

An Education Programme For Coastal Environment & Natural Resource Management

Report on Activities (April – September 2006)

Introduction: The activities in the period comprised of mainly – A. Workshops / Symposia / Interfaces organized with the participation of the fisher folk from different areas of West Bengal, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh; and B. Preparation of Resource Materials for presentation.

A. WORKSHOPS/SYMPOSIA/INTERFACES:

Six (6) programmes were organized in this period for the fisher folk of West Bengal, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. These were : -

- I. A two days' residential workshop with the representatives of coastal and estuarine fishermen in West Bengal on **Environmental & Livelihood Concerns Of Coastal Fishing** organized in collaboration with National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) at Seva Kendra, Kolkata on 13th & 14th May 2006.
- II. A one-day interface with the local fishermen on **Ecology and Fishermen's Livelihood in Sundarban** organized in collaboration with Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) at Jharkhali High School, in Sundarban, South 24-Parganas on 8th July 2006.
- III. A one-day symposium with the local fishermen on **Conservation and Livelihood – Emergent Issues in Sundarban** was organized in collaboration with Sundarban Matsajibi Jautha Sangram Committee at the auditorium of the Non-conventional Energy Centre at Gosava on 9th July 2006.
- IV. A one-day interface with local intelligentsia on **Traditional Marine Fishing – Problems and Prospects** organized in collaboration with Kanthi Mahakuma Khati Matsajibi Samity at Kalindi Higher Secondary School on 13th August 2006.
- V. A one-day workshop with local fishermen and village people on **Rights & Responsibilities of Fisherpeople** organized in collaboration with Baguran Jalpai Khati Matsajibi Samity at Baguran Jalpai Primary School on 15th August 2006.
- VI. A three days' **Inter-State Workshop & Training Programme** with representatives of fisher peoples' organizations of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal organized in collaboration with National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) at Punya Lakshmi campus in Diamond Harbour from 22nd to 24th September 2006.

B. PREPARATION OF RESOURCE MATERIALS:

Four (4) resource materials have been prepared in the period : -

- I. A Power Point presentation (English – to be transcribed in Bengali, Orya and Telegu) on **Coastal Ecology and Fishing**.
- II. A Transparency Sheet (OHP) presentation (Bengali) on **Coastal Environmental Pollution and Degradation – What and Why?**

- III. A Transparency Sheet (OHP) presentation (Bengali) on **Sundarban – Crises of Environment, Bio-Diversity and Livelihood.**
- IV. A Transparency Sheet (OHP) presentation (Bengali) on **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.**

Detailed Reports:

A. Workshops / Symposia / Interfaces:

I. Workshop on Environmental & Livelihood Concerns of Coastal Fishing – This workshop was organized in view of the long standing demand of the organizations of coastal and estuarine fisher people of West Bengal to arrange for detailed and in depth discussions on some important issues affecting their lives and livelihood.

***Workshop Title:* Environmental & Livelihood Concerns of Coastal Fishing.**

Date: 13-14 May 2006.

Venue: Seva Kendra, Kolkata.

Number of participants: 30. [22 participants from the far-flung coastal fishing villages of both the maritime districts of West Bengal (South 24- Parganas and Midnapore East; 5 resource persons; 3 assistants).

Topics Taken Up:

- a) Coastal & marine pollution – nature, origin, effects & remedies.
- b) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- c) Sharing of the participants on status of their coastal environment and resources.
- d) Fishers as Custodians of the Sea and the Coast – Rights and Responsibilities.
- e) Right to Food (livelihood) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- f) Community Initiative to Secure Right to Health
- g) Organizing the unorganized – tools, technique and strategy of unionization
- h) Group works
- i) Evaluation of the workshop & planning for strengthening fisher people's organizations in the coastal zone.

Resource Persons:

- a) Mr. Harekrishna Debnath, Chairperson NFF
- b) Prof. Shuvendu Dasgupta, Centre for South-East Asian Studies, Calcutta University
- c) Mr. Phani Bhattacharjee, President - Shramajibi Hospital, Howrah.
- d) Mr. Sasanka Deb, Secretary – DISHA.
- e) Mr. Pradip Chatterjee, Chief Coordinator – DISHA.

