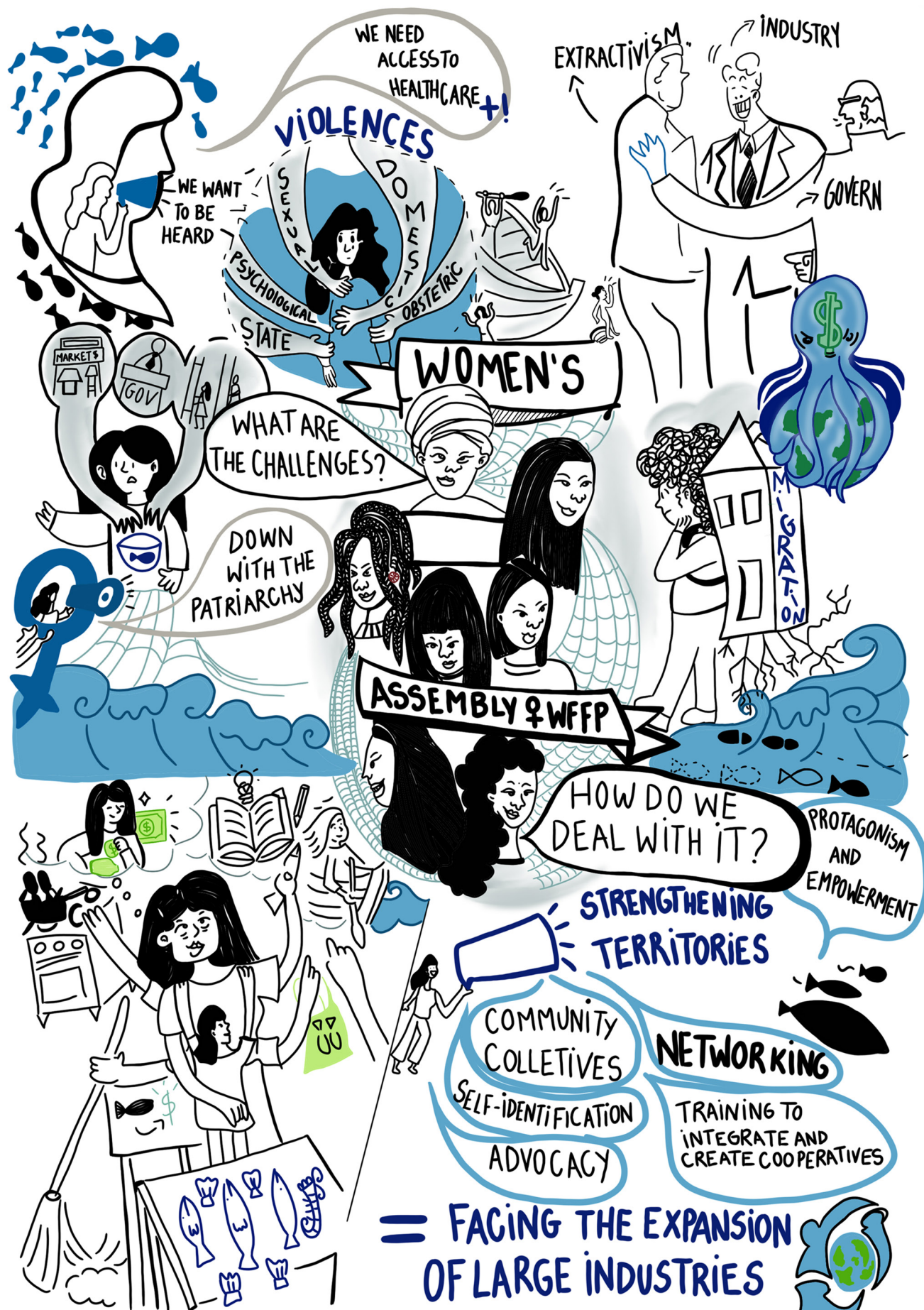


A Report of the Women's Assembly



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Fisherwomen united will never be defeated

**World Forum of Fisher Peoples
General Assembly -8
14th to 22nd November 2024**

A report of the Women's Assembly

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We would especially like to acknowledge the efforts of all the member countries where fisherwomen assemblies were organized as a prelude to the GA8.

We thank the interpreters and everyone who has supported with this coordination too.

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Women's Assembly, Brazil 2024 – “women united will never be defeated”

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) is an organisation formed from an independent global assembly of fisher peoples, organised in New Delhi, India in November 1997. This is the largest fisher peoples' network across the globe and has created an impact over the years at the global and national level, favouring the fishing communities, our inland and coastal/marine rights. The WFFP has taken forward this vision with focusing on the collective power that we hold and hence is empowering fisherwomen who contribute to more than 50% of the fishwork across the world.

WFFP recognizes that issues and concerns in the fisheries sector have significantly changed with the promotion of Blue Economy, Ocean Grabbing, Marine Spatial Planning, Sea-bed Mining, Intensive and Industrial Aquaculture, all of these combined with the drastic changes induced by climate crisis, have placed the traditional fishing and coastal communities at the receiving end of much devastation and exploitation.

Fisherwomen's Assembly:

The leadership decided to have a specific fisherwomen's assembly immersed into the programme of the GA8. The thought process behind the women's assembly has been to engage with women, LGBTQI+ persons in the fisheries sector to amplify their voices and concerns at the GA-8 and also to build a global women leaders alliance. As a prelude to the GA8 in Brazil the leadership also gave a call to its member groups for them to organize their own women's assemblies and bring their collective vision to the WFFP stage.

This was thought of as an opportunity to strengthen the active women leaders both in the regional and global forums, identify women advocates and researchers, in order for them to build a body of work that will be relevant to visibilise the women's politics in the long run.

Thematic framing of the 8th general assembly:

The Coordinating Committee had decided on three overarching themes for the 8th general assembly:

- Food Sovereignty – ‘the solution we want’
- The Climate Crisis – “the collective attempt to survive all organisms”
- Ocean Grabbing – ‘the threat we struggle against’

In this context, regional and country-based women assemblies were convened.

Women's Assembly 2024- main focus points –

- The representation of women was the central focus point. The focus was on women's issues not being included but also the fact that women are not represented.
- The GA was taken as a space to address and seek solutions to patriarchal structures within our own movements as well as in the external spaces in which we engage
- Recognizing women in leadership and include more women leaders from the movements by identifying them and providing space for them.

