

**AN ABRIDGED ACIVITY REPORT OF KERALA SWATHANTHRA MATSYA THOZHILALY  
FEDARATION (KSMTF) -2004**

Friends,

We are privileged to submit an activity Report of KSMTF for the year 2004 before the General Body Meeting of NFF held in Kolkata in December 2004.

In the outset itself we do pay our homage to the late Sr.P.V.Rose who expired on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2004 in Trivandrum. Sr.P.V.Rose had been a close co\_traveller with KSMTF while she was alive. It is with prayerful memories of Sr.Rose that we present before you the major interventions made by KSMTF in the year 2004

**1. Major Activities**

**Agitation against Foreign Fishing Vessels**

KSMTF took initiative to call upon other existing trade unions in Kerala to jointly discuss upon the Central Government's new moves to issue licence to foreign fishing factory vessels for fishing activities in the Indian sea; and design a protest activity programme against this new attitude of the Centre.

The joint action committee formed in this concern organized a State level mass convention in YMCA Hall in Trivandrum on January 13, 2004. This convention was inaugurated by kerala opposition leader com.V.S.Achudhanantdan.

Mass conventions were organised in this regard in all coastal districts of kerala from January 23-28,2004.

A coastal sectoral 'Bandh' was orgainised on February 3<sup>rd</sup> akined to this issue and all fishermen refrained from fishing on that day. Thousands of fishworkers marched to the Accountant General's office too on this day to register their agony on and protest to this new venture of the Central Govt.

this multi-faceted protest activities paved the way for the costal M.Ps to raise this issue for urgent consideration, favouring the fish workers, at the floor of the parliament.

### **Trawl agitation**

The Govt. of kerala every year makes a customary benning of trawling activities in kerala marine sector just for 45 days only instead of the 90 days- trawl- ban demand raised by the fishworkers. And simultaneously, the Govt. of kerala, was conspiring with the mechanized trawl boat association members to do a way with all sorts of trawl ban this year.ksmtf managed to know of this secret arrangements of the Govt. and boat owners association, and proclaimed that if the Govt. retreats from banning trawling this year and if the trawl boats venture to trawl during the monsoon season, the fishworkers will dare to take in to custody all such trawl boats. This proclamation was announced at press conference timely convened by ksmtf. All ksmtf leaders camped in kollam district and organized fish workers to be prepared for boat-catch even in any adverse situations. The boat owners declared that they will dare into trawling activities. The Govt. was alerted of this aggressive situation and was compelled to ban trawling during this year.

### **Kerosene Issue**

The continuous kerosene quota reduction by central Government as very adversely impacted upon the fishing activities and the fishing communities, even though the Govt of India had promised to avail kerosene quota assistance, sufficient kerosene for fishing at just prize the fishworkers ,it had failed to keep its promise. The traditional fish workers under KSMTF staged a protest dharna on February 16,2004 in front of the Govt secretariat in Trivandrum .

### **Shark fishing issue**

The Central Govt. withdrew its shark fishing ban due to fishermen's Agitation. But still the Karnataka Govt.issued a shark fishing ban in Karnataka .This had very adversely affected hundreds of shark fish workers both in Kerala and Tamilnadu. At this stage Fisheries Action Forum was organized to safe-guard

the livelihood rights of the shark fish workers who engage in shark fishing from Tamilnadu to Gujarat. Under the leadership of Mr.Vincent Jain and T.Peter, submission were placed before the Karnataka, Kerala and Central Govt. to withdraw the Karnataka shark fishing on March 11,2004 a press conference was convened in Mangalore, in the state of Karnataka , to exhort the Govt. once again to withdraw the ban and proclaimed of fish workers organized agitation if the Govt. refuse to oblige . The Karnataka Govt. was compelled to lift the ban due to the continuous interventions of Fisheries Action Forum.

### **Welfare measures related issues**

Fisheries welfare fund Board of Kerala had suddenly 17 out of the existing 21 welfare relief programs of the Fish workers in Kerala . KSMTF immediately intervened protesting against this. Convened “Sathyagraha Struggle”at the secretariat and Govt. district head quarters .T.Peter , P.P.John , John J.P,M.Ambrose, K.V.Rapheal, Rajan Lazer , M.S.Sathyanathan etc had led the struggles. On account of the Fish workers agitation this issue was discussed at the Legislative Assembly and the related welfare schemes were reinstated.

### **Fish import agitation**

The Indian Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh visited Thyland in2004 . To coax the Thyland people and earn cheap popularity he declared that India would import Fish from Thyland . Immediately KSMTF intervened . Alerted the people here about the adverse impacts of the fish import on fishing and the livelihood of Fish workers here in India .Organised a protest dharna before the Secretariat of Govt. of Kerala and registered our anger in the media too.

