



BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME  
DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES



FISHERMEN'S COOPERATIVES  
IN KERALA: A CRITIQUE

BOBP/MIS/1

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## PREFACE

This paper briefly discusses the history of fishermen's cooperatives in Kerala and the reasons for their disappointing performance. It also describes the experience of a successful fisheries cooperative — in Marianad village of Trivandrum district — and analyses the reasons for its success.

The paper was presented at the Workshop on Social Feasibility in Small-Scale Fisheries Development held in Madras, September 4-8, 1979. The workshop was hosted by the Government of Tamil Nadu in cooperation with the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP).

The paper may be of interest to small-scale fisheries planners, as also to individuals and institutions who are concerned with the cooperative movement and with the social and economic uplift of small-scale fishing communities.

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The opinions expressed in the paper are entirely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bay of Bengal Programme or of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

The Bay of Bengal Programme is a regional FAO Programme that develops and demonstrates appropriate technologies in several areas of small-scale fisheries — such as fishing craft, fishing gear, fish handling and utilisation, coastal aquaculture. Its aims are to improve the conditions of the small-scale fishermen and improve the supplies of fish from the small-scale sector in five countries that border the Bay of Bengal — Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

## SUMMARY

Kerala is a state at the southern tip of India. Situated on the southwestern end of the peninsula, it has a 590 km coastline, surfeited by the Arabian Sea. The waters off Kerala's shore are known for their resources of fish and crustacea. This bounty, combined with the fact that the state has a daring and enterprising community of traditional small-scale fishermen, accounts for Kerala's continued pre-eminence as the leading producer of marine fish in India.

Prior to 1956, the region that is now Kerala consisted of the state of Travancore-Cochin plus the Malabar region which was then part of Madras state. Both the Madras state and the state of Travancore-Cochin had very enlightened fisheries administrations. The Department of Fisheries in Madras came into being as long back as 1906 ; the state of Travancore-Cochin was aware of the vast fishery potential off its shores and planned numerous ways to exploit and utilise this potential.

It is therefore not surprising that the first initiatives in cooperative organisation for fishermen were undertaken in the region that is now Kerala state as early as 1917.

During the past six decades, cooperative organisation is one of the subjects most widely discussed in the area of fisheries. Yet, one of the most disappointing aspects of development programmes for fishermen relates to cooperatives.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, it undertakes a brief analysis of the history and rationale of fishermen's cooperatives in Kerala, so that the main reasons for their failure can be highlighted. Second, it tries to present a theory about the *modus operandi* of cooperative organisation for the small-scale fishermen of the state — particularly the self employed fishermen. The practical application of this theory is examined in the third part, a case study of a successful small-scale fishermen's cooperative in Trivandrum district of Kerala state.

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
1 A brief history of fishermen's cooperatives in Kerala : why have they failed ?	1
2 An analysis of the fish economy of Kerala	5
3 A feasible form of cooperative organization for small-scale fishermen : the case of Marianad	10
Appendices :	
1 Birth of a village, launching of a cooperative	18
2 Marianad today (pictures)	21
Publications of the Bay of Bengal Programme	25

## 1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF FISHERMEN'S COOPERATIVES IN KERALA: WHY HAVE THEY FAILED?

### *Early Beginnings*

The first cooperative society for fishermen in the region that is now Kerala was registered in 1917. At that time, fishermen's cooperatives were registered on the basis of communities with separate societies for the Arayan and Valan (Hindu) and Christian fishermen. By 1933 there were 95 cooperatives with a membership of 8,194 from the three communities. The performance of these cooperatives was very disappointing; the Government of Travancore through its cooperative enquiry committee of 1934 studied the problem of fishermen's cooperatives and suggested various means of encouraging cooperative enterprise among fishermen.<sup>1</sup>

The suggestions included the creation of multi-purpose cooperatives; the provision of processing facilities such as curing yards; involvement of community leaders; and Governmental support for cooperatives that oppose the middlemen and undertake marketing themselves.

### *Renewed Interest*

Interest in fishermen's cooperatives rose again after the reorganisation of states in 1956. The Department of Fisheries took up the matter with great zeal and simultaneously promoted programmes for socio-economic development of fishermen — especially the mechanisation of fishing boats.

Cooperative enterprise was advocated as the best means by which fishermen could improve their socio-economic standards.

### *The Proposed Structure of Fishermen's Cooperatives*

Organisationally, the Kerala fisheries department envisaged a three-tier structure for cooperatives of fishermen, consisting of

- (i) primary or village cooperatives for each fishing village. They would be "uni-purpose" in nature; they would promote either credit (*vaipa*) or production (*ulpadaka*).
- (ii) secondary or district level cooperatives which were to undertake the supply of fishing requisites to the primaries and more important, to market the fish caught by them;
- (iii) an apex or state-level cooperative which would act as a coordinating agency.

The Government coupled the organisation of primary village cooperatives with other incentives such as the provision of mechanised boats, long-term loans and grants. Government made it clear that high-subsidy mechanised boats would be given only to fishermen's cooperatives. With officials under pressure to achieve targets, any person who could muster at least 51 names of fishermen (50 was the statutory minimum) and a share capital of about Rs. 500 was granted a registration. Immediately on registration, the president of the cooperative and the cooperative committee (normally the 'promoters' who are not real fishermen themselves) resolved at a meeting to apply to the Government for a boat, a long-term loan and a managerial grant.

### *The Performance*

The result of this rather "quantum oriented" policy was a phenomenal increase in the number of cooperative societies. They were registered without verification: no pains were taken to ensure that they were genuine people's organisations and not just names in a registration book.

1 K. Paramupillai, *Travancore Cooperative Enquiry Committee Report 1934*, Trivandrum, 1935 (in Malayalam).

Table 1

## GROWTH OF FISHERMEN'S COOPERATIVES IN KERALA

Type of Cooperative	Year		
	1958-59	1968-69	1974-74
<i>Primary</i>			
Credit	241	194	189*
Production		623	847
Secondary and apex		17	17
Total	241	834	1053

\* The decrease in number indicates that some cooperatives had wound up. In 1976-77 the total number of cooperatives had reduced to 768.

Source : Department of Fisheries, Kerala State, Administrative Reports.

During the 16 years between 1958-59 and 1973-74, the number of primary fishermen's co-operatives increased from 241 to 1036 and the stated membership from 33,332 to 108,993. During the same period the number of mechanised boats operating in the State increased from 115 to 2,105 of which 805 were issued through these cooperatives. The apparent misdirection of the cooperative movement among the fishermen and the fact that real fishermen hardly benefited from it began to dawn on the Department of Fisheries during the late sixties. Thereafter registration was almost totally frozen and the reverse process of liquidation was set in motion. However, although officials became aware of the situation, the pressure from political quarters for registration of cooperatives did not cease.

A recent study<sup>2</sup> for the integrated area development of two blocks (administrative divisions) in Trivandrum district has documented the growth of fishermen's cooperatives in coastal panchayats (village-level administrative divisions) in one of the blocks. The data, combined with other information in the study, provides some insights into the state of these cooperatives.