- The women's assembly aimed at a political assertion and a consolidation of issues raised by women and their demands.
- Trajectory of the articulation and the evolving concepts in the public domain were analyzed. From fisherman's unions to the inclusion of women and hence the articulation to fishworkers, the articulation of fisher people to ocean people.
- This intervention would lead to WFFP programmes dedicated to learning about gender issues targeting not only women, but should educate all on gender justice.

Following the call given by the WFFP leadership, Women's Assemblies took place in the following countries before the GA8:



Short reports of each of these women's assemblies is attached as an annexure at the end of this document.

Women's Assembly at the WFFP GA8- proceedings:

Around 70 women participated in the Assembly, representing at least 34 countries, from across the different regions

The discussions focused on three broad themes provided below along with a brief about the perspectives from women coming from each of these regions

The representatives present for the women's assembly were from the following different regions:

- **African region:** Mauritania, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Guinea, Kenya
- **Asia-Pacific region:** Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Maldives, Pakistan, Palestine
- **Latin American region:** Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil
- **Caribbean region:** Belize, Tobago, Guyana, St Vincent & Grenadines, Antigua, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Anguilla, Bahamas, St Kitts & Nevis
- **Europe:** Spain, Turkey
- **North America:** Canada, USA





1) Perspectives of fisherwomen from different countries challenging patriarchy, exclusion of women, violence against women

African region:

The patriarchal culture prevailing in these regions has led to the exclusion of women from any space where they could be getting recognition. There is widespread violence against women and this is predominant in many regions. There is a prevailing dependence on men who are also the primary decision makers. Women are not valued or understood.

It was recognized and acknowledged that women are the pillars that hold the community together despite the violence they face at various levels.

Asia-Pacific region:

Invisibility and lack of recognition is an issue in all regions and especially in the context of recognition in identity; recognition or representation in governance. In some places, policies that favour men, can not be accessed by women. Men's participation is normalized, expected and that is the cultural norm, while women's participation is not. Women are not involved in decision making, whether it is in the community or in the government. Women struggling to defend their rights face violence, intimidation, criminalisation – Examples were stated about women in Indonesia being teargassed by the military. Women also face gender-based violence in the workplace and examples were shared from Indonesian shrimp-processing industry.

North America, European region:

Femicide in North America was highlighted and it was noted that the number of indigenous women missing and murdered was very concerning and called for urgent action. The disappearances of women were being noted on a regular basis.

In Turkey and Gaza, it was shared that fisherwomen are not allowed to fish, own boats, or get fishing licenses. It is very difficult to be recognized as fisherwomen.

The situation in Gaza was shared, with discussions about the extreme violence against

people, denial of access to the sea, state violence against fishers and the current situation being one of nothing but a genocide.

Latin American region:

Lack of representation/recognition of women as fishers was noted and the inequality of women with male fishers.

Stating more specific examples, it was noted that women's access to estuaries and traditional shellfish harvesting areas is limited through violence – they place electric fences and women have been electrocuted trying to access the mangrove areas. Women who denounce those who are corrupt are threatened with violence and death. Drug trafficking, insecurity and violence impact women. Women are threatened by the police when they speak up, the state does not protect, but does the opposite.

There are situations of Machismo inside organisations and instances of physical and psychological violence were spoken about. It was repeatedly recognized that it is the fisher 'man' that is considered and the women are invisible.

Lack of security in the work environments was highlighted in this region as well.

2) Perspectives of fisherwomen from different countries about the challenges faced by the fisher women, women fish gatherers, seafood collectors, fisher peoples, ocean people and water peoples.

African region:

Lack of recognition of fisher rights was cited as the main issue. It was noted that extractive industries are on the rise with oil, gas, mining.

Access to the fishing sector was discussed and the fact that this access is reducing for women, leading to migration. Climate crisis has also been a major factor leading to migration, especially due to situations of severe drought in many regions.

Usually with low education levels, women face various problems in society. They depend on men because the men go to the sea, and hence, they are not active in the process.

Asia-Pacific region:

Policies in favour of fishers are not prioritized and there are limited or no benefits, or social security, which is posing to be a huge issue.

Low income of the entire community gradually and fisherwomen were noted and the fact that there are no policies to address this, no support from the government. It was discussed that there is limited access to healthcare, including pregnancy, childbirth, maternal care. Water and sanitation access is also limited in many regions.

It was discussed that lack of access to credit is crucial to the work of fishers. Credits are available but at high loan interest rates. Loan sharks charge high rates, for which cases were cited especially in Sri Lanka.

Pollution of all water bodies is a crucial issue to the lives of fishers and it is having severe impacts. In many places, climate change and lack of support has led to women migrating or changing their occupation. There are cases of widespread destruction of biodiversity and examples were shared from India regarding tourism development and industrial aquaculture

expansion.

Military violence & war was also discussed – for example US and Chinese interference in the West Philippines Sea are making this region a battleground; conflicts are also affecting Indonesia.

Human rights violations were noted as a significant issue in the region and specific examples were stated of fisher people who are fighting for their rights and have been killed. A specific example was shared of 9 fishers killed in the Philippines.

North America, European region:

It was discussed by the women that there are clashes between those engaged in the commercial aspect of the fisheries sector and the artisanal & indigenous fishers.

State violence and various human rights violations were reported in the context of the lack of recognition of indigenous rights. It was noted that indigenous fishers are forced to assimilate into the sector of commercial fisheries.

In the indigenous territories, government enforces division between land and water but this kind of a divide is not part of the indigenous people's way of life.

They also stated that jurisdiction related problems make it harder to claim rights.

Latin American region:

Extractive industries in the region affect food sovereignty and it was discussed that this is affecting women's ability to take food home.

Corporate driven conservation methodologies were discussed and it was stated that concepts like Marine Protected Areas are excluding the fishers. In the name of conservation, traditional territories are also being encroached upon. It was noted that there is high levels of corruption in the name of mangrove protection. Mangroves are central to our longevity on the planet and there is a need to protect these for our future generations.

The ecological imbalance was discussed in the context of increase in pollution leading to the decline of fishing and the death of many species. The wind power projects coming up in different areas along with the push for the blue economy were also discussed in this context.

Industrial shrimp aquaculture is being pushed for consistently and over the 30 years of struggle fisher groups have been reiterating that it has been causing devastation and ecological destruction.

It was stated that there is a decline in crabs and shellfish numbers forcing migration. There is also exclusion of shellfish collectors in many regions. Government concessions for example for shellfish gathering is causing conflict in communities- leading to privatization and payment for access.

Fishers are facing lack of recognition from the state and organisation. They are also being discriminated from access to social security, or any health benefits.