Major issues that transpired during the workshop by way of sharing and group works of the participants:

A. There is a serious depletion of fish resources in the sea.

- i. Destructive fishing (particularly bottom trawling), collection of wild prawn seeds by mosquito nets and pollution are the major reasons for depletion of marine resources.
- ii. Industrial waste, municipal sewage, agricultural run-off, tourist centers, industrial aquaculture and harbours are main pollutants of the sea.
- iii. Depletion of resources compels traditional fishers to put extra efforts that prompts over-fishing, use of finer mesh nets, juvenile catch etc. and ultimately contributes to depletion.

B. Fishing community is facing serious threat of displacement:

- i. All most all of the traditional fish landing centers and coastal fishing villages do not have any land right or title.
- ii. Coastal fishing villages and landing centers are facing displacement and eviction due to proliferation of tourism/hotel industry, creation of Export Promotion Zones (EPZ) and Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in the coastal area, shifting of highly polluting industries and large-scale privatization of the coastal common areas.
- iii. There is a wholesale occupational displacement of fishermen due to Marine protected area, Reserve Forest, National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary – particularly in Sundarban area due to several sanctuaries, Tiger reserve, National Park and Biosphere Reserve.

C. Most affected stretches of the West Bengal coast:

- i. Digha (East Midnapore) – Tourism and civic waste.
- ii. Shankarpur (East Midnapore) – Tourism, Harbour, Aquaculture, erosion.
- iii. Jaldha , Mandarbani, Dadanpatrabar (East Midnapore) – siltation, tourism, erosion, large aquaculture projects.
- iv. Saula to Junput (East Midnapur) - Proposed Nuclear Power plant at Haripur.
- v. Gopalpur to Bankiput (East Midnapore) – Serious sea erosion.
- vi. Daha Sonamui to Nandigram (Two coastal blocks of East Midnapore) – SEZ covering 250 Square KM, pollution from Haldia Petrochemicals and IOC refinery.
- vii. Sagar Island (South 24-Pargs.) – Upcoming deep-sea port (FDI).
- viii. Kulpi (South 24-Pargs.) – Proposed Riverine Port, SEZ and proposed Ship Breaking Yard.
- ix. Frazergunj, Bak khali (South 24-Pargs.) – Tourism and Aquaculture.
- x. Sundarban region (South 24-Pargs.) - Aquaculture, Tourism, Tiger reserve, sanctuary, Biosphere reserve etc.
- xi. Jambudwip, Haribhanga Island (South 24-Pargs.) and Kadirabad Chawk (East Midnapore) – total eviction of fisher folk by forest department.

D. Necessity to Access Social Security Schemes by Fishing Community :

The fishing community should be aware of the existing social security schemes like Annapurna and Antodaya Jajona, NREGA etc. and there should be organized efforts to access these schemes.

E. Necessity to Take Community Based Health Initiatives :

The fishing community should strive to build and protect their health by their own community initiatives – this is both necessary and possible. The Shramajibi Swasthya Prakalpa stands not only as an example but also a practical guide to action.

Evaluation of the workshop:

The participants highly rated the workshop in terms of selection of topics/issues, methodology and presentation of inputs. They felt that this exercise was very useful in identifying, understanding and flagging various burning issues in a focused manner. It helped them to develop a broader perspective of the environmental and livelihood issues of the coastal zone.

Some suggestions for enhancing the effectivity of the workshop were –

- i. Preparation of Bengali version of the Power Point Presentation on Coastal Ecology and Fishing.
- ii. Preparation and distribution of brief notes on each of the topics covered.
- iii. Arrange more time for the workshop
- iv. Holding of at least one such workshop in a year
- v. Taking effective measures by the fisherpeople's organizations to implement policies discussed and developed through the workshop.

Recommendations of the workshop:

- a. Preparation of Bengali version of the Power Point Presentation on Coastal Ecology and Fishing.
- b. Preparation and distribution of brief notes on each of the topics covered.
- c. Arrange more time for the workshop.
- d. Similar workshop and seminars should be organized in the coastal area for sensitizing the Fishing community about the impending threats to their livelihood and for more intimate linking up with the real conditions at ground level so as to arrive at clearer guide to action.
- e. Fishworkers' Unions/organisations should be strengthened and consolidated in all coastal fishing villages to assert their traditional and customary rights and responsibilities as **CUSTODIAN** of the sea and the coast.
- f. There should be sustained struggle to retain and protect the grip of the traditional fishing community over the coastal zone against all violation, encroachment and pollution.
- g. There should be proactive role of the union towards establishment of a sustainable and responsible fisheries management regime with the community at the nucleus. Traditional self-regulatory fisheries practices need to be re-

established together with implementation of various statutory management measures.

