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Pakistan Fisherfolk Folk Forum [PFF]

Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) came into being on May 5, 1998 as a result of a day-long seminar on problems of fisherfolk communities in Karachi.

The seminar was attended by a large number of social organizations of fisherfolk communities as well as representatives of various NGOs of the country. The participants, after a full-day deliberations unanimously decided to launch a national level organization of the communities for protection of their livelihood resources and solution of problems.

PFF is a registered organization. Since its inception, it has been active in creating awareness, mobilization and community organization for protection and sustainable management of the fisheries and other community livelihoods through advocacy, participatory research, information dissemination and participatory community development processes.

The fisherfolk communities in Pakistan, comprising of about 5 million people, are among the poorest and most deprived population of the country. Degradation of fish resources, the only livelihood resources of these communities, due to unsustainable exploitation, coupled with defective governmental policies has largely added to their already augmented vulnerabilities. Besides, the fisherfolk communities have also been facing host of socio-economic problems especially lack of basic amenities of education, health and safe drinking water. Moreover, living near the coast and other water bodies the fisherfolk communities have always remained vulnerable to the natural disasters including cyclones, floods, droughts etc.

Vision

PFF jointly intends to bring a change in attitudes and policies of the government and its institutions, and envisages introduction of a sustainable fisheries policy. The fisherfolk communities, who are historically deprived of their livelihood from the fisheries resources of the coasts and inland waters, should exercise their ownership rights on those waters.

Mission

To protect the livelihood resources of the fisherfolk communities. To bring sustainability in the fisheries resources and in their use. Bringing positive changes in the socio-economic conditions of the fisherfolk communities of the country, through awareness, mobilization as well as organization. To ensure restoration of ownership rights of the communities on their historical / traditional fisheries resources of coastal as well as inland waters.

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Objectives

- To mobilize and organize the Fisherfolk communities dependent for their livelihood resources on Pakistan's coast, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponds and other water bodies
- To strengthen the organizational and management capacities and skills of the local CBOs of the Fisherfolk communities besides establishing and strengthening PFF units in Fisherfolk localities, villages and towns of Pakistan
- To struggle for the livelihood rights of the Fisherfolk communities, sustainability in the fisheries livelihoods through advocacy, information dissemination, media campaign and dialogue.
- To campaign for deracinating the causes and factors responsible for the depletion in the coastal as well as inland fisheries resources by advocating participatory approach and management systems for the protection and conservation of fisheries resources
- To struggle for the restoration and protection of human rights of the Fisherfolk communities of Pakistan including the right to sustainable livelihoods, basic social services, right to life and security as well as right to social and political participation
- To work for the social-economic uplift of the Fisherfolk communities and improvement in education, health, livelihoods through participatory community development activities
- To make effort towards minimizing disaster risks faced by the communities through relief, rehabilitation as well as participatory disaster mitigation and management activities in the disaster prone areas
- To work for betterment of the vulnerable sections of Fisherfolk communities i.e. women and children especially for the empowerment of the women and the education and health of the children
- To struggle for regional peace and cooperation for minimizing regional hostilities affecting the Fisherfolk communities of Pakistan and India in the form of their arrests on the allegations of crossing coastal borders and 'prisoner of war' like treatment meted out with them

Strategy

PFF has adopted the strategy of mass mobilization and awareness, advocacy, campaigns and community development for achieving its goals. PFF strongly believes in participatory approach of community awareness and development actively involving the local communities and other key stakeholders in the process.

FF Units

Presently, 111 PFF 'units' have been established in a number of Fisherfolk villages of coastal areas of Pakistan including Karachi, Thatta, Badin and Gawadar Balouchistan. Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum is presently recognized as the only national level network of the Fisherfolk communities of Pakistan. However, the Fisherfolk communities are scattered communities living close to various water and fisheries resources. PFF is engaged in mobilizing and organizing more and more community members to establish more units in different areas, regions and provinces of Pakistan.