There is a situation of lack of recognition of the fishers, as the people who are food providers. Overall, it was also stated that there is a lack of investment in traditional fisheries.

Caribbean region :

Women are restricted to support roles as fish processors, vendors, and those handling

the marketing. There is a perception that they are not capable of fishing. However, it was noted that in general women are very active in fisheries in the Caribbean, in some places they are also boat owners or co-owners.

It was reiterated that the support roles of processing, packaging, selling etc. are also very important roles and should be recognized as part of the fisheries sector. It was noted that access to credit is a major obstacle, and inability to access credit makes it impossible to upgrade boats in ways that would enable women fishers to participate more, e.g. adding bathrooms. The unavailability of insurance for fishers was also cited. Banks are also reluctant to lend because fishing is seen as high risk sector.

3) Perspectives of fisherwomen from different countries about the need for collectivization, solidarity and collective rights and about what is needed for the future generations

Women organising themselves was seen as a crucial requirement and it was echoed by all regions that it is important to strengthen struggles. Women coming into decision making positions was cited as an important step ahead..

It was stated that the way government concessions have caused conflict and this shows the real need for collective rights to access resources. The fact that fishers are not mere beneficiaries but are citizens of their respective countries and have rights was reiterated and agreed on as a strong position by all regions.

The session focused on discussions about creating networks and collectives for empowerment of women, political articulation from the grassroots, partnerships with allies (e.g. universities, health organisations), self-identification as fisherwomen and strategies for confronting large extractive projects that are causing destruction. There was a discussion about a regional organisation specifically for women fishers in the Caribbean.

It was noted that there is a need for trainings and public awareness, e.g. presentations on women in fisheries during career days in schools.

Building solidarity between women was highlighted as a core aspect for all our work.

It was noted by all regions that women are mostly the primary care givers at home and this makes the work they do more difficult. It was discussed that if we do a simple exercise of looking at the 24 hour clock of a fisherwoman it would be clear about the strength this entire section of society holds.

The women gave slogans for solidarity with Palestine and discussed about the nature of ongoing campaigns in support of the people there.



Declaration of WFFP-GA8 Fisherwomen's Assembly 2024

From the II WFFP Global Fisherwomen Assembly Brasilia, 2024. We, the women fisher, women fish gatherers, women seafood collectors across the world (34 countries in every region) representing marine, inland, traditional and artisanal fisher peoples declare:

We the fisherwomen, will be at the forefront of the struggle to protect our seas, coasts, inland waters, coasts, our childrens and future generations.

We see this assembly, our coming together as a sign of redemption of those who have been excluded from society for too long, both as fisher women and women!

We understand the need to make the insatiable desire for justice and the struggle against injustice our way of life.

We condemn the old and new economic regimes that displace and dispossess fishing communities, destroy the living conditions of the peoples, women, and children of the seas and rivers.

We dream of a new generation without gender discrimination, ensuring justice and equality.

We believe in the union of women of diverse fishing cultures and ways of life to lead the way to empowering our traditional fishing communities.

As symbols of womanhood, we respectfully remember and stand in solidarity with all the fisherwomen leaders. We stand in solidarity with the leaders that fought for the rights of fisher peoples and the liberation of women. We take the pledge to honour our mothers, grandmothers and elders of the struggle for justice started by deceased fisher peoples leaders untethered.

We believe that this distinguished Women's Assembly will inspire women across the world to break the chains of patriarchy, slavery, exploitation, and oppression.

Let us be the protesting voice of womanhood capable of breaking free from the oppression of patriarchal supremacy.

Let us dignify women's contributions to fishing communities, moving away from the currents of socio-political and religious pressures.

Along with the protest voice, we are also ready for a resolute path ahead in the defence of our waters, our lands and our lives!

We recognize our strengths, making this declaration our own compass to value and guide our everyday actions. We pledge with the mother ocean, our witness, to join hands and partner in the path of defending our territories and resisting capitalist and patriarchal domination and destruction

Resolutions

We resolve to declare November 5th as the International Day of Fisherwomen. We call WFFP to continue to support the Women's Assembly and to ensure the Women's Assembly will take place at each and every General Assembly. As well as to support the organisation of

Fisher Women's Assemblies across all the Regional Fora.

We demand that our identities as 'fisherwomen', 'women fish gatherers', 'seafood collectors' be recognised and included in all the communication in relation to 'fisher peoples', 'coastal peoples', 'ocean peoples', and 'water peoples'. WFFP should have a gender-sensitive language.

We reiterate our identity as historical, traditional, artisanal, fishing communities and refuse to be categorised into mechanical scale-based groupings. We are the traditional fisher peoples' and we belong to oceanic and riverine civilisations.

We demand recognition of the historical role of fisher women in the protection, reproduction and caring of fishing ways of life. We acknowledge that women have undergone historical and ongoing forms of oppression, which intersect with racial, cast-based, ageist, ablest forms of oppression.

Gaining our customary rights and territorial rights recognised by governments is the only way ahead in fighting Ocean Grabbing, Marine Spatial Planning and other Blue economy projects and conservation agenda.

We reject Ocean Grabbing and its formulations of Blue Economy, 30x30, Marine Spatial Planning, industrial fisheries, industrial/capitalist aquaculture, which impacts fishing communities and coastal ecologies, disproportionately impacting women and future generations.

We demand halt of Industrial factory farming of aquatic food and privatization of small aquaculture farms, falsely promoted by corporates, international organisations, governments in the name of food security. In reality this is displacing fisherwomen, limiting access to traditional harvesting grounds, while subjecting them and their communities to increased violence and harassment.

We demand the protection of our dignity and rights to education and social security – health, pension, caring, disability support; and the recognition of our occupational skills.

We denounce growing insecurity and violence in the context of drug trafficking, which is having profound impacts in our communities driving migration, health issues linked to increased substance abuse, and gendered violence.

WFFP must initiate a global campaign in the lines of 'Reclaiming the Waters, Reimagining Earth Future' – as a programmatic and outreach programme for all member countries.

We ally with the global women's movement and feminist thought process, in our battles for liberation from patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, racism, casteism, inequality, sexual violence and discrimination.

We also call upon all traditional fishing communities and women to come forward and ally with us in this battle against imperialism and neo-colonialism!

We deplore the forces of War and War mongering. We demand immediate end to the genocide against the Palestinian people by Israel, and the end of militarised violence and the interference of the US and China in the West Philippine Sea.

We stand up against the feminicide, disappearance, and harassment of Indigenous fisher

women.

