERALA STATE**

Some Thoughts for World Fishworkers Day

**"OUR STRUGGLE IS FOR THE FUTURE: THAT OF THE FISH AND
OURSELVES"**

Words of Joyachen Antony during his 1984 fast at the Secretariate

Nature has blessed Kerala State with the most productive and diverse marine fishery resource. The marine fishing communities of Kerala are undoubtedly the most skilled in the country. We had the most diverse and location-specific fish harvesting and processing technology. Our fishery entrepreneurs are the most innovative. We have the most avid fish eaters in this country. The research institutions and the fishery educational institutions in Kerala are the best in the country. The fisheries department has a long history and is perhaps the largest in India.

Despite all these advantages, and after four decades of what we call fisheries development, look at the situation which confronts us in Kerala State. The fishery resource is not sustainably harvested; the fishing community is still by and large the most socio-economically backward section of Kerala society and the fish consumers are not in a position to get sufficient supplies of good quality fish.

The factors responsible for this situation are numerous. Going into those details will not be of much help now. I have written much about this in earlier years and do not wish to repeat myself here. Instead let me just briefly outline an agenda for the future. I have written about this agenda also in other publications. It has also found a place in many official documents produced by the state government -- for example the Government's Fishery Policy and the recent State Planning Board Task Force report on the Livelihood Security of Fishing Communities.

The important thing to note is that there is no shortage of good and proper ideas. What we lack is the popular support to get these ideas implemented. But first let me correct some wrong idea and concepts which have to be removed before we can move into the future. The idea that creating investments will always lead to development is not always correct. In Kerala's fishery sector today we need to REMOVE investment and not add to it. We have reached the stage where adding more fishing equipment -- boats, engines and nets etc -- will create more problems and make the existing situation worse. What we require is a better distribution of these assets. The idea that we should always catch more and more fish is wrong. We also should NOT CATCH more fish in the coastal areas of Kerala. What we need is to adopt the methods for improving the quality of what is already caught in the coastal areas and for fishermen to get a better price for that fish. Fishworkers should move to the fishing zone just beyond the coastal waters. There is also

collective bargaining agreement between a fish price regulation board and the representative of the fish buyers. Wide publicity should be given for these prices. The knowledge of these prices will help both fishworkers and fish consumers from being exploited by fish buyers and fish sellers. We should not be misunderstood this as a provision where each fishworker can set the price which he pleases. Obviously no one will buy fish from such a person. This act can be implemented ONLY through the organisations of the fishworkers. If we have an Act like this, then fishworkers organisations like Matsyafed, and other fishworkers groups, can begin to function effectively.

3. Greater Social Control Over Export

Uncontrolled export-orientation can yield quick money as we have seen in Kerala's fisheries sector. However this wealth normally gets concentrated in the hands of a few. Fishermen also certainly benefit because they get higher prices for the exportable species which they harvest. However, in a context where anyone could enter into fisheries, this craze for export is the main reason for the excessive investment in fish harvesting (boats, harbours etc) and fish processing (freezing units etc) in Kerala. This excessive investment puts pressure on the natural resource and it is degraded quickly. Export-oriented fishing operations should not affect the marine ecosystem. Fish exports cannot be at the expense of fish supplies to domestic fish consumers. We need to decide what species to export and how much we should export. We also must decide what technology to use to harvest and process the exportable fish. These decisions need to be taken collectively. The state, the fishworkers, the domestic fish consumers and the fish entrepreneurs must have a role in taking these decisions. Only such a measure will ensure that we earn the maximum foreign exchange with the minimum ecological and economic costs.

COMMUNITY RIGHTS OVER THE COASTAL SEA AND THE LAND

The coastal sea should be deemed the property of the community of fishworkers. Who will constitute this community? It should be the workers and owner-workers who have the rights to work and own fishing assets (defined above) along with their immediate families that form this community. They should then accept the rights and the responsibilities for the management of the coastal sea ecosystem and ensure the sustainability of the living resources therein. In practical terms we should have village and district panchayat level fishery management and development councils which will plan the level and nature of investment to be made in the sea. These councils should also take decisions on how the produce from the sea should be handled once it comes on land. There needs to be a strong networking among the councils at the district panchayats and the state levels. These councils should be chaired by the panchayat president and should have representatives from the fishworkers and their organisations (trade unions, mahila samajams, cooperatives); the licensed fish buyers; the licensed fish processors/exporters; the representatives of the Fishworkers Welfare Board; the Matsyafed; the Department of Fisheries; and few representatives from civil society (voluntary organisations etc) and the scientific (physical and social) community.

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women, skills to take up home-based employment or to find employment in the service sector of the economy would be appropriate. However, for the more educated and talented children opportunities to branch out into other professional and service sector occupations should be encouraged. Priority for all this should be to children whose parents are presently involved in fishing and related activities. The main long term objective of such skill-oriented employment programmes should be to get as many people as possible out of the fish harvesting activity in the next two decades. ~~By~~ this time we should be able to REDUCE the number of persons fishing at sea to 100,000.