II. Interface on Ecology and Fishermen's Livelihood in Sundarban - DISHA and Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) organized one-day seminar jointly at Jharkhali High School, in Sundarban, South 24-Parganas on 8th July 2006. The theme of the seminar was 'Ecology and livelihood in Sundarban'. Jharkhali is the most densely populated fishing village in the Sundarban. There are about 3000 active fishermen in and around Jharkhali who operate about 400 traditional country boats for making a living. Apart from actual fishing there are about 1500 other fish workers engaged in ancillary works relating to pre-harvest and post harvest land-based activities. They use traditional fishing gears and tackles and do the fishing in rivers and canals of Sundarban through generations. This is the only livelihood option to almost all of them. It is worth mentioning that there is not a single trawler or other type of mechanized boat in this place. It is also pertinent to mention here that since the establishment of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve (STR) the number of traditional country boats has been frozen at 960 (said to be the number of boats operating in 1973 in the area brought under STR) for which the Tiger Reserve authority issued boat license certificate (BLC) to be renewed every year prior to the beginning of the fishing season. There cannot be any addition to this number of boats – only replacement of old boat by a new one of the same types is permissible. The entire Sundarban is a reserve forest. Moreover there are the Tiger reserve, Crocodile reserve, Bird sanctuary, National Park, Biosphere reserve and various other conservation projects in Sundarban. Fishing or any other activity is prohibited in the core area of the ever-expanding Tiger Project and National park jurisdiction. All boats operating/plying through any part of Sundarban shall have a registration with a boat License Certificate (BLC) from the Forest Department. Total number of boats having Forest BLC is about 5000. Entrance into the Sundarban Tiger Reserve area is prohibited for all but 960 boats with Sundarban Tiger Reserve BLC. These boats (out of 960 only 600 are in operation) are permitted to operate in the buffer zone of the Tiger project after obtaining compulsory fishing pass, on payment of prescribed fees, prior to every fishing trip. Innocent passage for fishing boats through the restricted area is theoretically allowed.

Interface Title: Ecology and Fishermen's Livelihood in Sundarban.

Date: 8 July 2006.

Venue: Jharkhali Uchha Madhyamik Vidyalay, Jharkhali.

Number of participants: 153. [Apart from 5 resource persons, 2 assistants and 6 volunteers all the participants were fisher people].

Materials used: Overhead projector, Charts, Posters and Bengali copies of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act etc.

Duration of the seminar: 10 AM to 5PM with lunch and tea break.

Input session:

Shri Harekrishna Debnath in his opening remarks outlined the general fisheries scenario of the state with reference to declining trends in the overall marine fish landings in the country. West Bengal, as an exception among the maritime states, has been showing steady increase in marine sea production. He attributed this to the providential existence of the Sundarban mangrove forest in the state. He emphasized that the fishing community as traditional custodians of the coastal zone should assert their right to protect and nurture this gift of nature, with all its flora and fauna, against all odds and at all times to ensure mutual sustenance by community controlled judicious and sustainable use of the resources.

Shri Shyamal Mondal narrated the plight of the fishermen in the Sundarban due to depletion of fish stocks for various detrimental activities like intensive aquaculture, wild shrimp seed collection by mosquito nets, dumping of industrial and civic waste in the rivers, encroachment of rivers, canals and creeks for aquaculture, excessive use of pesticides and chemicals in agriculture, siltation of many rivers due to bunding in the upstream and resultant shrinking of available fishing space in the region. The situation has further complicated and the sufferings of the fishers aggravated to the extreme due to imposition of total ban on fishing in about two thirds of the available fishing grounds of Sundarban being marked as core area of the Tiger Project. The whimsical and arbitrary nature of the tiger project officials in dealing with the fishers has made their lives miserable even in the buffer zone, he maintained.

Shri Pradip Chatterjee, in his presentation, analyzed the genesis of the crunch of fish resources, threat to wildlife and forests mostly due to activities and interventions from sources beyond the Sundarban. With the help of different charts, posters and other documents he narrated his observations to the participants. He maintained that the fisher people are suffering for faults of others. He highlighted the hollowness of any conservation approach minus genuine consent and active participation of local communities. Present conflicts between conservation and livelihood in the Sundarban are the outcome of ill conceived and misplaced notions of conservationist extremism, he opined. It is high time that the nation takes a look at the whole approach and makes appropriate correction in this regard. Local communities have the responsibility to raise this demand relentlessly to bring about the desired changes.