We assert the following:

Statement 1: WFFP to continue to support the Women's Assembly and to ensure the Women's Assembly will take place at each and every General Assembly. As well as to support the organisation of Fisher Women's Assemblies across all the Regional Fora. The Women's assembly also needs to have action plan for women fisher issues!

Statement 2: We must reiterate our identity as "fisher women" "women fish gatherers", "seafood collectors", "fisher peoples", "ocean people", and "water peoples".

Statement 3: Gaining our customary rights and territorial rights recognised by governments is the only way ahead in fighting Ocean Grabbing, Marine Spatial Planning and other Blue economy projects and conservation agenda.

Statement 4: We want to ally with not just ocean and riverine communities but build an alliance of all traditional producers and indigenous peoples and develop common actions to protect our fishing territories. Only then we can strengthen our fight against imperialism and colonialism.

Statement 5: We demand WFFP to start a global campaign "Reclaiming Waters, Reimagining Earth's Future" - that will challenge the various blue economy projects, oil and gas, thermal projects, coast and ocean mining projects that are destroying our homes and people!

Statement 6: We reject the global capital definition of small-scale and larger-scale! we want to be identified as traditional / Artisanal fishers and the industry as predatory industrial fishing!

Statement 7: We reject industrial/capitalist aquaculture / mariculture, as fishing. It is industrial farming that is harmful to our lands, oceans and peoples. It cannot be a livelihood option!

Statement 8: We reject conservation and climate crisis mitigation projects brought to us as false solutions to profit corporates. Conservation and climate mitigation cannot be at the expense of traditional fishers, as means to displace us. We are the real guardians of the oceans, waters, and coasts.

Statement 9: We reject all forms of gendered violence within and beyond our communities.

Statement 10: We demand the political recognition and support to fisherwomen representatives fighting against patriarchy within their communities, fisher organisations, the fisher movement, and any regional and global forums. For this, we demand equal representation from women at all levels of decision-making within WFFP and its member organisations. We also demand the inclusion of a Women Assembly representative at each of the WFFP Regional Fora and at the Coordinating Committee.

Statement 11: As women of oceans and waters, we want to ally with the progressive and feminist forces in our countries and the global women's movement, in our thought processes. Our battle is for our liberation from patriarchy, inequality, against sexual violence and discrimination! -

Statement 12: The fight for our territories and customary rights is linked to all peoples'

democratic and ideological struggles for liberation of peoples, their rights, liberties and self-determination! We deplore war mongering by imperialist forces and stand by Palestinian peoples and all other struggles for peace and liberation, against imperialism!

**THERE IS NO LIBERATION OF FISHER PEOPLE WITHOUT
THE LIBERATION OF FISHERWOMEN!**

Annexure:

Thailand:

Women fisher network in Thailand came together on November 4-5, 2024 at Trang province. Fisher women are the backbone of small-scale fisheries, yet their invaluable contributions remain largely unrecognized. From processing and marketing fish to supporting fishing operations, they play a vital role in ensuring food security and economic sustainability. However, societal norms and systemic barriers often limit their opportunities. By challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for greater policy inclusion, the groups in Thailand aim to empower women in fisheries, unlocking their full potential and driving positive change in coastal communities.

In Thailand, discussions around small-scale fisheries and gender focused on several key points, particularly the visibility and recognition of women in the fishing sector:

- **Women in small-scale fisheries are often invisible** in official statistics and policy discussions, even though they play a crucial role in the sector. Their contributions are frequently overlooked, especially in activities like fish processing, marketing, and supporting fishing operations.
- Many women who are actively involved in fishing and related activities do not receive recognition as “fisherwomen.” This **lack of acknowledgment** affects their access to resources, training, and decision-making opportunities within the community and industry.
- Traditional gender roles often dictate the types of work women are expected to perform in fisheries. While men typically handle fishing, women are more involved in post-harvest activities. However, these **roles are changing as more women engage directly in fishing activities, challenging societal norms.**
- **Women contribute significantly to the household and local economy through their work in small-scale fisheries.** Their role in ensuring food security and income for their families is essential, yet undervalued.
- **Women in fisheries often face challenges in accessing resources such as credit, technology, and fishing licenses.** These barriers hinder their ability to fully participate and benefit from the fisheries sector.
- **There is growing advocacy for the inclusion of women in fisheries policies and programs.** Efforts are being made to address gender disparities by involving women in decision-making processes and ensuring their needs are met in the fisheries sector.
- **The climate crisis is having a profound impact on small-scale fisheries, with fisherwomen—who often play a central role in fishing communities—being disproportionately affected.**

These discussions were aimed at bringing visibility to the contributions of women in small-scale fisheries, advocate for their recognition as fisherwomen, and address the gender

inequalities that persist in the sector.

The challenges faced by Thai fisherwomen mirror global issues in small-scale fisheries, requiring targeted solutions. The nature of interventions of the women's group in Thailand is focused on the following:

- 1.Data Collection and Analysis:** Collect gender-disaggregated data on women's roles in the fisheries value chain and conduct community-based assessments to understand local dynamics.
- 2.Legal and Policy Framework:** Advocate for the legal recognition of women's rights as fishers and the development of gender-responsive fisheries policies to ensure equal access to resources.
- 3.Capacity Building and Training:** Offer training in sustainable fishing practices, entrepreneurship, business management, and leadership to empower women in the sector.
- 4.Access to Resources:** Improve financial inclusion, access to technology, and infrastructure (e.g., cold storage, landing sites) to enhance market access and support women's economic participation.
- 5.Social and Cultural Change:** Promote community mobilization and awareness campaigns to challenge gender roles and highlight women's contributions in fisheries.
- 6.Health and Safety:** Ensure workplace safety training and access to healthcare services, including maternal and child health.

Specific Strategies for Thailand:

- Collaborate with government agencies for gender-responsive policies.
- Strengthen women's organizations to advocate for rights.
- Support community-based initiatives and seek international cooperation for best practices.



Philippines:

PAMALAKAYA-Pilipinas women fisherfolk situationer report for WFFP GA8

There was a large gathering on the international day of rural women on 15th October 2024. Women fisherfolk in coastal communities are usual targets of abuses and harassments, especially when they oppose programs and projects that threaten their main sources of livelihood. Over 5 kilometers of mussel farms (tahungan) and other fishing structures in Navotas City have been dismantled by order of the local government unit, leaving thousands without a source of income. Affected fisherfolk and other residents believe that the dismantling order is part of the 650-hectare Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation Project of SMC and the LGU. The women members for PAMALAKAYA-Navotas Chapter are currently facing threats due to this, causing their mussel farms to be demolished all in the name of rehabilitating Manila Bay.