### **MPEDA march**

An agitation march to the MPEDA(marine products export development authority) office was organized in Ernakulam with the following demands.

Institute a Fisheries Ministry at the Centre.

Ban totally all the licence issued to all foreign fishing vessels in Indian sea.

Raise the number of trawl-ban-days to 90 days in Kerala.

T.Peter inaugurated the agitation march . P.P.John , Fr. Thomas Kochery, K.V Rapheal, Ms.Sanci Jacob , P.V.Pavithran, Ms. Jiji Antony , V.D.Majeendran etc spoke at the agitation march.

### **Red-tide issue**

Sudden events of massive-fish-deaths were observed in kollam and Trivandrum sea coast districts during the month of September 2004. The sea water had a reddish colour and toxic smell. The scientific community in kerala did not have an one-window-opinion over this issue. Self contradicting and fear-emanating opinions were communicated to the public through the media by the scientific community. They scarred the people saying ‘you will die if you eat those diseased and poisoned fishers’ hence people were reluctant and even scarred, to buy and eat fish. This raised a livelihood threat to the fishworkers.

Ksmtf intervened urgently to respond to this issue. Organised a number of action programs to remove the people’s fear and effectively respond to the scientific community the following are relative activities.

Publicly cooked such fisher in front of the secretariat and ate them with cooked tapioca. The policemen some of the daring public to joint fishworkers in eating and enjoying this fish and tapioca meal. All those who ate these didn’t die nor did they have had any health issue. This was factually informed to the people through the media. T.Peter, John .J. P, Anto Elias, Valerian Issac, Elizabeth Antony , Freeska Kurisapan and Sr.Philomin Mary had given the leadership to this programs.

A dharna was organized in front of CMFRI office at Vizhinjam since the Scientist who scarred the people in eating such fishes . Fr Thomas Kochery inaugurated this dharna. T.Peter , John.J.P , A.Badusha had given the leadership to this program.

A public seminar was organized in Trivandrum on Red-Tide issue .Fisheries Minister Mr. Dominic Presentation inaugurated the seminar .Various Scientist

from Scientific Institute, Fisheries Departments, Medical and Health Department, like Dr. A.P.Lipton (CMFRI), Dr.Ashok Kumar(CIFT),D. Sanjeev Ghosh and Raveendran Nair (Fisheries Department),Dr.K.Raj Mohan (Medical College TVPM) Shared their perspective and opinions over this issue.Mr. Julian Teelar, Fr.Thomas Kochery, T.Peter, Anto Elias, john.J.P, Dr. Thomas Varghese ,Vincent Benedict, Freeska Kurishappan and Elizabeth Antony shared their conviction and opinions over the same issue taking sides with livelihood issues of the Fish workers .The seminar revelations were projected to the public through the media with much positive responses from the general public. People restarted the normal fish purchase and its consumption.

### **Pakistan jail –release of Kerala Fish workers**

Five months ago six Kerala Fish workers were enjoined by Pakistan accusing them of their entry into Pakistan Sea border limit. These Fish workers had gone for fishing to Muscat (Sultanate of Oman ). On their way ,their boat engine stopped functioning due to some mechanical problem. With their dead engine they floated over the sea and sea currents and wind flow brought them to the Pakistan water border and forced their entry into the border . The Pakistan Coast Guards arrested and put them into their jail .

The family members of these fish workers placed many petitions before the state and Central Govt. here in India to release their enjoined family members. The Govt did not respond to these petitions . Hence KSMTF took up the issue. A long the family members of the enjoined fish workers federation commenced an agitation of Sathyagraha before the secretariat. This compelled the Govt to positively respond to the issue. The state Govt.agreed to take up the responsibility and financial costs of the jail-release process of these unfortunate fish workers. The state Minister of Fisheries came down to the Sathyagraha shed (Pandal) and conveyed to us the Govt.'s decision. In this background , we withdraw the continuation of Sathyagraha activities. The Govt. process this regard is in progress now.

## **Study and training activities**

A number of programs were undertaken and executed in this regard .Some of them are enlisted below.

### **Media camp**

A media camp was organized for 35 selected members from different districts of Kerala from 2004 June 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> at MJM Centre Mavelikara ,with a view of equipping the participants with media competency and using their media talents for furthering the fish workers cause in future.

Dr.M.J.Joseph , the Chief editor of “Varthamanam” monthly , inaugurated the camp sessions Prof. Vijayan Nair ,R.Radhakrishnan Prof.Madhu Eravankara, Dr.Mathew Erthayil ,Chunakara Janardhanan Nair, Prof. V.C.John ,Sivaraman Cherianad ,Vincent Benedict etc facilitated and lead the training processes.