The panchayats' 17-kilometre coastline is dotted with 10 fishing villages harbouring 68 registered primary cooperatives. This means four cooperatives for every kilometre of coast, or almost seven cooperatives in each village. The average membership was about 80, but it is interesting to note that about half of them had the bare minimum membership of 51 required by the Department of Fisheries. Total membership was 5,265, about 95% of the area's active fishermen,

The average share capital was Rs. 1,690; 61 cooperatives had secured long term government loans amounting to Rs. 230,619; 36 had received managerial grants averaging Rs. 2,400 per cooperative; 34 of the 68 societies had received mechanised boats.

Enquiries conducted with the supposed beneficiaries of these cooperatives, the fishermen, were revealing :

".... Ordinary fishermen deny having any share or membership in the cooperative societies. The share amount, including membership fee, was probably advanced by someone interested to have the society registered with a view to availing of the assistance offered by the Government. Anyhow the majority of the fishermen, including those who have membership in the societies that have received assistance from Government, including costly mechanised boats, continue to be as impoverished and exploited by middlemen as they were before. The cooperative movement has not brought about any tangible benefits to the fishermen in the study areas either in their exploitation of the fishery wealth or in their redemption of the exploitation of the middlemen."

<sup>2</sup> Government of Kerala, *A Plan for Integrated Area Development of Athiyannoor and Nemom Blocks in Trivandrum District, Kerala State, Trivandrum, 1975.*

This state of affairs is typical of the fishermen's cooperatives in Kerala state as a whole — impressive statistics, poor performance. On the basis of statistics relating to number of cooperatives, coverage and share capital, Kerala has an impressive lead over the other maritime states in India. In 1974, there were 1,036 primaries (Andhra with the second highest had only 662) with 108,993 members which meant a 99% coverage of the estimated 110,000 active fishermen in the state. The share capital contribution of the individual members amounted to Rs. 16.68 lakhs which was 22% of the total corresponding all-India figure.

As for performance statistics, we find that in 1974 the 1,036 cooperatives attained a business turnover -fish and fish products — of Rs. 51.23 lakhs which was only 9% of the corresponding all-India figure and only 1% of the total value of fish landings in Kerala during that year. Forty four of the 1036 societies worked on a profit that year totalling Rs. 76,000. The remaining 992 societies lost Rs. 54.32 lakhs — a figure that exceeds the total business turnover.<sup>3</sup>

The state of affairs of the secondary and apex societies in Kerala was the same, with a paltry business turnover of Rs. 33.11 lakhs and all running at a loss.

#### *The Latest Assessment*

In an effort to probe the debacle of the cooperative movement among fishermen, the Kerala Government appointed an investigating committee in 1975. It was quite appropriately called the "Resuscitative Committee for Fishery Cooperatives."<sup>4</sup> The committee conducted four sittings in 1976 and presented its report to the Government the same year.

This Committee was of the opinion that some fundamental problems are at the root of the failure of the whole hierarchy of cooperatives -the primary credit and production cooperatives, the secondary marketing cooperatives and the apex federation. Basically these problems were identified as :

1. Failure of the credit cooperatives to meet the credit needs of the fishermen because the former did not receive financial support from the financing institutions — not even from the banks in the cooperative sector.
2. Failure of the producer cooperatives because of defects in the mechanised boats supplied to them, and more so because they were only provided with boats and not the working capital to operate them.
3. Failure of the marketing cooperatives, because the producer cooperatives did not supply their fish catch to them.
4. The inability of the cooperative federation to start functioning.

The main recommendation of the committee was that all primary cooperatives that were either defunct or inactive should be wound up. In their place new fishermen service cooperatives should be organised at the village level. Twenty activities were spelt out for them, ranging from the purchase of modern fishing implements and provision of loans to construction of roads and mediation in disputes. But significantly, though the committee repeatedly stressed the need to link credit with production and marketing, better marketing of fish caught by members does not figure among the proposed functions of the resuscitated cooperatives. It would thus seem that the *status quo* has been accepted as regards the nature of the linkages between the different levels of the cooperative hierarchy.

The committee seems to have taken a totally detached organisational view of the problem, the implicit assumption being that cooperatives are organisations created from above and handed down to the people. Hence, if these organisations do not function, it must be basically due to the fault of the incumbents.

<sup>3</sup> Data from the National Cooperative Development Corporation, New Delhi and relates to the state of affairs on 30-6-1974.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Kerala, *Report of the Resuscitative Committee for Fishery Cooperatives*, Trivandrum, 1976.



### *The Pre-requisites for Success*

The picture painted above of the state of fishermen's cooperatives in Kerala is no doubt depressing. To take refuge in the fact that this reflects the general situation in India would be to evade the issue.

Fishermen's cooperatives in other developing countries have fared no better. Studies have been undertaken to find out why this is so.

Why do fishermen's cooperatives fail? How can they succeed? In a comprehensive study,<sup>5</sup> Margret Digby, a stalwart of cooperative enterprise, lists five key factors for the few successes of cooperative ventures in fisheries the world over:

1. The fishermen's spontaneous response to exploitation.
2. Evolution from traditional community organisations.
3. Voluntary efforts by non-official bodies interested in the welfare of fishermen.
4. Action by other types of cooperative organisations.
5. Government policy aiming at the protection and development of fisheries and using the artisanal fisheries as a starting point.

Digby indicates that this list is arranged in the order of importance: the most successful cooperative enterprises were an outcome of the fishermen's spontaneous response to exploitation; continued success was assured by the subsequent incorporation of the other listed factors.

Commenting on the last factor-government policy as a starting point for the organisation of fishermen's cooperatives — Digby says :

"...The disadvantages are that governments are frequently in a hurry and hope to achieve important long-term results with too little sustained effort and expense. The department concerned may either misunderstand the methods and possibilities of cooperation or may not be aware of the economic complexities of the fishing industry. An artificially created cooperative movement may fail to develop the initiative and responsibility which would allow it to go forward to tackle seriously the powerful interest involved in fundamental change."

<sup>5</sup> Margret Digby, *Organisation of Fishermen's Cooperatives*, Plunkett Cooperative Foundation, Oxford, 1975.

## 2 AN ANALYSIS OF THE FISH ECONOMY OF KERALA

The fish economy of Kerala<sup>6</sup> can be considered to be made up of three activities — production, marketing and consumption ; and these three activities can be structured into three sectors — traditional, modern and ultra-modern.

### *The Activities*

(i) Production (P), in the context of the fish economy, refers to the catching or harvesting of fish from the sea using any technique and level of technology.

(ii) Marketing (M), refers to the movement of fish from producer to consumer and to any process meant to preserve or change the nature of the original product (fresh fish).

(iii) Consumption (C) is the disposal of the final product.

The above three activities give rise to a network of relationships that can be represented by the following scheme :

P - M - C

### *The Sectors*

We will here briefly note how the three sectors of the fish economy evolved and what their important characteristics are.