Thousands are affected by this demolition and project in this part of Manila Bay. According to the LGU, the dismantling of mussel farms is part of their compliance with the Supreme Court's Mandamus to clean up and rehabilitate Manila Bay. However, the fisher people insist that their mussel farms are not the source of pollution or garbage in the ocean. In fact, it helps in the growth of marine life because it is inhabited by various kinds of fish. The real destroyers of the sea are these projects that threaten livelihoods and the environment.

Among all the activists working, the work of Aries Soledad is especially recognized.

Aries Soledad, a queer member of PAMALAKAYA-Cavite Chapter and its secretary-general, recently faced threat and red-tagging from state forces. Aries has been a long time Rights defender from being a trade Union Leader in Architectural Framework Technologies Incorporation (AFTI) and eventually becoming the Secretary General of Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW) to now working with urban poor and fisherfolk communities. Aries' work as a community organizer and rights defender has caused threats to his life, liberty, and security. Incidents of threat, harassment, and intimidation have been experienced by Aries beginning from the time of the Bloody Sunday raids and killings in the Southern Tagalog Region up to the present. In September 2022 they were visited by state forces asking him to "clear" his name on their watchlist, while communities that they serve have reported that state authorities have repeatedly visited them asking them for any information about Aries. Despite the lingering threat on Aries' life, liberty, and security, they still choose to continue the work as a community leader and rights defender.

In line with these campaigns of the fisherfolk communities, PAMALAKAYA-Pilipinas launched different activities and programmes:

Mobilization in front of San Miguel Corporation who is the number one purveyor of the reclamation.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/7M55RFySfFaPQf7W/>

Solidarity lunch and cook-out with the women mussel farmers of Navotas.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/d6J3NzwFVokuQrSY/>

International Day of Rural Women mobilization

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/mFqbu5DSF4GEX8nq/>

World Food Day mobilization

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/xxHxyag3ZnT5X4s8/>





Pakistan:

A fisherwomen's assembly was organized in Karachi, Pakistan on 10th November 2024

Fisherwomen demanded recognition, rights, justice at this historic assembly.

They asserted that the work of the fisher people needs recognition. As Indigenous people, there are numerous challenges—from the impacts of climate change to man-made disasters. Hundreds of women from across the city and different districts of Sindh gathered to demand the government's action on multiple issues.

The way of life of fisher women was discussed and the fact that Fisherwomen work day and night alongside the men. They are the real victims of the climate crisis. It was asserted that fisher women should be given rights, and that is possible if the work of the fisher people is recognized.

The event also showcased the rich cultural and social values of the fishing community, with local food, embroidery, and lifestyle on display at various stalls. Through performances, young boys and girls highlighted the struggles their parents have endured for years.

Among the demands was the immediate release of detained Pakistani fishermen in India and a call for the government to not stop the flow of water from the Indus River, which is crucial to their livelihoods. According to figures by the Sindh Human Rights Commission, 181 Pakistani fishermen are currently detained in Indian jails. There is no consular access to 23 of these fishermen. It was demanded that these fisher people be released by the Indian government. It was also stated that the Government must facilitate the children of fisher people by providing access to government schools and hospitals. It was also stated that as one of the clear demands that the government must issue the '*Mahigeer Card*,' similar to the one issued to Sindh's farmers. It was emphasized that a social safety net is critical for the survival of the fishing community.

It was also highlighted at the assembly that the government must take responsibility, especially in the context of development projects, the new canals on the Indus River will further worsen the fishing community's lives. It was decided that the fishers will engage with lawmakers and demand for their rights.

A very major aspect of the assembly was to honour and respect the fisher women and recognize their courage, their way of life. It was reiterated that the fisher people have been sidelined and marginalized. Various women leaders from the social sector presented their views and highlighted the issues of the fisher women. Speakers also called for urgent government intervention to address the systemic issues facing the fishing community- lakes and water bodies being destroyed, livelihoods impacted, lack of basic facilities among others.

The women's assembly echoed with statements of solidarity and togetherness on these issues and a resolve to continue stronger in the struggle for the rights of the fisher people.

Press Clippings:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1249658-fisherwomen-demand-rights-recognition-justice-at-historic-assembly>

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2508760/fisherwomen-demand-rights-recognition>

<https://www.facebook.com/jbconnects.pk/videos/first-fisherwoman-assembly-reclaims-ocean-demands-clean-watersforyou%E3%82%B7-fisheries-/436765829193029/?rdid=JHmqvciz2Oyr33lo>





India:

The first ever, India Fisherwomen Assembly was held in Trivandrum, Kerala on 5-6 November 2024

The two day national Assembly had participation of more than 11 states including coastal and inland fisheries related states. The Women's Assembly had solidarity participation from more than 20 national organisations and movements. More than 500 women leaders and members of unions participated in the Assembly and more than 200 delegates represented their respective unions and women's federations. The theme being 'From the River to the Sea', the assembly has become a powerful platform for the resilience, identity, and struggles of fisherwomen across India. The event saw inspiring solidarity from diverse sectors, with representatives of Adivasi struggles, domestic workers' union, struggles for gender justice, the anti caste movement etc. Media persons, artists and elected political representatives also joined the programme, extending their support.

The venue for the programme was at the Fr.Thomas Kocherry Resource and Programme Centre that was also inaugurated. It is being revived as a space for fisher people.

The cultural aspect of the assembly weaved together the true essence of the programme, with symbolic references to the unity of the fishers by pouring water that each of the groups brought from their own oceans and rivers into a large glass bowl, a pledge to mother sea being recited in different languages at the sea shore and a rally with songs and music. A theme song for the IFA has been developed written and sung by the women, that proved to be a big boost to the gathering and is being heard like an anthem for the fisher women.

The award-giving and felicitation ceremony honored the strongest leaders of the fisherwomen movement. The awards were instituted in memory of prominent fishworker movement leaders.

