

Celebrating Fisheries

The World Fisheries Day, which specifically recognizes the role of small-scale, artisanal fishers and fishworkers, was celebrated in myriad ways around the world

At a meeting in New Delhi, India, on 21 November 1997, during the formation of the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF), fisherfolk and their supporters from around the world declared that day as World Fisheries Day (WFD). Since then they have continued to recognize 21 November as a special day. Following that tradition, this year small-scale, artisanal fishers and fishworkers gathered in different places around the world to highlight the urgent need to protect fishery resources and secure access to them, while also recognizing the low-impact nature of the activities of the small-scale, artisanal fisheries sector.

In one voice, they complained of how States continue to overlook or marginalize small-scale fisheries,

unsustainable fishing and place artisanal and low-impact fishers at the centre of Europe's fishing future.

They called on EU decisionmakers to grant the right to fish to those who fish sustainably; to reduce fleet overcapacity where it exists, while preserving jobs in artisanal, low-impact fisheries; to end harmful subsidies and unsustainable and destructive practices; and to restore the health of the seas in Europe and the rest of the world.

They declared that they want to leave a legacy of healthy seas and oceans in a world where there is less, but better fishing; they want their children to fish in healthy oceans full of thriving fish stocks; they wish to eat fish of better quality than what most people consume today; and, as stewards of the marine environment, they demanded that their collective voices be heeded before it is too late.

At the second European Artisanal Fishermen's Congress, held during 22 - 23 November 2013, in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, around a hundred fishers and fishworkers—men and women—gathered to give birth to Low-impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE), a new body launched to fight for the rights of small-scale fishworkers.

LIFE's initial membership is from fisher organizations that represent more than 1,000 fishers and fishworkers from France, Spain, Greece, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Poland, Germany and Croatia.

Low-impact fishing

LIFE's objective is to represent, support, develop and defend low-impact fishing operations in coastal waters. Its members have agreed to be bound by a requirement to fish responsibly, without damaging the

while supporting large-scale fisheries that adversely impact the environment, provide fewer jobs and offer a less equitable distribution of benefits.

At the first European Artisanal Fishermen's Congress, held on 18 November 2012, participants had come together to discuss their plight and to petition decisionmakers in the European Union (EU) to protect their livelihoods, communities and heritage.

They emphasized that for Europe's fisheries to thrive, the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) needs to stop

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marine environment, to use selective fishing gear and to avoid catching undersized fish.

Maria Damanaki, the European Commissioner on Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, has expressed her support for this initiative both in writing and in a video message to the Congress. During the Congress, Joost Paardekooper, European Commission Policy Officer, spoke of the options available for the small-scale European fleet in the new CFP. The measures, he said, recognize the benefits of the small-scale fleet to local communities and their low environmental effects. In France, WFD was celebrated in the maritime town of Sainte-Pierre-Quiberon in south Brittany on 22 and 23 November at an event organized by the Lorient-based non-governmental organization (NGO) Pêche et Développement, which has been hosting events around the WFD since 1997.

This year, one of the themes chosen for the event was “Social Issues in Fisheries and Colonization of the Oceans”. Problems facing young people entering the fisheries, sea safety and health were also discussed. Older fishers looking to retire also face a dilemma about whether they should they sell their boats (average age: 27 years), licences and quotas so they can enter into comfortable retirement or whether they should bequeath their old boats to their children.

The discussions focused on the threat to fishing livelihoods from the new colonizers of the oceans and “ocean grabbing”. Alain le Sann, one of the founders of Pêche et Développement, made a presentation highlighting the role of such players as the World Bank, rich foundations connected to big business interests, some United Nations bodies, government functionaries and large, often multinational, environmental NGOs. These are now working in an alliance, the Global Partnership for the Oceans (GPO), under the direction of the World Bank. The GPO, and such related initiatives as “50 in 10”, Oceans 5 and others aim to privatize access to marine resources and

to coastal areas through “rights-based management” in the name of conservation and profits. This is nothing less than “ocean grabbing” that favours the rich at the expense of the poor.

The Bangladesh Fish Workers Alliance (BFWA) organized a rally and discussion in five districts of the country. The participants, numbering 4,000, included activists, students and others engaged in fisheries.

The Bangladesh campaign stressed the role of fisheries and the significance of WFD. It also focused on specific issues relating to minimum wages for fishworkers, health, education,

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housing and credit.

In the southern Indian State of Kerala, the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (Kufos) held a rally and a public conference in which fishery scientists, activists and members of fisher organizations participated. This was followed by a public conference where government officials spoke of the need to improve breeding technologies to allow fishers to go beyond dependence on capture fisheries. The administration of the Union Territory of Puducherry, India, announced it would set up a Fishermen Development Corporation.

In West Bengal, India, 6,000 fishers, under the auspices of the fisher organization, Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum, gathered to protest against the setting up of a nuclear power plant at Haripur. They also demanded rights to land, fishing and social security, as well as a total ban on trawling.

Fish Festival

In Arunachal Pradesh, India, the government announced at the two-day “Meen Mahotsava” or “Fish Festival” organized on the occasion of WFD that it will amend all

Fishworkers and their supporters in Kilifi, Kenya, taking out a march to celebrate World Fisheries Day



ANDRE STANDING

MD. MIZANUR RAHMAN



A human chain rally organized at Bhola, Bangladesh, by the Bangladesh Fish Workers' Alliance (BFWA)

The Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) observed World Fisheries Day through rallies, workshops and public meetings



PFF



FRANCISCO J MARI

World Fisheries day celebration meeting at Praia, Cape Verde



FRANCISCO J MARI

Mamayawa Sandouno, President of ADEPEG - CPA, Guinea Conakry, and Member, ICSF, speaking at the Praia meeting



PRADIP CHATTERJEE / NFF

The Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum of West Bengal, India, observed World Fisheries Day at Haripur



memorandums of agreement (MoAs) with developers of hydroelectric power projects. The amendments would require developers to release fish seeds in the reservoirs. The aim is to encourage local fish farming and promote sustainable development of the community.

The Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) celebrated WFD with a public gathering at Al-Ghazi Jeti in Ibrahim Hydri, Karachi. PFF and fishers' representatives voiced their concerns

Pollution and destruction of coastal habitats force fishers to go farther offshore in their inadequately equipped boats, endangering lives.

about human-rights and security issues relating to surveillance by the coast guard, pollution of water bodies, land-grabbing and arrests of fishers for transboundary transgressions of maritime boundaries. Muhammad Ali Shah, the PFF chairperson, spoke of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), according to which fishers cannot be arrested for crossing into another country's waters. There was also a suggestion for a "Common Peace Area" of 50 nautical miles where fishers from India and Pakistan may fish freely on the basis of "no-objection" identity cards issued jointly by both countries and where fishing vessels display a Common Peace Area flag.

In Sri Lanka, the fishing community joined hands with victims of land grabbing to commemorate World Fisheries Day under the theme "The owners of the sky, land and water are those who live and survive on them".

Participants from Jaffna, Mannar, Trincomalee, Baticaloa, Ampara, Mathara, Galle, Kaluthara, Gampaha, Puthlam coastal districts and the two inland districts of Polonnaruwa and Kurunegala gathered at Negombo on 21 November for a meeting organized by the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO).

The meet noted that, around the world, fishers suffer losses due to

natural calamities such as typhoons. They also have to contend with plans to force them away from their traditional areas, on which they depend for their livelihoods. Such displacement arises from development projects related to tourism, aquaculture, special economic zones and industrial fishing. The participants at the Negombo meet reaffirmed their commitment to protect the rights of fishing communities.

A statement from the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers of the Vatican, Rome, was issued ahead of WFD, which noted that most of the victims of the recent typhoon in the Philippines were fishermen who lost families, homes and livelihoods. The statement noted that within the industrial fisheries, employment contracts are incomplete or illegal, salaries are inadequate, and vessels lack minimum safety requirements on board. Pollution and destruction of coastal habitats force fishers to go farther offshore in their inadequately equipped boats, endangering lives.

The Council renewed its appeal to all governments to ratify, as soon as possible, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) to ensure safety at work to those employed in fisheries, and to ensure medical care, sufficient hours of rest, the protection of a contract of employment, and the same social benefits enjoyed by workers on shore.

In Kenya, the Community Action for Nature Conservation (CANCO) organized an event in Kilifi to mark WFD. Around 300 persons attended the event. Members of fishing communities from Kilifi, Malindi and Lamu gathered for a procession through Kilifi town that ended in a prominent fish landing site.

Beach management units

Presentations on small-scale fishers and fishworkers were made by members of various beach management units (BMUs) from these regions. The minister of fisheries made a concluding speech about the

importance of fishers for the food security of Kenyans.

On 20 November a meeting was organized in Kilifi by CANCO and CFFA in which the role of the media in fisheries in East Africa was discussed.

Fifteen participants, including journalists from Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania, debated the opportunities for stories on coastal communities, including those related to oil and gas production, foreign fisheries access arrangements and the use of development aid.


The Katosi Women Development Trust joined the fisherfolk at Nangoma landing site in Mukono district of Uganda on the 21st of November to celebrate WFD, an event co-ordinated by 3 of KWDT's women's groups from this fishing community. The celebrations brought together over 300 people, including men, women, children and local leaders from the district and subcounty levels.

For many, it was the first time they were hearing about WFD. The event gave local communities an opportunity to share their challenges and highlight their dependence and commitment to protecting fishery resources. Issues of fishing using illegal gears, the need for infrastructure (health, sanitation at landing sites), illegal 'tax' collection by government employees and land grabbing by landlords while local people are evicted from the lakeshore were highlighted.

For the third consecutive year, WFD celebrations were organized by the African Confederation for Professional Artisanal Fishworkers (CAOPA), which gathered members from 16 countries. This year's event took place in Cape Verde's capital city, Praia, where it was hosted by the Network of Organizations of Professional Artisanal Fishworkers (ROPA) of Cape Verde. Attending the event were representatives from Tunisia, the Republic of Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Benin, Liberia, Congo, Togo, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Gabon and the Ivory Coast as well as the host country, Cape Verde. The event was also attended by representatives of the

journalists' network for responsible fisheries in Africa (REJOPRAO), the Sub-regional Fisheries Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), the Masifundise Development Trust, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and Bread for the World.

The Praia Statement, issued at the conclusion of the event, highlighted the impact of climate change, noting that at least 250 mn people in Africa will be affected by 2020, especially those in densely populated coastal areas where sea level rise is likely to have the greatest impact. Climate change is already impacting coastal communities through extreme weather events and changes in fish stock distribution.

The Statement noted that artisanal fisheries are more likely to be impacted as they depend on coastal waters which are ecologically fragile and are increasingly being threatened by development of non-fishery activities. The critical role of women in the sector was also highlighted. 

For more

www.pff.org.pk

Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum

www.facebook.com/pages/World-Fisheries-Day-November-21/141778879204555

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www.nafso-online.org/2013/11/world-fisheries-day-2013.html

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