(i) **The traditional sector (t)** : The physical geography of Kerala with the sea on the west, mountain ranges on the east and a network of river systems across the state — is a prime reason why fish is a major source of food and fishing an important occupation for the people of Kerala.

Fishing in the high seas is a primitive activity carried out by certain communities who have from time immemorial lived along the fringes of the coastline of Kerala.

**The whole chain of activities- production, marketing and consumption of fish-was until about three decades ago insulated from the mainstream of the state's economy. What were the reasons for this insulation?**

-the nature of the resource; found in the open seas as a “free good”.

— the manner of production: predominantly like simple commodity production in a peasant economy.

-the nature of marketing-carried out mainly by a group of non-producers, using labour-intensive methods and moving very small quantities over a limited distance.

-the characteristics of the bulk of the consumers: by and large living in the rural areas, and hence mainly small producers of food themselves.

In these circumstances the link between the activities created a sort of “closed circuit” and there was very little dependence on the “outside economy” for inputs and markets. This

<sup>6</sup> The details of the fish economy given in this section are taken from : John Kurien, *Towards an Understanding of the Fish Economy of Kerala State*, Working Paper 68, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1976.

closed (or nearly so) circuit of activities we shall refer to as the traditional sector. The activities in this sector can be represented by the following symbols:

Pt      Mt      Ct

(ii) The modern sector (m) : The rise of merchant capital, the urbanisation of the State and the planned development of fisheries during the past three decades has given rise to a sector where production and marketing activity incorporates more technology and capital and where consumption activity has increased in a small segment of the population who live in the towns and cities. Being economically better off, they exhibit a distinct pattern of preference and a consumer behaviour different from that of the rural consumers. This new linkage of activities we shall refer to as the modern sector. The activities in this sector can be represented by the following symbols :

P m      M m      C m

(iii) The ultra-modern sector (urn) : The need for foreign exchange, the potential of sea-food exports to world markets and the concomitant entry of industrial capital into the area of fisheries in Kerala is presently creating a third sector: industrial capitalism. This sector is inextricably intertwined with other forces in the national and international capitalist market economy. Sophisticated technology and a highly skilled labour force are the hallmark of the production and marketing activity in this sector. The consumption activity is concentrated in the metropolitan centres of the world, composed of the ultra-modern rich consumers. This sector we shall refer to as the ultra-modern sector. The activities in this sector can be represented by the following symbols :

P<sub>um</sub>      M<sub>um</sub>      C<sub>um</sub>

Combining the three sectors we get the following schematic presentation of the fish economy of the state.

Ultra-modern (urn)	P <sub>um</sub>	M <sub>um</sub>	C <sub>um</sub>
Modern (m)	P <sub>m</sub>	M <sub>m</sub>	C <sub>m</sub>
Traditional (t)	P <sub>t</sub>	M <sub>t</sub>	C <sub>t</sub>
	Production	Marketing	Consumption
	(P)	(M)	(C)

This skeletal framework for the economy provides a basis for understanding not just its structure but also its working. Each element of this matrix is basically made up of participants (individual and institutional decision makers) and it is the sequel of relationships between them (interaction between the elements) in the circuit of economic activity that forms the essence of the working of the whole economy. In other words, the dynamics of the fish economy is the result of the interaction between participants in the Production, Marketing and Consumption activity of the different sectors.

### The Sector of the Small-Scale Fisherman

The traditional sector (the sector of the small-scale fisherman) is the largest sector in the fish economy of Kerala, in terms of the number of participants in each activity and the fish flow. The traditional small-scale producers account for about 70% of the fish production and number about 100,000. The small-scale fish distributors also number over 100,000 and handle, at different stages in the fish marketing channels, practically 90% of the fish landed in the state. The traditional consumers comprising the rural population of Kerala consume about 80% of the fish produced in the State.

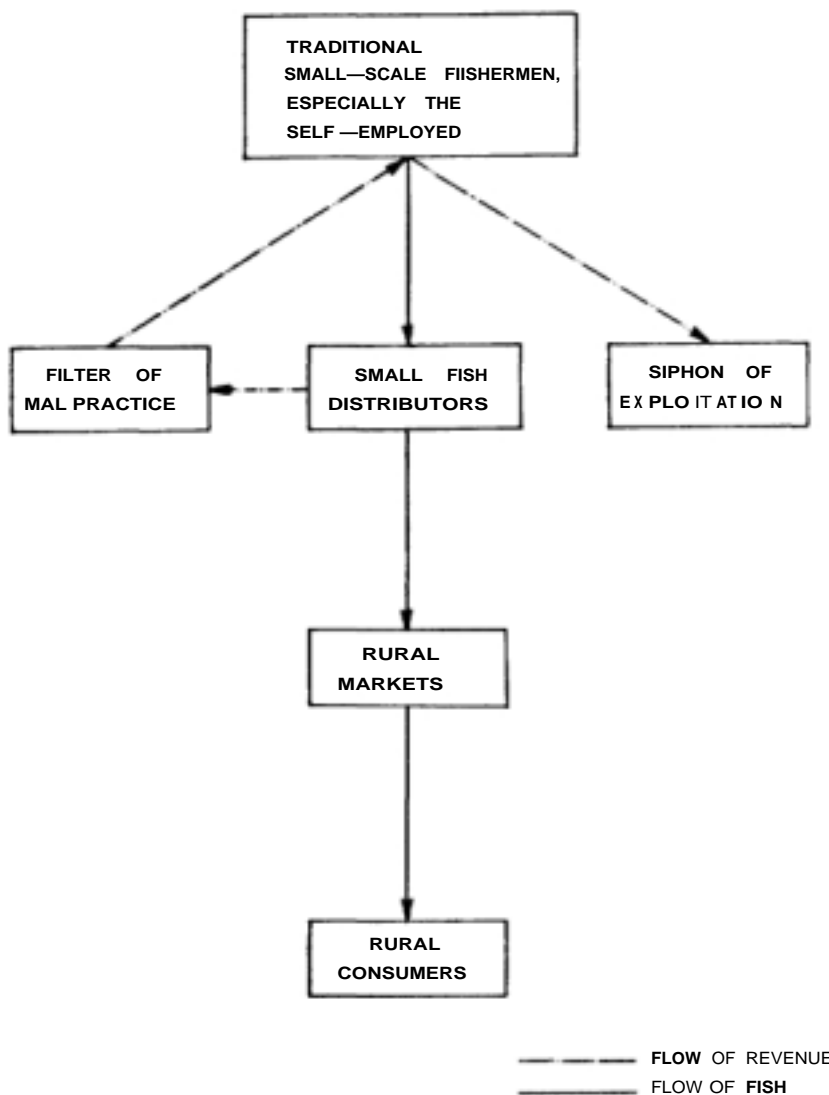
The traditional sector, as indicated earlier, can be considered a "closed circuit" but for the intervention of certain "irritants" who appear between the production and marketing activity (i.e. between P and M in the matrix). These "irritants" take the form of moneylenders, middlemen and owners of property on the seashore. In course of time they gain social acceptability among the fishermen and then extend their economic clutches through the activity of fish marketing.