### **Inland fisheries camp**

An inland fisheries camp with selected 32 participants ,was convened at MJM, Mavelikara in 2004 September 16 -18 .M.Morali MLA inaugurated the camp. Inland fisheries sector analysis was done by D.S.Ghosh. The topic of fish farming and fish workers was dealt by Raveendran Nair .Vincent Benedict took up the subject “Common Water of Fish Resource”. T.Peter and P.P.John lead camp process.

### **Camp for General council members**

During November 5-7 a study camp was organized for General council members of KSMTF . T.Peter inaugurated the camp . The different topics dealt with in the camp were –

New trend in fisheries sector –V. Vivekanandan , SIFFS.

Fisheries sector and information technology –Satheesh Babu ,INAP.

Indian societal analysis –Dr .Varghese George, Marthoma College.

Marine eco system and fish workers-Vincent Benedict,MJM.

Value based organization and activities –Fr. Thomas Kochery,NFF.

Human right issue –Mr.Joseph Bernad ,ISI.

### **2004 Parliament election and fishing community interventions**

Three regional press conferences were convened in Calicut , Ernakulam, Trivandrum highlighting the national fisheries and fish workers issues .

All parliament candidates in Kerala were contacted and lists of political demands of fish workers were submitted to them for serious positive considerations.

Three political candidates from three political fronts were brought together on a common platform in Trivandrum to initiate a public debate over issues related to fisheries and livelihood issues of fish workers. This program was convened with the collaboration of SIFFS, Trivandrum .Mr.Vivekanadan, SIFFS chief executive presented a position paper on the above stated issues. O.Raja Gopal (BJP), V.S. Siva Kumar (Congress) , P.K.Vasudevan Nair (CPI) were the candidates who participated in the open discussion.

### **International Women's day**

International women's day (March 8<sup>th</sup>) had been celebrated by four seminars in three coastal districts of Kerala by the Women's wing of KSMTF.

'Women and self employment' inaugurated by Mrs. Maglin Peter, state committee member, KSMTF in Trivandrum .

'Coastal Health and women' inaugurated by Ms.Lissy Jose, member women's Commission in Trivandrum .

'Women's legislation, inaugurated by Ms.Sheela Antony, member, KSMTF in Kollam.

'Women in fisheries sector' inaugurated by Ms.P.Valsala, the poetess in kozhikode.

## **World Fisheries Day**

November 21, the World fisheries day had been celebrated with more relevance by flag hoisting in every district. A study seminar and rally too were convened at Chirayinkeezhu, TVM, on this day. Sr. Philo Varghese had inaugurated the seminar.

## **Participation in NFF Activities and Concerns**

11 members participated in the General Body meeting of NFF held in Mumbai in January 22-25-2004.

04 members (T. Peter, Tom, Sr. Philomin Mary, Vincent Benadict) of KSMTF had actively participated in the 2day national consultation program arranged by NFF at Animation Center in Kerala, TVM, District from April 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004.

NFF had organized a national workshop on. National Fisheries Policy at Animation Centre in Kovalam, TVM, on 2004 July 14,16,&17 respectively. Four members-T.Peter, Jiji Antony, Fr. Thomas Kochery, and Sr. Philomin Mary participated in it.

Under the auspicious of NFF an active team of NFF members stayed in Delhi from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> august 2004. This team had submitted a memorandum on fisheries concerns to the Central Govt. and had done liaison work and lobbying with MPs, Bureaucrats and Central ministers to positively take up the fisheries concerns expressed in the said memorandum. T.Peter and Fr. Thomas Kochery represented KSMTF in this lobbying team.

## **Media Concerns**

### **Alakal**

KSMTF has a regular fortnightly publication called 'Alakal'. This is a main mouth-piece publication of KSMTF. Local, regional, national and international fishery- related concerns and events are relevantly published in this fortnightly publication in English. It has a website: [www.alakal.net](http://www.alakal.net).

### **KSMTF website**

KSMTF had very recently opened a website with an objective of communicating and debating with a wider- world on fishing, fishery and livelihood issues and concerns of traditional fish workers. The website of KSMTF is [www.keralafishworkers.org](http://www.keralafishworkers.org). This website was declared open by former Kerala chief minister Mr.A.K.Antony on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2004.

### **NAPM**

K S MTF had participated in most of the meetings organized by NAPM.

T.Peter of KSMTF had been elected as one of the conveners of NAPM in Kerala.

In a solidarity action plan demanding the closure of Plachimada Coco-Cola factory , there was a mass march towards Kerala Assembly on 2004 February 6<sup>th</sup>, KSMTF actively participated in the march.

On 2004 November 1<sup>st</sup> KSMTF had co-operated in a march against the constitution of Express Highway in Kerala. Its constitution world massively displaces people from the living habitat and destroys the means of livelihood of ordinary people as well as upset the ecological equilibrium of Kerala too.

