

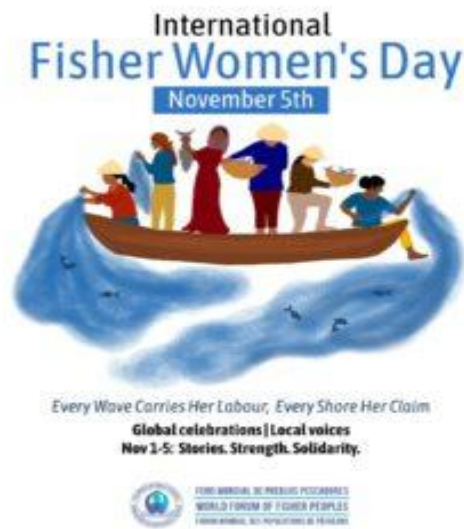
Commemorating the 28th World Fisher People's Day by NAFSO



The National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO) marked the 28th World Fisher People's Day in Kattankudy, Batticaloa District, with an event held under the theme *"Time for System Change: Assert Food Sovereignty."* For over five decades, Sri Lanka's fishing communities have faced persistent challenges that have often gone overlooked or unresolved. NAFSO remains dedicated to empowering coastal communities and protecting the country's marine ecosystems. Together with its committed staff and Mr Herman Kumara — National Convener of NAFSO and General Secretary of the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP) — the organisation works tirelessly to amplify the voices of fisher communities and defend their rights. Through collective action and ongoing dialogue with policymakers, NAFSO strives to secure fair, sustainable, and long-term solutions for the fishing sector.



Fisher communities, both in Sri Lanka and around the world, continue to face profound challenges that remain difficult to resolve. Within these communities, fisherwomen play an essential yet often overlooked role, particularly in sustaining food sovereignty. This year marked a historic moment: for the first time, the world celebrated **International Fisher Women's Day** on November 5. Beginning on November 1, a powerful five-day social media campaign was launched under the theme *"Every Wave Carries Her Labour, Every Shore Her Claim,"* paying tribute to the countless fisherwomen whose contributions have long remained invisible. Despite their critical importance, the struggles faced by fisherwomen — and by fishing communities more broadly — have been consistently neglected within Sri Lankan society. Successive governments have failed to listen to them or engage in meaningful dialogue to develop lasting and effective solutions.



The fisheries sector plays a vital role in Sri Lanka's socio-economic landscape and is composed of three main subsectors: coastal, offshore (deep-sea), and inland aquaculture. According to data from the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, these subsectors collectively provide livelihoods for approximately 2.5 million active fishers and support an estimated 6.1 million households (DCS, 2020/2021). Despite this importance, local fishing communities have long emphasised a range of persistent challenges restricting the sector's growth. These include inadequate planning, weak management practices, outdated technologies, and insufficient modern infrastructure. As a result, Sri Lanka's fisheries community remains disproportionately trapped in a recurring cycle of poverty, even though they make significant contributions to national food security and economic stability. This research seeks to examine, from an anthropological perspective, the underlying causes, contributing factors, and socio-cultural dynamics that sustain this poverty cycle. The overarching goal is to develop context-specific strategies capable of breaking this pattern and fostering

sustainable development within these marginalised communities.



Fisher people from 17 districts across Sri Lanka gathered in Kattankudy, Batticaloa, to discuss their ongoing challenges and develop new strategies to address them. The gathering served as an important opportunity to strengthen solidarity among local fishing communities and to better understand each other's needs. Participants also took a significant step toward acknowledging and addressing the ecological crises affecting their livelihoods. They proposed several new approaches aimed at achieving long-term, sustainable solutions. As these issues continue to intensify, NAFSO faces the substantial task of helping to develop and advocate for effective remedies to the ecological challenges that directly impact fisher communities.



By
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