The small-scale fishermen who are their own masters at sea, succumb to the devices and designs of these irritants on reaching the shore. The problems related to fish marketing start in this traditional sector at the place where the fish is first landed. There are two main problems:

- First, lack of a proper mechanism controlled by the fishermen to determine fair prices for their fish. As a result, the “siphon of exploitation” of the irritants sucks up much of the revenue that should really accrue to the fishermen.
- Second, the inability on the part of the fishermen to collect from the fish distributors the legitimate dues accruing to them from sales transactions. A “filter of malpractice” of the small fish distributors has deprived the fishermen of their revenue.

Sometimes the two problems are combined, but most often they are mutually exclusive. The situation is schematically illustrated below.

**DIAGRAM 1 : SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM OF THE SMALL—SCALE TRADITIONAL FISHERMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL SECTOR.**



The above facts indicate that the cooperatives for fishermen in Kerala must be cooperatives of the traditional, small-scale fishermen who operate along the total length of the coastline. Basically, the primary role of the cooperative (as a corporate body) is to act as a *social and economic* buffer to the fishermen at the first point of sale of their fish. In other words, a cooperative should be an “agent” — *by, of and for the fishermen.*

### Modus Operandi for Fishermen’s Cooperatives

There are therefore two dimensions to the issue of organisation of fishermen’s cooperatives, which we must recognise. They are: (1) the dimension of a village cooperative as a people’s organisation; that is, the sociological dimension and (2) the dimension of the cooperative as a business organisation; that is, the economic dimension.

Although these two dimensions cannot be separated, it is essential that we isolate the two in order to better understand both.

Here we will deal with the economic dimension only. This dimension is mainly concerned with the three main functions of providing credit, supplying craft and gear and marketing fish. Although all the three are equally important, it is the tackling of the last function -the marketing of fish -that will ensure the continued operation of a fishermen’s cooperative. Providing credit and supplying craft and gear are essential functions, but they can never become viable unless they are linked to the whole marketing function.

To start functioning in this manner on the shore is of course to start with the concrete reality. What the cooperative undertakes to do is primarily to sell every fish belonging to its members in the most suitable manner, and shoulder the responsibility of collecting the dues from the fish distributors. The cooperative could collect a small service charge from members for the risks undertaken and services performed.

Subsequently, the cooperative will also have to provide credit for productive purposes, which will in the short and long run increase the member’s productivity and the quantum of fish sold through the cooperative, thus increasing its earnings.

Consequently, if loans and savings schemes are introduced into cooperatives, better capital rotation and capital formation would be the result and this would in turn facilitate credit. Thus a credit-production-marketing-savings link would be established within the cooperative.

In effect what this amounts to is a recognition of the fact that no primary fishermen’s cooperative can hope to succeed by being a uni-purpose organisation -whether the purpose be for credit or marketing. The economic aspects of fishing are so closely interlocked that the attempt to handle a single operation by a new method merely arouses opposition and counter-measures at some other point in the fish economy.

In other words, a primary cooperative should be multi-purpose in function and flexible in character. It should gradually widen its functions to touch all the economic aspects of its membership, whether or not these functions are directly connected with the fishing operation.

Only such a planned and organised effort, basically controlled by the fishermen themselves, will ensure that the benefits from greater productivity generate higher returns for the fishermen, more earnings for small distributors of fish (who should be encouraged to buy fish only from such cooperatives) and fair prices for rural consumers.

#### *The Genuine Hierarchy*

Only when such a strong base of primary cooperatives handling the “essential” services has been created, is there any meaning in organising secondary and apex cooperatives that can undertake more complex services.

The basic function of the secondary and apex cooperatives — like that of the primaries -will be to create the credit-production-marketing savings link, but on a much larger scale and over a

wider area. They will also have to undertake other services that are not directly related to the fishing operations-such as provision of relief and welfare measures, organisation of insurance schemes and old age pension, planning for future development, extension of legal advice.

For the sake of clarity, we can split the function of secondary and apex cooperatives into two categories :

- (i) "dependent functions" -those that arise from the coordination of the essential services performed by the primaries.
- (ii) "autonomous functions" -those that are performed independent of the activities of the primaries.

Circumstances in Kerala have led to the creation of secondary and apex cooperatives from above; they have not sprung up from below in response to a genuine need. The secondary and apex cooperatives are attempting to undertake the dependent functions by themselves, and in this process becoming "institutional merchants" rather than coordinating cooperatives. As we indicated earlier on, such attempts produced very unprofitable ventures and ultimately sewed no useful purpose apart from adorning the theoretical three-tier cooperative structure.

#### ***Conclusion***

What we see in Kerala today is the consequence of a flawed understanding of what cooperatives really are. A cooperative is at once a people's organisation and a business organisation; though for the purpose of study and analysis we might separate the two dimensions, it is meaningless in reality to do so. *If a cooperative fails as a people's organisation it will most certainly fail as a business organisation — there is no exception to this rule.*

The malady of cooperative enterprise all over the world has been its inability to come to terms with this most fundamental tenet of cooperation. Fishermen's cooperatives in Kerala have been afflicted with the same malady; they have suffered the same fate.

### 3 A FEASIBLE FORM OF COOPERATIVE ORGANISATION FOR SMALL-SCALE FISHERMEN: THE CASE OF MARIANAD

In 1970 the small-scale catamaran fishermen of the little fishing village of Marianad in Trivandrum district spearheaded a movement to resist and overcome the hold of the moneylender. Three months of struggle against vested interests resulted in their coming together as a well-knit group. This awareness did not come suddenly; it evolved through a long process of questioning and a continuing search for the root cause of their problems (See Appendix).

Having collectively decided to act together, they approached the Department of Fisheries for registration as a cooperative so that they could function within the official cooperative hierarchy. They were informed that registration was not possible; one fishermen's cooperative already existed in the same village.

This came as an utter surprise. None of the 50 to 75 fishermen who were permanent inhabitants of the village seemed to know about the existence of this cooperative, said to have been registered in 1967 -during the great fishermen's cooperative boom in Kerala.

On returning to their village, rather disillusioned, they made enquiries and found that such a cooperative did indeed exist, but only in the form of some documents — the official registration paper; a bogus members' register in which one man's thumb impression had been used for all the members; a few books of accounts; and two audit statements.

The individual who had registered the cooperative in great secrecy had apparently invested Rs. 600 as share capital for the 51 members in the hope of getting from the Government a mechanised boat, a long-term loan or at least a grant. His efforts had failed. Now on being approached by the fishermen he agreed to "sell" the cooperative to them for the value he had invested in the shares on condition that he be retained as a member. Considering the immediate need, the fishermen agreed and thus "bought" over the cooperative.