Shri Sasanka Dev dealt with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005. He narrated the procedure for registration of claim through the Panchayat to avail benefit of this Act. There is no restriction like BPL, APL, skill, gender etc. for the applicants. There must not be any discrimination against women in the allotment of work and fixation of wages and other benefits. Wages will be on par with the minimum wages for the agriculture workers in the state. In case of Government's inability to give work within stipulated time, the intending and enlisted workers will be provided 50% to 100% wages stage by stage to account for equivalent of 100 days' work per family in a given financial year. He made it very clear that every able bodied person in the country (except the municipal areas) now has a 'right' to ask for work under NREGA according to her/his

skill and capacity. This is not just a scheme of any government but it is now a justiceable right.

Sharing of the participants:

In the post lunch sharing session, twelve participants gave testimonies and narrated frequent incidents of torture and humiliation meted out to them by the STR personnel while fishing with proper pass and permit. Many of them have been fined heavy amounts arbitrarily and in some cases their nets and other fishing implements have been confiscated. The charges against fishermen written on their permits on spot by forest officials are made in English leaving no scope for the fishermen to read those. In some cases the BLCs have been impounded. Fishermen are being labeled with false allegations of poaching and vandalizing the forests whereas it is a common knowledge that there are very strong rackets active in Sundarban having nexus with powerful quarters – they said. The STR or Forest Department have hardly shown any agility against the real culprits – they felt. It transpired from the sharing of the participants that the Reserve Forest and protected area management regime in the Sundarban have failed miserably to enable participation of the local people in conservation initiatives and in stead alienated them almost to the extent of hostility. Sri Gobinda Das, Anil Mondal, Madhab Das, and Niranjan Adhikary lead the sharing session and all the participants had the same opinion. Participants expressed their astonishment and anguish over virtual absence of the fisheries department from the affairs of capture fisheries in Sundarban.

Apart from the atrocities of the STR, the fishermen are suffering from the perennial menace of armed piracy in the fishing grounds of Sundarban forest. There are numerous instances of kidnapping of fishermen and/or hijacking of fishing boats and personnel by pirates only to be released after paying heavy ransom. This has inflicted serious scare among the whole fishing community of Sundarban. Government's assurance of enhancing security measures in the region remained hollow as ever.

South 24- Parganas district is one of the ten administrative districts in West Bengal where NREGA is implemented in 2006. All the participants were very vocal against the irregularities and secretive nature of operation of the Panchayats vis-à-vis implementation of NREGA. It was a shocking disclosure to know that the applicants for NREGA were not even given any receipt for their application – let alone JOB CARD! There was not even one person among the participants who knew any body getting work under NREGA. It remains a matter of inquiry what is really happening with the NREGA and how the money is spent in the Sundarban region. They were equally critical about the Joint Forest Management Schemes and Community Forest Management Programmes of the forest department.

Observations of the interface:

1. Traditional and customary right of the fishing community over the natural resources is unalienable. There is a genuine need for proper management measures for sustenance of the resources as well as that of the community dependant on them. As the custodians of the coastal resources fishing community must be brought at the center of any management regime in the Sundarban.

2. Plight of the Sundarban fisher folk should be made known to the rest of the society. Fishing community needs to seek collaboration of like-minded NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, and individuals for effective dissemination of information regarding the hollowness of coercive conservation approach and for assertion of their right to life and livelihood synchronized with the protection of nature and its resources through participatory management regime.
3. A Fact Finding Mission needs to be organized with prominent Human Rights, Environmental and Social Activists to document the tortures and harassments perpetrated on fisher people by the Forest Officials.
4. A Public Hearing needs to be organized with prominent Judicial, Human Rights, Environmental and Social personalities to make the authorities answer to the people's charges and assess the extent of malpractices and abuses.
5. Similar seminar should be organized in different parts of Sundarban to reassure the fishing community of its traditional rights and to remind the associated obligations.
6. After a series of seminars at different parts of Sundarban, there should be a convention at an appropriate location to work out a plan of action for the Sundarban fisheries.
7. State Fisheries Department needs to be sensitized to take a proactive role about the well being of the fisher folk and the fisheries sector of Sundarban – which is their bounded duty.
8. Fishing community organisations need to be strengthened to steer the struggle to re-establish the community at the apex of Sundarban affairs.
9. Community as a whole and the fishers organisations in particular need to be vigilant about the working of the NREGA and various other schemes and programme of the Government to eliminate and abort probable malpractices.