ORGANISED CREDIT FOR THE FISHERY SECTOR

Credit at reasonable rates of interest is the only input in the fisheries sector which is not in excess of the requirements. Even if all the changes mentioned above are implemented, availability of credit and an avenue for safe savings of surplus will be an important factor to ensure that the fishery sector becomes financially viable. The time is ripe for a fishery bank in Kerala. A financial institution which is linked to all the above mentioned measures will be a great help. Our policy makers and the traditional bankers have not recognised the potentials or the importance of the special financial needs of the fishery sector. A network of coastal branches of a fisheries bank which understands fisheries and fishworkers' needs will contribute substantially to a viable financial future for the sector.

MAKING THE FUTURE

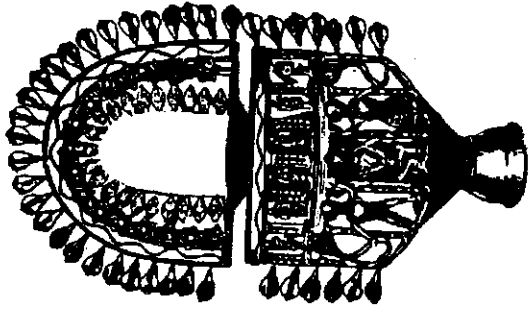
The future is ahead of us. But it does not come to us. We go into it. It is our determination which can show us the way in to the future. We have a role in steering the social processes which contribute to moving us into the future. The main responsibility for this in the fisheries sector fall with the mass organisations in the sector. Only the awareness and the initiative of the fishworkers as a class can ensure that the future will be to the benefit of those who labour at sea and on land. This struggle must be supported by sections of civil society who share the vision of a society which is more egalitarian and sustainable than the one we have at present. Taking a collective commitment to work towards this goal is one good way to celebrate World Fishworkers Day.

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Ulloor
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 011

ANNEXURE - F

Reports from Media (Main papers)

- Malayala Manorama
- Mathrubhoomi
- Indian Express



ഒരു പുതിയ സഖ്യം സ്വപ്നങ്ങൾ പ്രതീക്ഷകൾ



THE COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION



ഓം സത്യം ജിതേന്ദ്രിയം ഭയം ഓം സത്യം ജിതേന്ദ്രിയം ഭയം

പുതിയ സഖ്യത്തിലെ പൗരനുമുഹൂർത്തം

ആർ, അരോക്കൈ?

സാംസ്കാരിക വിനിമയം, പരിശീലനം, നൈപുണ്യവികസനം വിവരവ്യാപനം എന്നിവയിലൂടെ കോമൺവെൽത്ത് രാഷ്ട്രങ്ങളുടെ കൂട്ടായ്മയും ജനങ്ങളുടെ പരസ്പരധാരണയും വളർത്തുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി രൂപീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ള ഔദ്യോഗിക അന്താരാഷ്ട്ര സംഘടനയായ കോമൺവെൽത്ത് ഫൗണ്ടേഷൻ ഒരു പുതിയ പൗരസമൂഹസൃഷ്ടിക്കായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. CIVICUS എന്ന അന്താരാഷ്ട്ര സന്നദ്ധസംഘടനയുമായി സഹകരിച്ചാണ് ഈ പഠനം നടത്തുന്നത്.

സർക്കാരിതര സംഘടനകളും പ്രൊഫഷണൽ സംഘടനകളും വഴി നടപ്പാക്കുന്ന സാമൂഹിക പുനർനിർമ്മാണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെ ദിശയും ഗതിയും നിർണയിക്കുന്ന സുപ്രധാന പഠനമാണിത്.

കോമൺവെൽത്ത് അംഗരാഷ്ട്രമായ ഇന്ത്യയിൽ ഈ പഠനത്തിന് നേതൃത്വം നൽകുന്നത് ദില്ലി ആസ്ഥാനമാക്കി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന പാർട്ടിസിപ്പേറ്ററി റിസർച്ച് ഇൻ ഏഷ്യ (PRIA) എന്ന സംഘടനയാണ്. അതിന്റെ ഡയറക്ടർ ഡോ. രാജേഷ് ടാൻഡനാണ് അന്താരാഷ്ട്ര പഠനത്തിന്റെ സംഘാടകനും. കേരളത്തിൽ ഇതിന് നേതൃത്വം നൽകുന്നത് തിരുവനന്തപുരം കേന്ദ്രമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന 'സഹായി' എന്ന സംഘടനയാണ്.

- International : Commonwealth Foundation / CIVICUS
- National : Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)
- Kerala : SAHAY-Centre for Collective Learning and Action

SAHAY Centre for Collective Learning and Action

Address: Thegannur, P.O. 695 105, P. M. No. 636641, Trivandrum

Published by : G. Placid, Director, SAHAY. Design : Ajith Vemiyoor

ർത്തപ്പെടു
ാഗങ്ങളുടെ
ംഭംഗത്തിൽ
ന് നേതൃത്വ
തിഫലിപ്പി
നതാക്കൾ,
കർ, നിത്യ
നാനാത്വ
രഖരിക്കും.

ുന്ന മൂന്നാ
ം തുടർന്ന്
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ും ചെയ്യും.
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പു ലക്ഷ്യം.