#### *First Steps to Concerted Action*

It was with this "benami" transaction that the Marianad Malsya Ulpadaka Cooperative Society Limited, No. F(T) 287, began to function as a true cooperative — i.e. as a true people's organisation. Having taken possession of the legal records of the cooperative, the core group of enthusiasts aided by a team of community organisers (staff of a voluntary agency) began to set about the task of organising the cooperative.

First, share capital was raised at the rate of Rs. 5 per share, with each member buying at least one share. The list of members was thus finalised; and a general body meeting was held to elect the first board of directors from among the members. According to the bye-laws of the cooperative, the board of directors was to consist of four members from among the shareholders (this meant they had to be fishermen) and three nominees of the Government. On the recommendation of the general body, the Department of Fisheries accepted the names of the local government primary school headmaster and two of the community organisers to act as nominees of the government.

The major task before the board of directors was to devise a system to sell members' fish catch on the seashore as and when they concluded a fishing trip. Two persons with some experience in fish marketing (i.e. auctioning fish, selling dried fish and so on) volunteered to undertake this all-important task. The board of directors accepted the offer since the two volunteers had always sided the fishermen during their earlier struggle against moneylenders.

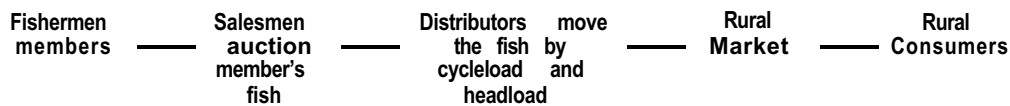
The two volunteers were then appointed as employees of the cooperative and designated as salesmen. The task of the salesmen was clearly defined; they would act as the agents of the

members. They would initiate an auction on the shore, issue receipts for the sale, and collect the credit dues from the merchants. Thus an organised system was introduced into the business of marketing, till then an unrecorded word-of-mouth affair. For this service, each member paid a service charge of 3% of his daily fish sales to the cooperative; it would help the cooperative meet its administrative expenses.

With the introduction of this system, no fisherman member had any direct dealings with the small merchants. The cooperative acted as a social and economic buffer. The members could produce the fish marketing receipts which indicated the value of the fish sold by the salesmen, and collect the money the next day from the cooperative's accountant. One of the community organisers functioned as a part-time accountant.

When the cooperative was formed, the level of total landings on the shore was rather small. Reason : between the fishermen there were not many catamarans and nets. The buyers of fish on the seashore were some 50-60 small fish distributors — men carrying fish on bicycle and women carrying headloads — who moved fish to the rural markets within a radius of 25-40 kms of the village. The movement of fish from the fishermen to the final consumer is illustrated below by what we shall refer to as a "fish-chain".

**Diagram 2: Fish Chain-Marianad Cooperative Society, 1970-74**



**Expansion of Activities**

The cooperative was subsequently able to organise credit facilities: small subsidies and matching loans were given to members to help them purchase additional fishing equipment. To make this possible, a small government loan of Rs. 8,000 (received by the cooperative in three instalments) and a working capital grant of Rs. 40,000 given by a voluntary agency were utilized. Simultaneously, the members also decided to keep 2% of their daily earnings in a fixed deposit savings fund which would further augment the general credit capital pool.

To facilitate quick and easy repayment of loans, members decided to link the repayment of loans to the marketing: 10% of their daily sales earnings from fish catch would be deducted as loan repayment. This system ensured a quicker circulation of credit among members and completed a closed circuit credit-production-marketing-savings link.

In 1971, the cooperative got permission to stock and sell fishing requisites-mainly nylon twine for making nets. This was a great service to the fishermen since nylon twine was in short supply in the market, and led to a "black market". The cooperative was able to solve this problem.

**An Assessment of Performance**

The cooperative's annual report for 1975-76 gives an idea of how it functioned for the nine years 1967-68 to 1975-76.



**Table 2**  
**SOME FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT THE MARIANAD COOPERATIVE**  
**FROM ITS DATE OF REGISTRATION**

Year	Share Capital	Fish Sales	Sales of			Retains**	Bonus and Dividend
			Fishing Requi-sites	Food Grain	Savings of members		
	RS.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	rs.	
1967-68	600.00	—	—	—	—	45 (Loss)	—
1968-69	600.00	—	—	—	—	79 (Loss)	—
1969-70*	920.00	50000	—	—	1000	423	—
1970-71	2130.00	74000	4200	—	1480	1850	—
1971-72	2165.00	146000	12300	—	2920	1412	—
1972-73	2170.00	113000	11200	—	2260	1443	Dividend 8% ; Par-ticipation bonus of Rs. 2 for every Rs. 1000 worth of fish sold through cooperative.
1973-74	2795.00	140000	19900	—	2800	1563 (Loss)	—
1974-75	3715.00	340000	28000	—	6800	5743	Dividend 10%
1975-76	3820.00	665000	45000	140000	9200	4990	Bonus Rs. 0.25 per kg. of fish.

\* Cooperative taken over by real fishermen.

\*\* Excess of income over expense.

Source : Marianad M.U.C.S. Ltd. F(T) 287 Annual Report 1975-76.

During the nine-year period given above, the real membership of the cooperative was stated to have increased from 55 to 137. This accounted for the higher value of fish marketed through the cooperative and the increase in the asset holdings of members. On a per capita basis the gross income of each member had increased from around Rs. 1,000 per annum to about Rs. 4,100 per annum.

It is also very significant to note that over the seven years 1969-70 to 1975-76 the retains (service charges and profits from sale of requisites minus all administrative expenses and operating expenses) have totalled about Rs. 12,800.00 which have facilitated the issue of dividends and bonuses.

The accumulated individual savings of members from 1969-70 to 1975-76 amounted to Rs. 26,460. More important than the total is the process by which the savings were made—a deliberate setting aside of 2% of one's daily consumption for the collective good. By general agreement a member may withdraw his savings only after it reaches a sum of Rs. 300 and then use it for such purposes as the purchase of more equipment; purchase of land; construction of a house; construction of a toilet; and as a last priority, the marriage of a daughter.

While the savings are in the cooperative's account, these are used to give credit to members, or to buy fishing requisites which are then supplied to the members at fair prices. Considering these indirect advantages, the members had decided not to claim interest on their savings.

Sales of fishing requisites to the extent of Rs. 120,600 were effected by the cooperative during the seven year period. Lack of working capital was a major inhibiting factor in increasing the purchases of fishing requisites-which in turn would have promoted sales to outsiders (fishermen from neighbouring villages).

By any standard, the performance indicated above is commendable.

### *The New Marketing Scheme*

The increase in the sales of fish in 1975-76 was the result of a new marketing experiment undertaken by the cooperative. For this purpose, the cooperative was able to secure for a nominal lease physical facilities such as fish handling and processing (basically cleaning) hall, store rooms, curing house, and an insulated van. Personnel competent to manage the experiment were also provided to the cooperative on the condition that the fishermen would extend the benefits of their cooperative to other fishermen in the neighbouring areas.