Evaluation of the interface:

1. Participants of the seminar expressed their pleasure and delight to find scope of ventilating their plights and grievances in a formal manner in the seminar. They appreciated this initiative of Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) and DISHA and desired to have this opportunity of learning and thinking together more and more. They observed that they remain deprived of many opportunities due to lack of information and knowledge about the matter. The NREGA was a case in point. They felt that duration of the seminar should have been two days for more detailed treatment of the issues.

The seminar was chaired and steered by the veteran community leader Shri Sudhansu Patra.

III. Symposium on Conservation and Livelihood – Emergent Issues in Sundarban - was organized at the auditorium of the Non –conventional Energy Centre at Gosava on 9th July 2006.

Gosava is the head quarter of the largest administrative block (Mandal) in the Sundarban. It is also the most important junction and trade center in the forest area. Traditionally Gosava had been one of the major fish landing centers in the Sundarban region. With gradual shrinking of fishing grounds and depletion of fish resources Gosava lost its earlier glory of a bubbling fishing center. Once vibrant fishing community around Gosava is

faced with serious decay and desperation with the advent of STR and various other Protected areas including National Park, Bird Sanctuary etc. About 300 fishing boats are still operating with the fishers struggling to find a living in the boiling cauldron of STR.

Date: 9 July 2006.

Venue: Non-Conventional Energy Centre at Gosava.

Number of participants: 71. Comprising of the local fishermen and women, Panchayat members and community organizers.

Materials used: Overhead projector, Charts, Posters and Bengali copies of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act etc.

Duration: 9.00 AM – 2.00 PM.

Resource Persons: Harekrishna Debnath, Pradip Chatterjee, Sasanka Dev.

Speakers from the community: Shyamal Mandal, Gobinda Das, Sudhansu Patra, Sudhir Biswas and Anukul Chandra Das.

Proceedings:

Sri Harekrishna Debnath gave a brief introduction of the symposium and emphasized the need for giving more time to the local participants for sharing of their experiences and observations regarding the conservation and livelihood options in Sundarban.

Shri Pradip Chatterjee in his presentation highlighted the major causes of depletion of fish resources and shrinking of the fishing grounds and degradation of mangroves and wildlife of Sundarban. It became very clear from his presentation of facts and figures that almost all of the causes were external and the fishing community was no way responsible for those. It is unfortunate that in the name of conservation they are made to pay heavily for no fault of their own. He requested the participants to reflect on the idea of – (a) Developing and strengthening a traditional fisher people's organization in the Sunderbans cutting across the folds of the political parties; (b) Organising a fact finding mission to document the harassments of Fisher folk by forest officials; (c) Organising a public hearing to frame people's charges against the forest officials and make the authorities answerable.

Sri Sasanka Dev drew attention of the participants to the salient features of the NREGA and impressed upon the participants about the potential of this legislation towards empowerment of the unorganized sector workers like fish workers. He requested the fishermen to avail the benefits of this Act to supplement their income during the lean months.

Shri Shyamal Mandal, Gobinda Das, Sudhir Biswas, Anukul Das and some other participants spoke about the excesses and atrocities of the STR personnel and Forest Officials. They brought the fact to the attention of the symposium that there is growing tendency among the large section of non-STR boats to enter into the STR area which is creating tension among the fishers and also providing a convenient handle to the STR for penalizing the fishers en-masse. Most of the reflections and sharing were the same as voiced by the participants of Jharkhali seminar.

Observations:

- There is a serious concern among the fisher folk of this region about the security of their livelihood but they have no clue to tackle it.
- There is a strong urge for united action for a lasting solution of their present plight.
- They have lost faith on political parties on whom they had a huge expectation of fair deal for their betterment but got sheer indifference and neglect.
- Serious tension is mounting in Sundarban surrounding the limited livelihood options and various ill-conceived management regimes.

