

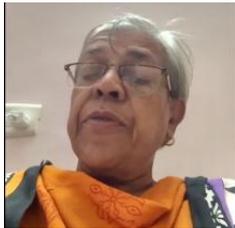
# Women of Waves (WoW) Rise Together by The World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP)

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*"Together, we rise. Together, we resist. Together, we shape the future"*

March 20, 2025

The World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP) organised a programme to celebrate the International Women's day on March 20th 2025 from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm. The programme titled "The Women of Waves (WoW) Rise Together" brought together fisherwomen, activists, and allies from around the world to highlight the important role women play in dismantling capitalistic and patriarchal systems. The urgency to assert fisherwomen's identities and reclaim their rightful place in society was brought to the forefront. Stories of strength, solidarity and resistance were shared by women across all continents.



## **Jesu Rethinam (Women Assembly Coordinator, WFFP)**

Welcoming all the participants to the programme, Jesu Rethinam gave the opening remarks and introduced the speakers and moderators. She mentioned the key discussion points for the programme as :

- Fisherwomen's role in sustaining life and livelihoods.
- Challenges of the 'Blue Economy' and resisting ocean privatization.
- Reclaiming our waters, collective action for justice.
- Stories of strength, solidarity and resistance.

She handed over the floor to the moderators for the programme Maíra Franco and Paula Satizábal. Maira is an environmental scientist from Brazil, a WFFP supporter and someone working on building a global network in opposition to industrial aquaculture. Paula is a researcher from Colombia, a WFFP supporter, and associated with the Helmholtz Institute for functional Marine Biodiversity – HIFMB.

## **KEY NOTES**

### **Nadine Orchid Nembhard, Importance of Women's Day (Co-Chair, WFFP, Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations)**

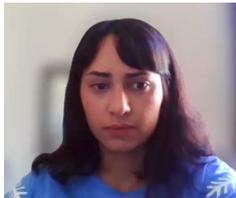


When women come together, we create spaces to flourish, and thrive – we must challenge stereotypes that persist in our communities. Women are often relegated to rules that don't reflect our capability, but if we work together, we can redefine what it is to be a woman in fisheries. We can be leaders in our community, organizations, and in WFFP. Diversity leads to better outcomes for everyone involved. We all need to commit to

supporting our fellow women in this field and empower all women to pursue their dreams without doubting themselves.

*"When women support women, we not only change lives, we transform whole communities. Together we can ensure that the future of fisheries is bright, is beautiful and filled with women."*

### **Marcela Dalete, Women's Day Poster (artist from Brazil)**



We need to look at who is responsible for the challenges women are facing today. Our focus should be giving power back to the community so they can face the big scale companies that invade our spaces. The consequences of ocean grabbing and extractivism strongly impact fisherwomen.

### **Christiana Saiti Louwa, Indigenous People's Perspective (Treasurer, WFFP)**



Women continue to be marginalized and excluded. In my culture, women are deeply connected to the waters and land. The woman feels more for our children, community, family, and environment. It is the woman who gives the knowledge to the children in the form of oral stories or practical examples. It is through this knowledge that we impact what we have to our family, our community and the world.

### **Ana Maria Suarez Franco, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and human rights processes (FIAN International, Secretary General)**



Women play a key role in liberating our coastal communities, thanks to the ecological knowledge passed down through generations. Many people do not recognize the role women play as leaders, caregivers of nature, and cultural preservers of social, economic, and environmental rights. Women have knowledge and wisdom of the ocean and the safeguarding of resources. They understand and respect the ocean and its rhythm, helping to defend it from threats of pollution and destruction through sustainable practices. Many fisherwomen remain excluded, but we are uniting forces. We have had some successes at the UN recognizing fisher peoples, and we hope to have many results in defense of fisherwomen in

the future.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN in 1979 to eliminate discrimination against women. It obligates states to respect, protect, and fulfill women's rights. During this convention, the CEDAW Committee was established to monitor state compliance and interpret the convention overtime. This committee provides recommendations to states on how to improve women's rights by adapting the convention to changing realities and amplifying the voices of marginalized women and grassroots groups.