The marketing experiment initiated three types of functions in the realm of cooperative fish marketing for a primary cooperative:

1. The strengthening and expanding of the role of the cooperative as a *fishermen's agent*. This role was especially vital for exportable varieties of seafoods (prawns and cuttle fish), which were high-priced, subject to artificial fluctuations and contributed (in 1975-76) the most to the fishermen's income.
2. The role of *price slump control* to ensure a minimum price whenever there were bumper landings.
3. The *direct marketing* of fish from the original producer to the final producer.

The fish chains generated by the new marketing scheme are illustrated by Table 3. This table also includes the earlier fish chain described in Diagram 2. Table 4 provides more details about the chains, showing the type of distributors, institutions and consumers involved in each chain, the quantity of fish handled/consumed by each and the revenues generated in this process. Thus it defines the role of each chain from the perspective of the "fish economy".

### *The cooperative's role in the fish economy of Kerala*

It is essential to understand further the meaning of this cooperative and its role in the fish economy rather than merely its role as a fishermen's organisation.

The producers are all artisanal fishermen who belong to the traditional fishing community and account for about 70% of the total fish landings of the State.

The distribution system in Chain 1-6 includes the traditional small distributors of fish (cycle-load and headload distributors) at some point along the chain. As a matter of principle, the cooperative has encouraged dealings with these small distributors since they, like the members, are also self-employed individuals who eke out an existence by distributing fish (in essence only an extension of the production activity). There is a great deal of interdependence between the fishermen members and the small distributors who buy fish from the seashore, which can result in a fruitful cooperation if nurtured well. This was the rationale of continuing the system of Chain 1 which handles 50% of the output (Table 4) although it may have been possible to devise other means of disposing of this fish (at higher returns to the members) with the physical facilities at the cooperative's command.

In the distribution system, the wholesale merchants are involved in Chains 2 and 4 and the exporting firms in Chain 3. In Chains 5 and 6 the cooperative does away with the wholesale

merchants and takes the fish straight to the wholesale market. In Chain 7 the cooperative dispenses with all the tiers in the distribution hierarchy and approaches the consumer directly.

At the consumption end, we see that 60% of the total output of the cooperative finally reaches the rural consumers, 15% the urban consumers and 15% the metropolitan consumers in the developed countries of the world, especially USA and Japan. In terms of the revenues generated, 48% is from the fish that reaches the rural consumers, 12% from what reaches the urban consumers and 40% from what gets to Japan and USA. Basically, we see that the cooperative caters quantitywise to the rural consumer but depends to a rather disproportionate extent for its revenues on the ultimate demand of the consumer in the foreign countries (Table 4 gives the details).

By its activities the cooperative has tried to strengthen the "traditional sector" of the fish economy of Kerala. It has encouraged the traditional producers to catch more fish; allowed the small distributors to continue and participate more actively; and by its physical location (away from the urban centres) ensured that a sizeable proportion of its output reaches the rural consumers in the district.

With the expansion of the productive facilities of each member, their unit output increased, thus making it more difficult to dispose of their fish by selling to the small distributors only. It is at this point that the more aggressive wholesale merchants and occasional speculators entered in this field. The introduction of the marketing scheme and the extension of the marketing function enabled the cooperative to act as a more effective buffer between the wholesale merchants and the fishermen.

The export trade in prawns and cuttle-fish is also infested with numerous middlemen and petty agents, whose functions range from provision of credit, collection of the produce (bulking the small catches of various fishermen), doing the intermediate processing such as the peeling of prawns or skinning of cuttle-fish -and transporting it to the final exporting firm.

With the new marketing scheme, the cooperative undertook all the above tasks and negotiated directly with the exporting firms, thus ensuring a higher price and quicker payment.

The above two functions undertaken by the cooperative prevented the manipulation of the small traditional producers by more aggressive participants in other sectors of the fish economy.

The scheme also enabled the direct movement of fish from traditional producers to urban consumers (urban, upper and middle income groups) using the insulated van as a mobile fish stall. The initial objective of this scheme was merely to supply directly to the urban consumer whatever fish was caught by the fishermen. This, however, did not work. Consumers preferred particular varieties of fish; producers catered to demands by providing hygienically cleaned (eviscerated), packed and cooled fish that suited their tastes. Although the function of direct marketing was profitable and ensured very high prices to the producers, it was later abandoned primarily because it was not the most socially desirable and economic means of utilising the facilities entrusted with the cooperative.

### **Other Services**

Apart from activities related directly to the fishing operations, the cooperative runs its own "essential items depot" (rice, wheat, kerosene oil) which serves the whole neighbourhood. It also runs a net-fabrication centre which gives seasonal employment to about 30 women in the village and assures them fair wages. The cooperative helps its members buy small plots of land and build huts, brick houses and toilets by extending loans on easy repayment terms. The managerial staff also conducts classes on cooperatives for the members.

### **The cooperative as a people's organisation**

What we have enumerated so far is the economic dimension of the cooperative-its work as a business organisation. However, the success of this cooperative as a business organisation is indisputably due to its success as a people's organisation.

**Table 3**

**FISH CHAINS GENERATED BY THE NEW MARKETING SCHEME**

	Role of the Cooperative	Village	Markets	Consumer
1. Fishermen-(F)	Salesmen auction each individual member's fish	— Cycleload and Headload distributors on the seashore	— Rural Market	— Rural Consumer
2. F—	The dried fish is brought by each member and it is bulked and disposed of collectively	— Wholesale Merchant	Wholesale Market Export	— Cycleload & Headload Distributors Rural Market Rural Consumers in Sri Lanka
3. F—	Each member brings his prawns/cuttle fish and it is bulked and disposed of collectively	— Export firm	Export	Metropolitan Consumers in U.S.A. and Japan
4. F—	The Cooperative procures "surplus" landings, processes them collectively and then disposes of them in bulk	— Wholesale Merchant	Wholesale Market	— Cycleload & Headload Distributors Rural Market Rural Consumers
5. F—	The Cooperative procures "surplus" landings, processes them collectively and then disposes of them in bulk.		Wholesale Market	— Cycleload & Headload Distributors Rural Market Rural Consumers
6. F—	The Co-operative procures the "surplus", preserves it for a short while in ice and then disposes of it in bulk.		Wholesale Market	— Cycleload & Headload Distributors Rural Market Retail Market Rural Consumers -- Urban Consumers
7. F—	The Cooperative procures fish, cleans it, makes consumer packs, cools the packs and then disposes of the packs.			Urban Consumers

[ 15 ]

**Table 4**  
**MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE NEW FISH CHAINS GENERATED BY THE MARKETING SCHEME [as of 1975-76]**