### **Other activities**

There is an organized activity o “Sramasakthi”, a sister concern of KSMTF, to generate new jobs and impact technical and Scientific training to youngsters . Sramasakthi activities have a beneficial role to play in KSMTF . SHG programs are promoted through Sramasakthi .

An inland fish workers co-operative is functioning at Parumala, Pathanamthitta under the leadership of P.P.John .It has a Fish landing centre at Parumala . The middlemen and money lenders ,who consistently exploited the fish workers, were/are systematically being eliminated through this co-operative enterprise and a just price is availed to the fishes caught and sold.

Mavelikara municipal fish market is now totally under the control and administration of our “Market fish workers co-operative”.This is the first instance in Kerala that a market has come under a fish workers co-operative.

Money lenders and market gundas are very efficiently controlled and eliminated by this market co-operative. Municipality is compelled to avail the basic conveniences of fresh water, drainage and toilet. Alapuzha inland fish workers union of KSMTF gives leadership to this market fish workers co-operative enterprise .

Under matsyafed, an apex body of Govt. fish workers co-operatives, our fish workers do control and administer three co-operatives.

1. At Chellanam, Cochin, where K.V.Rapheal also Ernakulam district union president of KSMTF is also the president of this co-operative .

2. At Valiaveli, Trivandrum, where Anto elias, the Trivandrum union district secretary to KSMTF also is the President to Valiaveli fish workers co-operative too.

3. At Pathanamthitta vanitha co-operative society, Ms. Mary John, President and member of Pathanamthitta fish workers union of KSMTF.

There was a mass movement to cleanse the Parvathy Puthanar lake which was being polluted through sewage drainage .This lake became breeding place of new pests . People were impacted with new sicknesses through this polluted lake .Hence, KSMTF along with other organizations, took an active role in the mass movement to cleanse this lake.

A new educational program is initiated to link the traditional and scientific fisheries knowledge. Fish workers and members of scientific community meet once in a month for a one-day-program to exchange their knowledge and enrich each other. SIFFS has initiated this program. KSMTF leaders are participating this educational programs. It is one year since this program commenced and it continues still.

The other programs where KSMTF assured and made its presence felt are listed below :

1. Participation in World social forum meeting held in Mumbai in January 2004. Ten KSMTF members participated in it.

2. Participation in the one-day work shop arranged by institute for environmental research and social education (IERSE) on migrant labour in food processing industries Vincent Benedict (KSMTF) participated at this work shop that took place in Cochin on February 2004.

3.T.Peter ,the president, KSMTF, participated in the World Forum of Fisher peoples (WFFP) general assembly held in Kenya representing NFF, India.

### **Memoranda Submissions**

Timely memoranda submissions made to the State and Central Govts. on different topics of concern are enlisted below:

- 1.Kerosene distribution be made on a just price.
2. Health and fishery departments were exhorted and alerted urgent intervension in when Malaria spread across the coastal belts in Kerala .
- 3.Submission against light fishing in the sea.
- 4.Submission against fishworkers displacement in the background of commercial harbour construction at Vizhinjam.
- 5.Submission to kerala Govt. exhosting to avail rope, twine, float and hook for fishing.
- 6.Submission to distribute urgently the pension and educational lumssum grant areas.
- 7.Trawl ban period be increased to 90 days.
8. Subsidy and customs duty exclusion on out-board motors.
9. Submission against the exclusion of Pathanamthitta district from matsyafed list.
10. commence urgently the construction of mini fishing harbour at Chellanam.
11. Against fish import.
- 12.Need to renew the fish markets with modern basic conveniences.
13. Issue pattah to fishworkes.
- 14.Anti sand-maining submission.

### **Future concerns**

#### **(a)Future committed leadership for value based organisatinal activities.**

There is a need for leaders with clear and relevant socio-political perspective and vision for future. We need leaders with commitment and capability, who can be realistic other than being more idealistic and we need mass-based leaders who foster collective values and more participatory democratic practice.

Hence regourous leadership and capability trainings are to be urgently designed and realized.

**(b)Study and research.**

Each and every leader of ours should know in depth more and more about less and less issues that make fisheries sector and the livelihood of fishing communities more complex. This would enable and equip our leaders and our people to be on the right track to address and solve the complexities of our sector and our community in the present socio-political situation.

Hence study and research need to be taken up in this line.

**© Economic efficiency building-up.**

In order to realise the above stated future agenda we need to have economic efficiency to do away with an ever dependent economic practice.

Heance sufficient fund raising action programes are to be planned and executed with caution.

**(d) Availability and working pattern of a central team.**

To be more realistic and effective of the above design for the future of NFF and the fishworkers regional trade unions,we hope and exhort to have a central team of NFF to come down and co-oparate with each states team committed to this concerns.

With thanks and sincere greetings we submit this report for your consideration and creative commends.

**T.PETER.**  
**President.**

**P.P. JOHN.**  
**General Secretary.**