In 2016, through sustained advocacy and engagement, rural women's groups successfully influenced the CEDAW Committee to adopt General Recommendation 34 on the Rights of Rural

Women. This adoption allows rural women to hold their government accountable for upholding their rights including their access to participation, food, food sovereignty, land, seeds, and other essential resources.

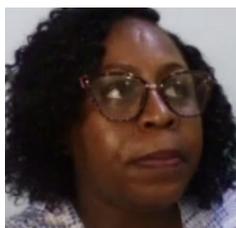
## **STORIES OF STRENGTH, SOLIDARITY AND RESISTANCE**

### **Subashiri Deepa (National Women Coordinator of NAFSO, Sri Lanka)**



Women are the life given to humanity and we are proud of it. We must unite the voices of women in fishing communities. Nobody will provide for us unless we fight. We must stand strong to claim our spaces and to get recognition as partners in the development sector. We are not in competition with men, we are claiming our share in the welfare scheme as equal development partners.

### **Kayana Toussaint (Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO), Saint Lucia)**



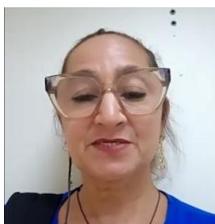
We must recognize the contribution of women in the fishing sector, whether catching, extracting or in a supporting role. The supporting role is as important as the extracting role. We need to leave a footprint enviable for women after us, to sit in spaces that men sit in. Our message to other women who may face social or legal barriers is that it is possible. There is hope for you because in our region we have fought to work alongside men.

### **Masnua'h (Coordinator of the Indonesian Fisherwomen Sisterhood (Persaudaraan Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia - [PPNI], Indonesia), CC Member WFFP)**



The climate crisis has amplified violence towards women. This is exasperated by extractive development and false solutions pushed by the government through economic policies and law enforcement. Women in coastal villages are experiencing limited access, labour transitions, loss of livelihoods. There has been an increase in child marriages and this crisis has made women poorer. Our goal and networks is supporting women's groups working to encourage economic independence through organizing and education and the promotion of feminist economies.

### **Josana Pinto da Costa (Member of the National Coordination Committee of the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen, Brazil, CC Member WFFP)**



If one woman suffers, we all suffer. If one woman has a victory, we celebrate the victory together. We bond in the nature of solidarity. Let's celebrate this nature and continue to do this work in the name of our resistance.

**Necla Yazici (Birlik, Turkey)**



I have been a fisherwoman in Turkey for over 53 years following my family's legacy. I have experienced the climate crisis first hand with fewer fish being caught and prices for fishing resources rising each year. Many fisherpeople in my community have lost their livelihood. After my husband's passing, people told me to sell my fishing boat since there was no man to operate it. I told them that it was my boat, and I would not sell it until I die. I would like to be a role model for women. The sea is like love we do not know where does it starts and ends.

**Marianeli Torres Benavides (C-CONDEM, Ecuador)**



The new world order and geopolitical moment that we are living in is confronting us, we are facing an existential crisis, specially in the habitats of fisher peoples in the mangroves, and marine and coastal areas. To build spaces of life we need to understand what is happening, a brutal process of invasion of the sea and marine spaces by extractive industries, trade and war. This is a global crisis of global governance and the global economy is changing and this is changing our lives. We need to look at what is happening in Gaza, all people are vulnerable, including the existence of women and ecosystems. We stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people. We can only build by understanding what is happening and build from a different epistemology. We have been building a school for fisher women and collectors. This school is a co-creation based on the local knowledge bringing together different groups, this is a community space to offer a safe space to find shelter from what is happening that is threatening our own existence, the existence of women and possibility to reproduce life. We are organising a network of women fishers from Latin America to work and dream together.

**Yasmeen Ali Shah (Senior Vice Chairperson of Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum & President of Noori Development Foundation Social Movement of Fisher Women and Peasant Women-Pakistan)**



Between the illegal occupation of the coast and land resources, and the impacts of climate change, the culture of the fishing community has been destroyed and pushed further into poverty. Despite these challenges, women fisherfolk refuse to be silenced. Through the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, we are fighting for fair wages, social security, secure tenure rights, and environmental protection. We call upon governments, international organizations, and civil society to recognize women's contributions, ensure their rights, and protect their livelihoods.