Chain No.	Marketing Function	Point of Exchange	Description of Exchange	Percentage of the total catch thus disposed of	Percentage of revenue thus earned	Type of distributors and institutions involved in the chain						Type of consumer at the end of the chain		
						SFD	WSM	EF	RM	WSMT	EM	Rural (Ct)	Urban (Cm)	Metro-politan (Cm)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
ONE	Fishermen's Agent	Village (Sea-shore)	Salesmen auction member's fish to SFD	50	25	x			x			x		
TWO	Fishermen's Agent	Village (Marketing Centre)	Members dry fish individually. Cooperative disposes of collectively to WSM and SFD	5	4	x	x		x	x		x		
THREE	Fishermen's Agent	Village (Marketing Centre)	Members' catches bulked and sold by cooperatives to the EF	15	40			x			x			
FOUR	Price slump control	Village (Marketing Centre)	Cooperative procures "surplus". Processes it. Sells as in Chain Two.	10	12	x	x		x	x		x		
FIVE	Price slump control and direct marketing	Market	Cooperative procures "surplus". Processes it. Transports and sells at RM, WSMT.	5	7	x				x	x	x		
six	Price slump control and direct marketing	Market	Cooperative procures fish. Transports and sells at RM, WSMT	10	8	x			x	x		x	x	
SEVEN	Direct marketing	Final consumer	Cooperative procures fish. Processes it. Packs it. Sells directly to consumer in city.	5	4									x

SFD — Small Fish Distributors  
 WSM — Wholesale Merchants

EF — Export Firm  
 RM — Rural Market

WSMT — Wholesale Market  
 EM — Export Market

Seven facts support this argument:

1. The cooperative was formed by the fishermen themselves. It arose from a need, and more important, from a conscious awareness of the root cause of their problems (No imposition from above).
2. The cooperative is completely controlled by the fishermen and is based on the strength of their collective unity and leadership. (No personality cults.)
3. The cooperative has evolved at a pace that facilitated complete comprehension of each of its activities by each of its members. (No large "schemes" at the initial stages.)
4. The cooperative has constantly had to struggle against vested interests in order to continue its activities. This has inspired cohesion rather than disunity. (No moment of complacency.)
5. New membership has been restricted to those fishermen who are fully convinced about the value of the cooperative. (No membership campaigns.)
6. Uniformity in the application of rules and regulations dictated by the members themselves. (No preferences and exceptions.)
7. An open administrative policy on work procedures delegated to a dedicated set of employees who are answerable to the general body of members. (No secrets and favours.)

These seven facts are at the base of the cooperative's economic organization.

It might be asked whether such phenomena can be replicated and whether the Marianad cooperative can be considered as a "model" for fishermen in Kerala. For answer, one may look up the Kerala Government's Economic Review of 1977 (official round-up of the economic scene). It says :

"The experience of the Marianad Malsya Ulpadaka Cooperative Society, Puthencurichy, near Trivandrum is an eyeopener to the fishermen cooperatives in Kerala. Dedicated leadership and the felt need of the fishermen for united action against the exploitation by the middlemen could be reckoned as the contributory factors for the dynamic outlook of Marianad."<sup>7</sup>

Although the uniqueness of every fishing village in Kerala must be granted, we may conclude that the Marianad cooperative can and should be recommended as a model of business organisation. As a people's organisation, Marianad cannot be prescribed as a "model". But the Marianad experience does dramatize a universal truth : that fishermen should direct their struggle against the causes of their plight, rather than against the consequences.

<sup>7</sup>Government of Kerala, *Economic Review 1977*, Trivandrum, 1978.

## Appendix

### BIRTH OF A VILLAGE, LAUNCHING OF A COOPERATIVE

*This is the story of the birth of Marianad village and the launching of its now famous fisheries cooperative. It describes the cooperative's traumatic struggle against its opponents, a struggle that culminated in the firm assertion by Marianad fishermen of their rights and of their independence from outside forces. The account is abridged from Ripples and Repercussions, a booklet on the Marianad experiment.*

Our story begins in 1960, when the Trivandrum Social Service Society (TSSS) was set up with the help of the Church. The TSSS sought to help the fishermen of Trivandrum district by providing them with boats and nets through cooperatives. The understanding was that the fishermen would pay for the boats and nets in instalments. But since the TSSS was associated with the Church, which has always been considered a charity organisation, the fishermen did not take the question of repayment seriously. Moreover, the TSSS was not structured to handle development projects. Result: the project failed.

Projects failed but not hope. Realising that it was difficult to work in existing villages where the accumulated problems were too massive to tackle, the TSSS decided to work with a few families in a new village. If this experiment succeeded, the society planned to extend it to other fishing villages.

In 1960-61, the TSSS selected the uninhabited coastal village of Alillathura (which literally means "the shore without people") and bought some 30 acres of land to create the village now called Marianad. Low-cost houses were built with the aid of a cooperative housing society. To establish a community, fishermen from seven different villages who were willing to come and stay in Marianad were selected. There were initially 50 families and they came in 1961 and the following year. On August 15, 1962, the village of Alillathura was given the name "Marianad" (Land of Mary) by Bishop Perera, president of the TSSS.

The 50 families had made a difficult decision in leaving homes and relatives and setting foot on a strange coastal tract known for little more than ghost stories, poor fishing and desolation. They had nothing but hope to cling to. However, the majority of the 50 families had nothing to lose by undertaking this risk. They were invariably among the poorest families of the seven villages. Along with the new inhabitants came a team of community workers, to live with the people and learn from them. And they had nothing to give but the best of themselves as persons.

This team consisted initially of three members, two of them women. Of the women, one was a public health nurse who had been associated with the people of Marianad from 1961. The other was a city-bred post graduate in social work who came to Marianad in 1967 because she was keen to work with a rural community. The male member joined this team in 1968. He was a native of a fishing village 50 km south of Marianad. A post graduate in sociology, he decided to commit his services toward developing this socially and economically backward community.

This 3-member team was joined in 1973 by the author, a post graduate in business management. His prime task was to work with the fishermen in setting up and consolidating their new marketing scheme.

The initial approach of the team was that of community building and community development based on self-help. Living with the people, the team was always at their disposal. A feeling of togetherness began to grow in spite of differences of origin. The only principles that guided the team were : try to meet the felt and expressed needs of the people; involve them as much as possible; keep the method of operation as simple and as open as possible. No elaborate schemes, no big buildings, no expensive or sophisticated equipment.

In this way many activities were initiated in the village. A public health programme; clubs for boys and girls; savings schemes; a nursery and creche; and many other programmes. The basic idea behind each programme was to initiate an informal educational process to encourage changes, to build awareness and inspire self-confidence. Hence much time was spent in trying to make the people understand what was going on, encourage their involvement and help' them to shoulder responsibility.

After about seven years of such work, the team began to realise that no amount of community building would be effective and truly liberating if the economic matrix of the community was not radically changed. The fishermen are poor — but not because fishing activity is unrewarding. They are poor because they are being exploited and this exploitation has become institutionalised so that they do not see it and realise it for themselves.

After much study and inquiry, it was realised that unless the ownership of land, credit, production, marketing and savings were linked and controlled by the fishermen themselves, they would be unable to free themselves from the clutches of the exploitative forces. But the big question before the team was how they could make the Marianad community conscious of the exploitation.