Inference:

- More such exercises are required for sharpening of the understanding of the issues and expanding the knowledge base of the fishing community of Sundarban.
- Strengthening of the fishing community organisations and unions is urgently needed for representing the demands and aspirations of the community politically but cutting across the folds of the political parties.
- Strong support from the NGOs & CBOs is needed for articulation and circulation of the issues pertaining to the well being of Sundarban and its inhabitants – particularly the fisher folk.

Sri Sudhir Das, leader of the fishing community and member of Panchayat, presided over the symposium.

IV. An interface with local intelligentsia on Traditional Marine Fishing – Problems and Prospects organized in collaboration with Kanthi Mahakuma Khati Matsajibi Samity at Kalindi Higher Secondary School. The objective of this interface was to sensitise the local intelligentsia to the problems and needs of coastal and marine fishing and conservation.

Interface Title: Traditional Marine Fishing – Problems and Prospects.

Date: 13th August 2006.

Venue: Kalindi Higher Secondary School, Contai.

Number of participants: 28. [20 participants from the local teaching community and service holders, 5 from the fishing community, 3 resource persons).

Topics Taken Up:

- i. Coastal & marine fishing – What NFF Stands For.
- ii. Encroachment, Pollution and Unsustainable Fishing Practices
- iii. Sharing of the participants on Issues Discussed

Duration: 9.00 AM – 4.00 PM.

Resource Persons: Harekrishna Debnath, Pradip Chatterjee, Sasanka Dev.

In the beginning Sri Harekrishna Debnath introduced the participants to the problems faced by the coastal and marine fishing sector and NFF's stand in support of the traditional fisher people. He briefly touched upon the main problems of governance and regulations in view of

the depleting fisheries and unsustainable fishing practices. He emphasized the conservationist approach of traditional fishing.

Sri Pradip Chatterjee discussed the problems of encroachments and pollution and the need of the civil society to play a proactive role in these matters.

Sri Sasanka Dev conducted the sharing session, which had an enthusiastic participation from those present in the interface. The participants emphasized the need of holding such sessions in other adjacent localities and of involving the students as well. Some of them proposed to organize such programmes in future.

V. A workshop on Rights & Responsibilities of Fisher People organized in collaboration with Baguran Jalpai Khati Matsajibi Samity at Baguran Jalpai Primary School.

Workshop Title: Traditional Marine Fishing – Problems and Prospects.

Date: 15th August 2006.

Venue: Kalindi Higher Secondary School, Contai.

Number of participants: 45. [30 participants from the local fishing community, 5 from teaching and other professions, 5 organisers, 3 resource persons, 2 cultural performers).

Topics Taken Up:

- i.** Pollution affecting the coastal fisheries
- ii.** Unsustainable Fishing Practices
- iii.** Traditional Fisher People as Custodians of Coastal Waters
- iv.** Importance of Non-Party Organisation
- v.** Sharing of the participants on Issues Discussed

Duration: 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM.

Resource Persons: Harekrishna Debnath, Pradip Chatterjee, Sasanka Dev.

Cultural Performer: Kallol Dasgupta.

Sri Birendranath Samal, President, Kanthi Mahakuma Khati Matsajibi Samity welcomed the participants and introduced the resource persons.

Sri Pradip Chatterjee discussed in brief the pollution effects on coastal fisheries emphasizing the need of surveillance and proactive role on the part of the fisher people.

Sri Harekrishna Debnath dwelt on the evolution of NFF to stress the role to be played by the traditional fisher folk as custodians of coastal waters. He emphasized that without major involvement of this community the conservation measures will not be successful.

Sri Sasanka Dev described the history of tread unionism in India, its division by party lines and the eventual weakening. He highlighted the ways and means to develop and strengthen the unions cutting across the political party folds.

Sri Shuvendu Adhikary, the local MLA, attended the meeting and stressed its importance.

The participants were very enthusiastic to hold such workshops in other fish landing stations of the area.

Sri Kallol Dasgupta enthralled everybody with his melodies of rural songs.

VI. NFF – DISHA inter state workshop & training programme

NFF and DISHA jointly organized three days' workshop and training camp for selected leaders of the East Coast States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal at Punya Lakshmi campus in Diamond Harbour. The purpose of the workshop and training was to sensitise the leaders of the fisher people on important issues like change of CRZ, coastal aquaculture, from 22nd to 24th September 2006.