Programs

PFF has been providing institutional and social services to the communities under its following programs:

Community Development & Advocacy:

PFF is seriously involved in community development initiatives by providing basic health and education facilities to the fishermen communities. It is engaged in organizing their local groups and Community Based Organizations [CBOs] to work for the solution of their problems. So far more than 80 groups/ CBOs have been formed in different fisherfolk localities and villages in Pakistan. It is active in strengthening those community organizations by providing them trainings, which include: community mobilization, organizational management, leadership, effective communication, proposal writing, strategic development, gender and development and other trainings.

Along this all, theatre and cultural group of the organization also plays a vital role in community development process. It is considered as an effective tool to inform the people about the problems, which the community is facing in the daily life. It is the way to educate the community through characters, performance at the stage.

Besides, PFF has been engaged in mobilizing the communities, so that they can get their rights at their own level. Though advocacy is one of the key strategies of the PFF through which it interacts with the local, provincial as well as federal government to provide basic facilities and livelihood rights to the fisherfolk communities.

Disaster Management Services

The Fisherfolk communities are vulnerable to the natural disasters. Especially the coastal communities of Badin and Thatta have been experiencing worst-ever disasters in the form of floods, cyclones and droughts during the recent years. PFF in collaboration with its partners including Oxfam GB has been involved in relief, rehabilitation as well as disaster mitigation /management activities in the coastal districts of Badin and Thatta since 1999. PFF is also actively engaged in advocacy process to sensitize the governments to ensure sustainable disaster management plans for the disaster prone areas.

Water Rights, Research and Development

The PFF has been engaged in advocating the issue of Indus Delta since its inception. The Indus Delta faces major degradation threats that can well result in catastrophe. The major cause of destruction of the delta is the reduction in the flow of fresh water from Indus River. It has caused ecological disaster disturbing the ecosystem of this seventh largest delta of the world and endangering the livelihood of fishermen communities. The major reason of diminishing supply of Fresh River water is construction of big dams, canals, barrages and other water cuts and diversions on the Indus River.

Under this program, PFF is engaged in advocacy and awareness process to sensitize the governments and mobilize the local communities to get them involved in participatory struggle with regard to address the issue. PFF is also engaged in research studies on the natural livelihood resources as well as socio-economic and poverty related issues aimed at providing policy guidance/ recommendations in the sector. The research studies are also properly disseminated through conferences, seminars, workshops; publication of research papers.

Media and Communication

Considering the significant role of the media and communication, PFF has launched an effective media campaign to highlight the issues of Fisherfolk communities. This campaign has created a conducive environment to introduce the problems of the Fisherfolk communities. In this regard, PFF organizes visits of print and electronic media to observe the real situation of the neglected communities. PFF has also invited the attention of the government and its policy makers towards the hazards, being faced by the depressed populace.

Besides, PFF is also publishing a regular newsletter in Sindhi, Urdu and English and fortnightly newspapers in Urdu and Sindhi respectively, which carry research, and other community based activity reports.

A part from this, documentary films on the Fisherfolk problems are also being made to highlight their issues and problems.

Networking / Partnership

PFF has created linkages and partnerships with a number of civil society organizations and networks in Pakistan as well as abroad. PFF receives technical as well as logistic support in its struggle for sustainable livelihoods, mass awareness, advocacy, and community development and disaster mitigation / management activities from its following partners named in alphabetical order:

- Action Aid Pakistan [AAPak]
- Alternatives Canada
- Architecture and Development France [A&D]
- Asian Cultural Forum on Development
- Amercos (Spain)
- European Commission
- Frères des Hommes, France [FdH]
- Global Environment Facility, Small Grants Program of United Nations Development Program GEF- SGP-UNDP
- Green Peace
- Health and Nutrition Development Society [HANDS]
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [HRCP]
- Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Ambiente y Salud - ISTAS (Spain)
- International Collective Support of Fish Workers [ICSF]
- International Union for Conservation of Nature, Pakistan [IUCN]
- Novib - Oxfam Netherlands
- National Endowment for Democracy, USA [NED]
- Oxfam GB
- Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research [PILER]
- South Asian Partnership, Pakistan [SAP Pak]
- South Asia Labor Forum
- SUNGI Development Organization
- World Forum of Fisher People [WFFP]
- World Wide Fund for Nature, Paksitan [WWF]

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