About this time (November 1969), the people of Marianad gave expression to a great need; Marianad, their own village, should have its own church. Some members of the team of community workers were against this: they thought that this “need” expressed by the people was not a priority. The male community worker in the team disagreed. His argument: till then the team had believed in taking action to meet the genuine needs of the people; this initiative of the Marianad people to build a church must be taken up equally seriously. The team should use this initiative to confront the people with the reality of their exploitation by others.

The people met and decided to build a church by collecting money for it, as was the practice in their native village. A share of the fishermen’s daily catch (5%) would be noted down and collected the next day for the church fund.

The community worker who supported Marianad’s initiative for a church, used to spend a lot of time on the seashore. He observed how much fish the fishermen landed and how much money they earned after merchants had bought the fish from the moneylender. From his observations he got an idea of the share the church would get for that day. In the evenings the fishermen brought their contribution to the church fund. Invariably, the actual amount fell short of the amounts calculated on the basis of the auction price of fish.

“Why this difference?” they were asked. “Is it that you are dishonest ?” No, that could never be — especially when it had to do with the affairs of their church. There were other reasons. Gradually these sundown meetings bared the reasons :

“I’m indebted to the moneylender. He reduced the daily interest from the value of today’s catch.”

“The merchant who owed me Rs. 27 for yesterday’s catch gave me only Rs. 15, saying that he had incurred a heavy loss.”

“I had to pay the auctioneer for selling my fish. He wanted Rs. 10 immediately, failing which he said he’d never auction my fish again.”

The community worker talked to the people about the possibility of their selling the fish themselves: they could appoint a representative to auction all their fish and collect the money from the merchants. He also discussed the possibility of the fishermen saving small amounts, pooling their savings and helping each other in times of need.

Three months had elapsed since the church fund began. The people had collected about Rs. 1,000 and then came the day of reckoning.

After one sundown meeting (on February 9, 1970), the fishermen continued to discuss among themselves and finally concluded that even to build a church they had to first control the produce of their hard labour. Enough was enough. Now they would take destiny in their own hands, come what may. They decided to use the Rs. 1,000 as the initial working capital and requested the team of community workers to sit with them and plan a strategy for action. Within a few



days, the fishermen had launched their campaign to free themselves from the moneylenders, and sell their fish themselves. The campaign had only one aim. The fishermen stated it in two succinct words — Namukku vijayikkanam (We must succeed).

\* \* \* \*

When the cooperative was started, it needed a small shed on the seashore. This was built. The parish priest from the neighbouring village who visited Marianad on Sundays to say Mass, inaugurated the constructed shed. Two or three weeks after the start of the cooperative, the priest did not turn up for the Mass. The entire village kept waiting in vain at the community centre. Explaining his absence later, the priest said that he did not have the books for the new liturgy prescribed for that Sunday. He failed to turn up the next week also and offered another excuse. The third week, the people of Marianad discovered that the moneylender — who was on the church committee of the neighbouring parish — had kept the priest away from Marianad by means of threats. However, the Marianad people did not understand this, since the priest had supported the cooperative wholeheartedly in the planning stages.

The money lender's intimidation did not stop there. With the support of parishioners of six neighbouring villages, the moneylender made certain complaints about the method of fishing used by the Marianad fishermen. It was alleged that the Marianad fishermen had introduced hook and line fishing into a coastal tract where a majority of fishermen caught fish with shore seines without going to sea. It was also alleged that on account of the hook and line fishing the original settlers of that coastal area suffered a fish famine. It was therefore demanded that for three months of the year the fishermen of Marianad should not go hook fishing. This hard proposition was supported by the panchayat, some officials of the Department of Fisheries, local politicians and parish priests.

After long deliberation with the community workers, the fishermen of Marianad accepted the proposition, just to show the others that they would stand united. For the first two weeks after the fishing curbs were imposed the people of Marianad suffered a great deal. However what they failed to perceive when fully involved in fishing, they could see when detached from their tough daily routine. During this difficult time, the moneylender told the Marianad fishermen that the curbs on hook-and-line fishing would be removed if they agreed to sell the fish through him. On hearing this, the fishermen were able to spot the arch villain of the campaign against them; they refused to accept the moneylender's suggestion or money.

Before the third week ended the members of the cooperative managed to convene another meeting in the panchayat office — on April 5, 1970 — where the above mentioned leaders were present. All these leaders, including the priests, wanted the curbs to continue, as agreed at the previous meeting. At this juncture, one member of the cooperative stood up and said that the Marianad fishermen could not live without working; they had decided to break the restriction and go fishing from the next day onwards.

The pandemonium caused by this bold statement of a "solitary fisherman" was momentous. Those who attended the meeting reported their decision to the other fishermen and told everyone to prepare to go fishing the next morning. They lined up their catamarans on the beach, prepared their hooks and lines and also assembled all kinds of weapons to be used against anybody who dared to stop them.

It is more honourable for a fisherman to die in the sea, fighting for his rights, than starve on land. That was the philosophy behind the Marianad cooperative's defiance of unfair rules. The determination of the fishermen rattled their opponents and they withdrew from the fight. From then on the cooperative started to function again.

With the growth of the cooperative, many things began to change in the community. The fishermen realised that their catch meant money, and began to bargain for good prices. They perceived their past folly. They began to learn more about the cooperative, participate more in it and get more from it.

Today the Marianad cooperative is beyond doubt the only fishermen's cooperative in Kerala that is completely controlled by genuine fishermen and certainly the only village cooperative that undertakes to sell all the fish of its members.

# Marianad Today

*Glimpses into a day in the life of a fisheries cooperative*



Just about everyone in Marianad turns up at the beach at landing time—to examine, buy, sell or transport the catch. The Marianad cooperative has a role in each of these functions.



A bumper catch is being hauled ashore.



The catch is now unloaded on the beach.  
It will soon be auctioned by the Marianad cooperative.



This net fabrication unit of the Marianad cooperative, composed solely of women, is at work. Women are active participants in the Marianad economy. They keep track of their husbands' accounts with the cooperative. They have also formed their own association.



A mobile fish van from Marianad sells fish to consumers in Trivandrum city, about 15 kilometres away. The van, acquired by the cooperative with the assistance of a voluntary agency, has been operating for the past five years. It recently stopped the practice of selling the fish at a number of points. The fish are now unloaded in bulk at the Connemara wholesale market in Trivandrum.

An auction in progress, organised by the marketing wing of the Marianad cooperative. Men and women from the fishing community, fish distributors and officials of the cooperative huddle around the catch. The handling of the auction by the cooperative rather than by middlemen ensures the fishermen a fair deal. Even fishermen from neighbouring villages come to the Marianad beach to dispose of their catch.



The home of a Marianad fisherman. The village now has some 120 pucca (regular) houses, about 80 of which are similar to this. A few fishermen have electrified their homes, many have installed individual wells.



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BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME (BOBP)**

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