Consistency of the participants:

a. Samudratheera Matsya Karmikula Union, Andhra Pradesh	-----	5
b. Traditional Fishworkers' Union, Vizag, Andhra Pradesh	-----	2
c. Orissa Traditional Fish Workers' Union, Orissa.	-----	2
d. Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum, West Bengal.	-----	9
e. DISHA, NFF and Resource Persons	-----	5
Total	24

Participants arrived on 21st September and departed on 25th September 2006.

Objective of the camp:

1. To sharpen awareness of the state level leaders about the following contemporary issues affecting the fishing community and coastal zone:
 - a. *Proposed Coastal Management Zone: Swaminathan Committee Recommendations and its probable implications.*
 - b. *Aquaculture Authority Act 2005 & Guidelines for aquaculture.*
 - c. *Special Economic Zone in the coastal area.*
 - d. *Marine Protected Area*
2. To equip the participants with the know-how of survey of the coastal fishing villages through point-by-point explanation of the survey questionnaire prepared by NFF.
3. To reinforce the focus on the need for militant trade union activity in the fisheries sector.

Methodology: Participatory and interactive.

Language: English and Hindi with simultaneous translation into state languages of the participants.

Resource persons: Harekrishna Debnath, Pradip Chatterjee, Sasanka Dev.

Materials used: Overhead projector, Copies of Aquaculture Authority Act –2005, Guidelines for coastal aquaculture, List of Marine protected Areas in India, List of Special Economic

Zones in India (approved and approved in principle), Guidelines and incentives for setting up of SEZ, Coastal Survey Questionnaire (translated in state languages), documentary films etc.

Programme: There were four learning sessions, one recapitulation and one entertainment session each day.

Learning session – I : 9.00AM – 11.00AM
Tea Break : 11.00AM – 11.30AM
Learning session – II : 11.30AM – 1.30 PM
Lunch Break : 1.30PM – 2.30PM
Learning session – III : 2.30PM – 4.00PM
Tea Break : 4.00PM – 4.30PM
Learning session – IV : 4.30PM - 5.30PM
L E I S U R E : 5.30PM – 6.30PM
Recap of day's lesson : 6.30PM - 7.30PM
Documentary Film : 7.30PM – 8.30PM.
DINNER : 8.30 PM

On the first day, Sri Harekrishna Debnath gave inputs on the Swaminatham Committee Recommendations and the probable impact on the coastal zone and the fishing community. There was an effort to study the differences of approach between the CRZ notification of 1991 and the proposed CMZ dispensations. The shift of thrust from ‘Regulation’ to ‘Management’ speaks a lot. Further, the measures recommended by the Swaminathan Committee clearly aims at diluting the restrictions on encroachment and intervention contained in the CRZ notification 1991. It expresses ‘need’ for accommodation of “development” activities including setting up of Special Economic Zones (SEZ), tourism industry etc. in the coastal area. Redefining the coastal zone by extending the seaward limit up to territorial waters (12 Nautical Miles) and the landward limit up to the landward limit of the local Panchayat is a move virtually to bring the whole area under the control of the MoEF. This will facilitate more and more influx of the big companies, corporate and well off intruders in the coastal zone. The fragile ecosystem of the coastal zone will undergo serious stress and security of habitats and livelihood of the fishing community will be in peril.

Sri Pradip Chatterjee dealt with the Aquaculture Authority Act 2005, its rules and Guidelines for Aquaculture in details. The Act did not only nullify and override the Supreme Court Judgment of 12th December 1996 but also took aquaculture out of the purview of the CRZ notification. Also it acquitted all the polluting aquaculture farms punished by the apex court. He thoroughly narrated the ‘Guidelines for Aquaculture’ prescribed by the Aquaculture Authority and pointed out the scopes and loopholes of this instrument. He emphasized the need for thorough understanding of these statutes for effective intervention into further violation of the coastal zone by aquaculture farms. Each of the input sessions had a question-answer period for clarification of points/ issues brought up by the participants.

The inputs of the day were summarized and summed up in the recapitulation session.

European Academy Award winning documentary “ Darwin’s Nightmare” was screened.

The second day of the programme was fully dedicated to study, explain and understand the coastal survey questionnaire together with the methodology of conducting the intended

survey. Each and every point of the draft questionnaire was elaborately explained and discussed to find its necessity and relevance for the movement – particularly in the context of the impending threats to the coastal zone. Sri Pradip Chatterjee took the pains of doing the whole exercise bit by bit along with the participants while Harekrishna Debnath came in between for clarification and explanation of some points and issues as and when it was necessary. Each language group had copies of the questionnaire translated into their language. The final questionnaire (annexed here under) is the out come of the day's collective brain storming of the workshop. The participants realized the urgency as well as enormity of the task of conducting this survey.