1. Fr. Thomas Kocherry Memorial Award

For Lifetime Contribution to Fishworkers' Struggles

Presented to

Ms. Purnima Meher

2. Fr. Thomas Kocherry Memorial Award

For leadership work among fisherwomen in India

Presented to

Ms. Kovvada Varalakshmi

3. Sr. P.V. Rose Memorial Award by Cheru Resmi Centre

For Kerala Fisherwomen community leaders

Presented to Ms. Raji Antony

4. Sr. Patricia Kuruvinkunnel Memorial Award

Presented to Ms. Baby Mercy for pioneering work towards organising Inland Fishworkers in Kerala

5. Com. P. Christy Memorial Award, for fisherwomen leader from Tamil Nadu /

Pondicherry

Presented to Ms. K Vedhavalli, President Karaikal Fisherwomen Federation, for collectivising women and providing courageous leadership

6. Com P. Christy Memorial Fellowship

For National Fisher youth community leaders

Presented to Mr. Antony Kebiston Gomez for his courage, commitment and passion for community liberation

7. Com. T. Peter Memorial National Award for selfless work by women community leaders

Presented to Ms. Laila Aliyar Kunju

Awarded by KSMTF Thiruvananthapuram District Committee

8. Com. Rambhau Patil Award

To honour a new fisher union doing vibrant work to defend community rights Presented to Uttarakannada District Fisherfolks Association

Awarded by Thomas Kocherry Program and Resource Centre, Kerala

9. Com. Harekrishna Debnath Award

For consistent work to promote livelihood opportunities for fishers Presented to the Kanyakumari District Deep Sea Artisanal Fishworkers Union in Tamil Nadu. Awarded by Thomas Kocherry Program and Resource Centre, Kerala

Main demands of the IFA:

- To devise adequate and highly **beneficial schemes and policies to cater to their post landing activities** including establishment of modern and hi-tech (FISH) **fisher markets** in line with the Farmers' markets and also allocate and reserve places for fisher women in existing district Markets.
- The Traditional Fishers and Coastal Communities' **Way of Life and Livelihood are disrupted by the Blue Economy Development** interventions such as Offshore Wind Energy, Rocket launching and Propulsion Centre, Exploration of Hydro Carbons, Establishment of Nuclear Park and Thermal Corridors, Beach Sand and Deep-Sea Mining, Blue flag beaches and Tourism circuits. We demand the Union **Government to put a halt on the projects and revisit them based on the socio, cultural, ecological and economic impacts on the fishers as well as the ocean ecological integrity** to ensure their international commitments on Sustainable Development and Biodiversity.
- **The Union and State Governments to devise more Marine and Inland Capture Fishers' Oriented Schemes and Policies rather than fish Culture oriented schemes and policies.**
- To **revisit the fisheries policy and budgets to make it inclusive** and equitable to fisherwomen.
- Under the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF), we request the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Department of

Fisheries for Establishment of *Modern Integrated Country Boat (Gill Neers and Hook & Liners) Fish Landing Centre* comprising of Net Mending Centres, Ice Plants, Auction Halls, Cold Storage facilities, Rest Rooms and other basics facilities including 24X7 Primary Health Centre for the traditional fishers in Coastal Districts of India.

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying for **setting up Fishers' Cooperative Bank with a Seed Capital allocation for Fishers' Development Fund.**
- The Union and state governments to **provide reservation to fisher people's children in education institutions and government jobs** in similar lines of existing ST/SC reservations in the coastal states of India.
- **To revisit and increase the Fishing Ban Relief in the lines of Rs.350/Day**, to secure a standard livelihood for the fisher families. Also, we demand to extend the monsoon and fishing ban relief to the fisherwomen and other fisheries allied workers.
- **Establishing a Law or an Act to secure and protect the rights and wellbeing of the Traditional Fishers and Other Coastal Communities (RECOGNITION OF RIGHTS)** in line with the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA, 2006) for the coastal states and U.T of India.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) **to revisit and revise Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMP) based on the guidelines of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ, 2019) while demarcating fishers' villages in each coastal districts including their common properties** such as fishing land areas, boat parking areas, public infrastructure, temples, churches, hospitals, dry fish yards, lighthouse, landing centres, ice plants, fishing zones, fish breeding zones, fish auction halls and long-term housing needs considering the disasters in climate crisis.
- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying **to revise the Draft Indian Marine Fisheries (IMF) Bill 2021, to secure the traditional marine fishers' rights, lives and livelihoods.** Like fishes, Traditional
- Fishers have no boundaries in the sea, we demand to exempt traditional
- fishers from the Draft IMF Bill.
- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying to **revisit the Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Act 2023 which will grab and destroy coastal lands for profit-oriented people other than the fishers.** Further, we demand the governments to immediately halt the unsustainable shrimp industries in the coastlines of Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Goa.
- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying to **provide adequate Fishing Livelihood Compensation for Fishing Ban in the times pre/post disasters events like storms, Cyclones, Depression and Heavy Stormy winds.** Also, we have an estimate of having lost a minimum of 100 days loss of livelihood annually due to such extreme weather events and catastrophes in the past few years. We demand the governments to consider a fishers' emergency fund to compensate the annual

livelihood loss.

- The governments **to create a separate Ministry of Fisheries and Fishers' Welfare to secure and protect the rights of the fisherpeoples' in India.**

Social Media:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DCHj-wTThPh/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1CJGBkoKN3/>

Press Clippings:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/first-meeting-of-the-indian-fisherwomen-assembly-held-in-thiruvananthapuram/article68833483.ece>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/two-day-india-fisherwomen-assembly-to-open-at-valiyathura-on-november-5/article68823144.ece>

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2024/Nov/07/india-fisherwomen-assembly-calls-for-concerted-action-against-exploitation-of-natural-resources>

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2024/Nov/04/two-day-india-fisherwomen-assembly-from-tomorrow>

<https://thesouthfirst.com/kerala/fisherwomens-assembly-in-thiruvananthapuram-a-historic-call-for-sea-conservation-and-unity/>





India
Fisherwomen
Assembly
5-6 November 2024
Thomas Kacherry Centre,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala



FORD MUNDIAL DE PUEBLOS PESCADORES
WORLD FORUM OF FISHER PEOPLES
FORUM MONDIAL DES POPULATIONS DE PÊCHEURS



Indonesia:

On October 8-10, 2024 KIARA together with the Indonesian Fisherwomen's Sisterhood (PPNI) and the Indonesian Fisherfolk Union (SNI) held a people's consultation and fisherfolk meeting as an effort to build solidarity across food producers in coastal areas. The meeting was attended by 70 fishermen, fisherwomen, indigenous people, fish farmers among others. The theme of the meeting was "Encourage Indonesian Maritime."

The main themes focused on were Food Sovereignty, Ocean/Living Space Sovereignty and Climate Justice. In this thematic discussion, all participants discussed, shared experiences in facing challenges in the coastal villages, shared patterns of resilience in facing challenges and militarism in Indonesia.