**Aminata Diallo (Association des pêcheurset du Mali, Mali)**



Women have no access to economic means or bank credit and cannot own land. They are the bottom of society despite being the majority. When a woman asks for a loan at a bank, the woman will pay more interest than the man even though women do an equal share of the work and should have the same rights as men. Currently, discussions are being held with the men in our fishing community to spread awareness of these issues.

**Janet Cleetus (Secretary of Thiruvananthapuram District & Senior Leader of Kerala State Independent Fishworkers Federation (KSMTF), India)**



The central government of India has made a decision to mine sand from the ocean in India without any consultation with the fisher people. Many types of fish will be lost because of sand mining. This is the area where many of the fish species are found. The sand, the shore and these fish resources cannot be returned. Our focus needs to be to make the community stronger.

**Lakshmi Kovvada (President of the Andhra Pradesh Traditional Fishworkers Union-India)**



Our greatest threat includes industrial aquaculture throughout Andhra Pradesh's coastline. All the coastal lands owned by the Forest Department are getting converted into tourism projects and conservation parks. Our way of life is being destroyed. The ground water is being polluted. The sea is also polluted due to coastal hatcheries and coastal industries. The availability of fish has also reduced due to which many fishers are also forced to migrate. This is a time for us to fight not only at the state and national level, but at the global level too.

**Patrisha Faye Aldefolio (Pamalakaya, Philippines)**



In the face of reclamation, privatization, and other forms of ocean grabbing in the Philippines, fisherwomen are not merely passive observers in the fishing industry. They are facing the same threats as their male counterparts. They are losing their homes, losing fish to catch, sell and eat. This two-fold oppression of economic marginalization and gender equality has long been plaguing fisherwomen in the Philippines. Projects that oppress people and the exploitation they face due to them, affects women in a severe manner as compared to others. As care givers, they are tasked to bring the home in order again after a situation of a disaster. They are the ones who ensure food for their family to eat. But what will they serve to eat if the fish and rice in the Philippines are imported? and if the marine ecosystem is disrupted and the fish catch is reduced. Women take on the task of cleaning the homes and cleaning the sea, in case of oil spills. And so, when the men are sailing to catch fish, the women left at home are the ones who march, protest and demonstrate for their husbands, brothers, children, but most importantly for themselves. We should rely on the innate capability of women to care and organize and maximize it to serve for their own liberation.

**Suphaphon Pannarai (Fisher Women Network, Thailand)**



Fishing is our way of life it is our source of food and survival, we are impacted by profit driven policies, which has increased the inequalities that women experience in our society. Capitalism is a threat to us, we are mobilising in our communities to protect our resources and our way of life. We are in struggle to fight for our resources and change the policies that impact our lives and future generations. We need to connect among women

to become a strong network to resist capitalist economies. We use this international women's day to share among ourselves and we see we are facing the same problems of profit driven development and how as fisher women we have been invisible, we have to join hands to resist the false solutions and for this we need to have a strong network in our countries and within the fisher movement.

**Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk (Director of Sustainable Development Foundation-Thailand)**



Women are resisting capitalistic and economic development. To make a change, we have to strengthen the women's movement, make ourselves more visible, and be part of the decision making.

**CLOSING STATEMENTS**

**Jesu Rethinam (Women Assembly Coordinator, WFFP)**

Looking towards the future, the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP) has many plans to expand the reach and impact of its movement. As per the WFFP General Secretary's statement during the GA8, each year, from the 5th of November to the 10th of December, WFFP will have a five week long campaign across the globe. The goal is to develop themes that empower the groundwork and strengthen the campaign demands. These weeks are broken up into themes such as "Gender Rights & Violence against Women," "Asserting Fisher Identity," "Fisher Rights as Human Rights," and many more.

**Susan Herawati (Secretary General of KIARA-Indonesia)**



We face an uneasy situation because of extractive and exploitative development. We need a movement to reclaim the waters and ocean.

**As the World Forum of Fisher People we declare 5th November to 10th December as the global fisherwomen campaign**