In the recapitulation session the participating unions felt that the survey work demands pulling of substantial amount of resources – which is always very difficult. This may turn out to be the major constraint for such an important task. They were soliciting advice on possible source of support. But there was no ready answer to their quest. The participating unions/states, after prolonged deliberations, decided to start the survey work through their units in different blocks and villages. As a procedure they planned to conduct similar workshops in their states/unions comprising representatives of each block at district levels and of each village at block levels. From these workshops they would identify volunteers for the survey to work at the block levels under the supervision of the district committee. This process will take some time the participants felt.

A documentary on community initiative for resource management – Thai Dugong Experience – was screened.

On the third and final day there were three input sessions.

Harekrishna Debnath introduced the much-touted Special Economic Zone (SEZ) issue. The concept, the legislation, the guidelines and incentives for setting up SEZ were narrated. It transpired that SEZs are virtually going to be 'foreign land' with in the country. It is as good as selling parts of India to individuals and companies (local or foreign). Coastal zone of the country is going to be the main destination of the intending promoters of SEZ. There is already a stiff competition among the states to attract more and more investment for 'development' and each one is offering concession and indulgence to the prospective investors beyond any intelligible rationale. There is already a mad rush among various entrepreneurs and investors to grab prime costal lands at through away price in the name of setting up SEZ. A grave devastation is looming large on the coastal zone and the fishing community. Invariably many fishing villages and landing centers will be swallowed by SEZs. Huge section of the beach-based fishermen will be wiped out. There is an urgent need to resist this menace with all mites available at the command of the community. This is a do or die situation.

Participants were supplied with a list of approved and proposed SEZ in their respective states. They were also giver background document, guideline and special incentives offered to SEZ by the Government of India.

Sri Sasanka Dev dealt with the history of trade union movement in India. He emphasized the need for unionization of the workers to protect their right to a decent livelihood. This is more relevant for the unorganized sector workers today – particularly in the context of globalization

and privatization of common property resources. Trade Unions should remain independent of political parties. One trade - one union is the ideal option. Sri Dev observed that splintering of the workers in the name of political party affiliation has jeopardized the bargaining capacity of the workers and rendered the unions subservient of the interest of political parties. This type of union does more harm than helping the cause of the workers he maintained. He cited the example of many Independent trade Unions that succeeded in gaining substantial benefits and achieved the distinction of bringing about laudable changes. He named the world renowned “ Solidarity’ of Poland and Indian initiatives like Khsetkari Sangathan, Chattishgarh Mines Majdoor Sangathan, Bharatiya Kisan Union, National Fishworkers’ Forum etc. as examples of successful independent initiative. He reiterated the urgency of militant trade union activities among the fishing community for resisting the onslaught of globalization on the coastal zone and the seas.

He also elaborated the methodology and tools for building vibrant union in the fisheries sector.

In the third and final input session on the third day Sri Harekrishna Debnath and Sri Sasanka Dev jointly treated the issue of protected areas. Sri Dev took the participants to the background story of the Kyoto protocol and genesis of carbon trade. He also elucidated the process of Convention on Bio Diversity (CBD). It was conclusively established that arbitrary and whimsical pronouncement of Protected Areas with out taking the concerned communities into the decision making process has proved utterly failure and even counterproductive. There is an urgent need for revision of the whole policy approach and the fishing community has to work for bringing this change. The participants were supplied with a list of 32 Marine Protected Areas in India.

Evaluation: Participants highly appreciated the choice of issues and method of conduction of the workshop and training programme. They demanded that similar workshop should be organized in each state. They acknowledged the importance of the issues that were treated in the workshop and also expressed scare about the awesome effect that may be inflicted upon the coastal zone and the coastal community. They found three days to be slightly inadequate for in-depth treatment of this curriculum of the workshop – particularly because of the time required for interpretation into regional languages. Looking at the vastness of each issue the programme schedule seemed a bit too heavy to some of the participants.

Darwin’s Nightmare was rated ‘very high’ by the participants. Each group wanted a copy of the film. Traditional Fishworkers’ Union of Andhra Pradesh decided to edit the film with subtitles in their state language for mass screening.