Representatives of fisherwomen also held a discussion to build solidarity among women. The fisherwomen who were present formulated the challenges faced so far, namely:

1. No recognition of fisherwomen's identity. Women contribute almost 56% in Indonesia's food production chain but this is not directly proportional to the state's recognition of fisherwomen's identity. Fish work is still considered a male profession and women, who catch fish or food from the sea are not considered as fisherwomen. The absence of recognition for the identity of fisherwomen has an impact on the absence of protection and empowerment for fisherwomen, one of which includes insurance for fisherwomen, assistance for fisherwomen based on their needs, and a gender-friendly state budget.
2. In addition, fisherwomen are rarely involved in policy formulation at both local and national levels. Policies that are created in Indonesia do not favour the position of fisherwomen who are vulnerable to cases of violence or spatial conflicts that exist in coastal and small islands.
3. Up until now, there is no clear data on the number of fisher women in Indonesia. This has an impact on the budget allocation for the protection and empowerment of fisherwomen. In Indonesia, fisherwomen are recognized for their contribution only in fisherfolk households as stated in Law 7 of 2016 on the Protection and Empowerment of Fisherfolk, Fish Cultivators, and Salt Farmers, which means that fisherwomen are once again 'domesticated' by the Indonesian government.
4. Fisherwomen face violence and structural ocean grabbing through the issuance of investment licenses, besides that women also have to deal with extractive and exploitative industries such as mining, reclamation, port development and tourism. One of the ocean grabbing occurred and faced by fisherwomen occurred in Wawonii Island, Southeast Sulawesi; Pari Island, Thousand Islands; Sangiang Island, Banten; Rempang Island, Riau Islands and many more.
5. Fisherwomen are trapped in a situation of prolonged conflict against large-scale investment which is then facilitated by the state through the Blue Economy scheme. The threat of space grabbing through Blue Economy is included in the vision and mission of Indonesian president Prabowo Subianto. This means that for at least 15 years, Blue Economy has always been a 'way' used by the government to seize living space.

6. Fisherwomen also face threats from the climate crisis that occurs in coastal areas and small islands. Fisherwomen have to face the shift of their local knowledge in reading winds and currents, predicting the 'lean' season or the season when they cannot go to sea, losing the ability to identify the planting season and losing space due to abrasion that occurs in fishing villages. The increasing impact of the climate crisis has caused many fishing villages to sink and the intensity of fishing villages being flooded is increasingly unpredictable.
7. The change of profession also occurs and is experienced by fisherwomen, many fisherwomen choose to become migrant workers and leave the fishing village. Unstable fish prices, uncertainty of protection and empowerment of fisherwomen, and the absence of holistic adaptation and mitigation efforts have forced fisherwomen to choose to leave coastal villages and become labourers or migrant workers.
8. With the increasing impact of the climate crisis that causes coastal villages to sink, in fact, causing space grabbing to occur in the name of climate change. One of the ongoing advocacies responded by KIARA and PPNI is the sinking of Timbulsloko village, Demak, Central Java where the government offers a false solution by relocating the community, especially fisherwomen, to move from their sinking village. The relocation encouraged by the government has become a false solution because the government did not prepare the relocation area and forced the community to buy land independently. Meanwhile, the government has the opportunity to issue permits for drowned areas to be converted into cultivation areas or reclaimed.
9. Ironically, the Indonesian government has a high commitment in 30X30 by expanding the Marine Protected Area but at the same time expanding the shrimp farming area and opening the lobster seed export system; giving permission for sea dumping or reclamation for international tourism; rampant destruction of coastal areas through the issuance of permits for sand, nickel, or coal miners. At the national level, the government continues to encourage conservation efforts through mangrove planting, coral reef transplantation and seagrass conservation, but at the same time the government issued concession licenses for sedimentation management or sand extraction of 17 billion cubic meters in 7 regions in Indonesia.
10. Fisherwomen assess that the government continues to offer false solutions to respond to the climate crisis that occurs in coastal areas and small islands. The false solutions offered by the government include providing Corporate Service Responsibility (CSR) and bounding fishermen and fisherwomen to be trapped in false empowerment programs from companies that destroy the environment.
11. In addition, fisherwomen are offered by some companies or the government to plant mangroves and will be taught how to calculate carbon. This means that fishermen and fisherwomen will be preoccupied with the management of conservation programs and made to forget the causes of coastal and small island degradation. Debt Swap, which has become a major project today, continues to be pushed by the Indonesian government, in addition to several policies born in Indonesia trying to encourage several ministries to manage CSR from companies.
12. Investment in Indonesia is accommodated by the government and closely

guarded by state security forces such as the police or the army. Investment is accommodated through the issuance of Law No. 6 of 2023 concerning the Ratification of Job Creation Legislation or Omnibus Law. The passing of Law No. 6 has an impact on the increasing conflicts that occur in coastal and small islands. Investments take the living spaces of fisherwomen and cause multiple burdens that must be experienced by fisherwomen. Fisherwomen who live in conflict areas often experience physical, verbal, and psychological violence perpetrated by state security forces such as the police or army.

13. In Indonesia, policies that grab the living space of fisherfolk are facilitated in policy and protected by the security forces. The pattern of ocean grabbing that occurs in Indonesia means that the security forces (police and military) are at the front line to protect investment. Indonesia has a dark history with militarism. The former authoritarian president of Indonesia, Soeharto, led for 32 years and came from the military. Under Soeharto's leadership, many people's lands were confiscated, kidnappings and killings were committed.
14. In 2024, Indonesia will again have a president from the military who has a history as a perpetrator of human rights crimes, namely Prabowo Subianto. With Prabowo's election, Indonesia has the potential to revive military dominance. Fisherwomen are very likely to experience deprivation of living space and must face the threat of violence perpetrated by the military.

Four problems faced by fisherwomen are an illustration of the conditions faced by Indonesian fisherwomen. However, in the midst of these challenges, fisherwomen continue to make efforts to fight for their living space. In this grand meeting, the fisherwomen who participated in the activity have identified the fisherwomen's movements that have been carried out so far and can be used as lessons learned by other fisherwomen's movements. The efforts of fisherwomen to fight for Indonesian maritime are as follows:

1. An effort to encourage the recognition of fisherwomen's identity through changes in professional identity in the Identity Card. For 4 years, KIARA and PPNI have been advocating to change the identity of women's occupation from housewife to fisherwoman. In Indonesia, the occupation column in the ID card is often simply recorded by village officials without seeing the actual occupation of the woman. As an initial movement, KIARA together with PPNI has advocated at least 31 fisherwomen in Demak, Central Java who used to be called only housewives to become fisherwomen. The 31 fisherwomen we advocated are fisherwomen who go to sea with their husbands and fish together. However, the professional identity in the national ID card which is written as a housewife causes fisherwomen not to get an insurance card.

