

Fishermen community leaders meeting

Venue : Hotel Tamilzhagam

Date : 16.12.05

Time : 11AM

The meeting had the following agenda:

- ❖ To review the present scenario prevailing in the fishing villages of Nagapattinam
- ❖ To explore the possibilities to form a core group with common interest and concerns over the developments happening in the sector
- ❖ To discuss the needs and challenges which the sector faces presently
- ❖ To make sure the NGO interventions in the sector as community need based rather than simply NGO programmes
- ❖ To sensitize this core group about the need of community participation rather than the onlooker status, which now plays, in the programmes carried out in fisheries sector
- ❖ To sensitize the members about the need of a well thought-out plan about the interventions and responsibilities of each stakeholder in this sector

Meeting started with the self introduction of the participants

Highlights of the Discussions;

- a. An overview of the rehabilitation programmes was presented in relation to distribution of fishing units, permanent shelters, etc.
- b. Since there is apparently no community participation involved in many of the activities carried out by most of the NGOs and the Government, the meeting generally expressed concern over the process. There is not much information given to any of the programmes done by NGOs to the community
- c. It was generally felt that the need for forming a group from the community who can intervene in the whole process, not only tsunami rehabilitation but also on a long term basis as it is the community bear the effect of development
- d. The meeting observed that currently the fishing community in the district is dependent on the immediate needs like relief materials, fishing units, shelter. With the first anniversary of tsunami or on the completion of permanent shelters most of the NGOs will leave Nagapattinam, what should be the plan to deal the challenges that may arise.
- e. It emphasized the need for the shift from immediate activities to long term programmes, such as improvements in technologies, deep sea fishing, post harvest activities, fuel price hike, poor price for the export species, etc
- f. It also raised its concern over the issues like impact of *Sethu samudram* project and growing aquaculture industry. It strongly felt that the Govt. was providing subsidies for aqua culture under the name of fishermen welfare where no fishermen are involved.

- g. The meeting felt that there is a need to know the future commitments of the NGOs and the Govt. in the coming years like, viz, how many years the NGOs are going to work, what type of activities they may be taking up and which are the villages etc
- h. It was also discussed that although NGOs had done a good work in the field of fishing equipments distribution and shelter, there are areas like improvement of quality of education, health and women issues, which are left out.
- i. It urged the Govt. to come out with new welfare schemes which are helpful and implemented by other States like Gujarat and Kerala.

Decisions

1. This group can be transformed into a Core Group of fishermen leaders to carry forward the future activities.
2. It was decided to co-opt representatives from other villages also for future meetings
3. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 22-12-05 in which all concerned NGOs and Fisheries Dept. officials to be invited for further discussions
4. This group will have a collective leadership for further actions until it takes a formal shape.
5. The members present will take the responsibility of inviting the other leaders for the next meeting while NCRC will invite the NGOs and Dept of Fisheries officials.
6. Members ensured that this group will keep itself away from the village politics, party politics and other issues but pledged to work towards a better future for the fishermen community in Nagapattinam.
7. The meeting formally ended with lunch at 2pm

Later, a team of villagers of kodiakkarai came and shared the matter concerning 4 missing fishermen for the last 8 days and sought this group's help to mobilize the Govt. machinery to identify the missing fishermen. The meeting expressed its concern on the issue and accompanied Kodiyakkarai fishermen to meet the Dist. Collector. At around 5.30 pm the team met Collector at his camp office and the Collector assured them all necessary steps to search the missing fishermen