This advocacy encouraged the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries to start identifying or recording the distribution of Indonesian fisherwomen. The efforts made by the ministry have not been able to map the exact distribution of Indonesian fisherwomen, but through this joint advocacy, there is a change in the government's way of thinking in seeing the profession of fisherwomen. In addition, many fisherwomen are increasingly aware of their political identity as Indonesian food producers.

2. Fisherwomen carry out community based economic movements by selling products that are processed based on the potential in coastal villages. The products produced by fisherwomen are women's collective efforts to break the dependence of fisherwomen on middlemen and become efforts to break the chain of violence faced by women.

The interesting thing that became a finding in the discussion with fisherwomen is the awareness of fisherwomen about feminist economy that has been carried out so far. We found many fisherwomen cooperatives today and it is one of the indicators that the feminist economic movement continues to be carried out by fisherwomen.

3. The growth of collective movements to defend their living space. One example is Pari Island, Thousand Island where fisherwomen manage Rengge Beach independently and plant food plants. The efforts of fisherwomen by planting and managing the beach become a symbol of resistance and collective efforts to maintain their living space. One form of resistance that is alive today apart from advocacy through legal channels is by continuing to carry out activities at sea, planting, protecting the sea. The activity of service is a form of resistance typical of Indonesian fisherwomen.

In this meeting, the fisherwomen who attended committed to keep fighting to promote spatial sovereignty, food sovereignty and climate justice. The fisherwomen who attended this meeting agreed to do the following things:

1. Continue to advocate for the recognition of fisherwomen's identity.
2. Continue to strengthen solidarity and provide assistance in conflicts that occur in coastal areas and small islands.
3. Commit to protecting Indonesia's oceans and not get caught up in Debt Swap schemes, false solutions related to the impact of the climate crisis
4. Strive to continue mobilizing feminist economy for Indonesian fisherwomen

Press Clippings:

<https://news.mongabay.com/2024/10/fishers-women-indonesia-pantura-ja-va-dredging-sand-exportsogical-and-economic-damage/>

<https://www.tempo.co/ekonomi/masyarakat-pesisir-tantang-kkp-adakan-diskusi-soal-kuota-pengerukan-pasir-laut-55>





Sri Lanka:

The National Fisheries Solidarity Organisation (NAFSO) has been discussing the issues in focus by the World Forum of Fisher People and specifically the GA8.

On 23rd and 24th of October 2024, a National Women's Assembly was organized in Negombo. Two women representatives from each of the 16 districts participated in this assembly. During the meeting, there was a detailed sharing of the activities and functionalities of WFFP related to women and listed the key points raised.

A celebration of the World Fisher Peoples Day was planned on November 29 in Mullai Island District, Sri Lanka. The demands and resolutions put together for the WFFP General Assembly would be highlighted.

Key discussion points pertaining to fisherwomen in Sri Lanka

1. Recognition of the role of Fisherwomen:
 - Fisherwomen's contributions are largely unrecognized, similar to how even fishermen lack proper acknowledgment.
 - Although women do not venture into the sea, they are the backbone of the fishing economy, undertaking pre- and post-landing activities like fish drying, cleaning, and separating fish from nets.
 - They are often treated as unpaid labour despite their significant contributions, making them eligible for formal recognition. Women-inclusive fisheries policies must be developed.
2. Market Access:
 - Post-landing markets and marketing facilities are inaccessible to fisherwomen.
3. Land Grabs:
 - Land grabbing severely affects the livelihoods of fisherwomen and their families.
4. Identity and Welfare:
 - Fisherwomen lack identity cards and access to social welfare schemes.
 - They must be included in all census data and granted equal rights within cooperative societies.
5. Disaster Management:
 - During unforeseen circumstances or disasters, especially when fishermen are at sea, disaster management centers should establish clear communication channels and create awareness among women about rescue actions.
6. Insurance and Pension Schemes:
 - Fisherwomen must be included in insurance and pension schemes.
7. Healthcare Infrastructure:
 - Health care systems need to be accessible in fisher villages, with infrastructure

specifically designed to benefit women and children.

8. Fisherwomen Unions:

- Fisherwomen unions must be formed to strengthen their power and rights, ensuring they are recognized as fishers and their issues are highlighted.





South Africa:

On the 25 October 2024, Masifundise and Coastal Links held their annual National Women Assembly in Cape Town. Over 40 women representing coastal and inland fishing communities participated in the Assembly, which aimed to create a safe, women-only space for members to discuss their challenges and solution as fishing communities, fisherwomen and also within the Coastal Links organisation.

The following key points were raised as part of the Fisher Women Assembly:

- **Need to establish the SSF Women's structure within Coastal Links-** The group discussed the need for a distinct name for the SSF Women's Assembly that reflects its independence. The need for a committee to be formed was also raised as priorities.
- **Leadership Role Conflict for Women in Cooperatives-** Women expressed concerns about the challenges women in leadership positions face in Cooperatives formed as result of the SSF Policies. The concern was raised regarding the backlash that women will face when trying to represent both Coastal Links and the SSF Women's structure. Specifically, they highlighted difficulties in advocating for resources for the Women's structure while simultaneously fulfilling their leadership role in Coastal Links. They emphasized the added challenge of facing gender bias from traditional leaders and local authorities who are more likely to take male representatives seriously.
- **Traditional Leadership and Women's Representation-**Concerns were raised about the lack of recognition for women in traditional leadership structures, where men often dominate decision-making processes. It was noted that women's concerns are often overlooked in these settings, especially when male representatives are present.
- **Market Access Issues -**Women highlighted the significant challenges they face in accessing markets for their products. They expressed frustration over the lack of a market to sell their goods, which is affecting their economic sustainability and ability to generate income
- **Promoting Complementary Livelihoods Without Leaving the SSF Sector-**The group emphasized the importance of identifying alternative livelihood activities that compliment the SSF sector, without taking women away from their primary roles within the sector. There was a strong emphasis on the need for alternative income-generating activities that can support women's livelihoods while maintaining their involvement in SSF-related work.
- **Women and care work-**The role of women in the household and community was highlighted as critical, not just in sustaining families, but in supporting the overall well-being of their communities.





The World Forum of Fisher Peoples organized its 8th General Assembly in November 2024 in Brazil. A specific fisherwomen assembly was organized during the GA. This is a report of the proceedings at the assembly along with the declaration, resolutions and statement passed at the assembly. This report also includes short reports of fisherwomen's assemblies organized in different parts of the world as a prelude to the GA8.

