

Mainstreaming the Margins

The WFFP is transforming the visibility of fisherwomen's labour through global advocacy, leadership and collective action

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The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) has consistently placed the rights and recognition of fisherwomen at the heart of its global struggle for justice in the fisheries sector. Fisherwomen's labour – encompassing not only the act of fishing, but also post-harvest processing, local marketing, household sustenance, and the transmission of traditional knowledge – has for too long remained invisible, undervalued, and unprotected. Drawing directly from the key takeaways discussed at the Global Fisherwomen Assembly (GFA) held in Thailand in 2025, this report details WFFP's significant achievements centered around the International Fisher Women Day (IFWD) on November 5, the transformative five-week campaign of 2025, our global-scale actions to address injustices, violence against women, as well as the meaningful events organized to commemorate International Women's Day on March 8, 2026. The intent here is to emphasise how WFFP has worked to address the invisibility of fisherwomen's labour, our concrete plans to eradicate it, and our strong organizational commitment to this vital cause.

Securing global recognition for November 5 - International Fisher Women's Day

The successful marking of November 5 as International Fisher Women's Day (IFWD) is a major milestone in our activism work. Through years of persistent advocacy and international mobilisation, this day is now recognised and celebrated in many countries around the world. This achievement represents a powerful step toward global acknowledgment of the unique contributions of, and challenges faced by, fisherwomen. Participants at the GFA 2025 noted that the next critical step is to fine-tune a global set of demands that can unite our movement. Equally important, WFFP has begun the vital work of recording our history – the stories, struggles, resilience, and achievements of our fisherwomen – to create a lasting legacy for current and future generations to look to. This process, initiated through the IFWD, directly tackles invisibility by ensuring that the labour and lives of fisherwomen are recorded and honoured, rather than erased from historical narratives. At the same time, we recognise that such efforts at documentation need to be

much more in-depth, and we are committed to expanding this work as a foundational element of our strategy to make fisherwomen's labor permanently visible and celebrated.

The Five-Week Campaign: Illuminating the many dimensions of fisherwomen's labour

The five-week campaign organized in 2025, running from November 5 to December 10, stands as one of our most effective tools for combating the invisibility of fisherwomen's labour. This campaign was implemented across numerous regions, with strong participation and leadership from our members in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and several Caribbean nations, as well as in other countries, including India and Kenya, through our extensive global network. Each week was carefully themed to illuminate different aspects of fisherwomen's work and rights, thereby bringing their often-hidden labour into public view and fostering regional ownership of the various highlighted challenges and concerns.

During **Week 1, from November 5 to 11**, under the theme “**Gender Rights & Violence Against Women**”, the focus was on the empowerment of women fishers, addressing gender-based violence (GBV), and advocating for gender equality in fisher communities. Activities over the course of this week made visible the intersecting oppressions that fisherwomen face in carrying out their daily labour, highlighting how gender discrimination and violence can marginalise their contributions and limit their participation in decision-making.

Week 2, from November 12 to 18, themed “**Asserting Fisher Identity**”, promoted the critical importance of maintaining and asserting traditional, artisanal, and indigenous fisher identities. Fisherwomen are often the primary bearers and transmitters of these identities through their work in fishing, processing, and community life. By asserting these identities, the campaign helped counteract the cultural invisibility that diminishes recognition of their essential role in preserving heritage and sustaining communities.

The **third week, from November 19 to 25**, on “**Community & Customary Rights**”, placed emphasis on protecting the collective rights of fishing communities, with particular attention to territory and cultural heritage. This



Commemoration of the First International Fisher Women's Day on 5th November 2025, Sri Lanka

theme revealed how fisherwomen's labour is inextricably linked to communal well-being and customary practices, making their work visible as a cornerstone of community resilience rather than an individual or hidden effort.

From **November 26 to December 2**, the week themed **"Protect Waters; Protect Life"** drew attention to climate change, environmental degradation, and the urgent need for sustainability in fishery management. Fisherwomen's intimate knowledge of waters and ecosystems, gained through their labour, positions them as key actors in environmental stewardship. The campaign used this week to render that ecological labour visible and to critique approaches that often overlook or harm their traditional practices.

The **final week, from December 3 to 10**, themed **"Fisher's Rights as Human Rights"**, focused on recognising fisher rights as fundamental human rights, with a strong emphasis on legislative advocacy and legal strategies. By situating fisherwomen's labour within a human rights framework, this week elevated its status, demanding that it be seen, protected, and supported through laws and policies at the national and international levels.

While the campaign achieved widespread engagement and successfully raised the profile of these issues, the GFA 2025 discussions stressed the need for a thorough assessment so that the campaign can be fully owned and adapted. WFFP plans for every country to

develop its own action plan, in order to ensure sustained visibility for fisherwomen's labour through ongoing, context-specific actions that are coordinated globally, thereby systematically eradicating invisibility over time.

Tackling violence against women: International actions and internal safeguards

The measures adopted by WFFP to tackle violence against women on a global scale are deeply integrated into this visibility work. The first week of the campaign specifically addressed gender rights and violence against women, promoting empowerment and equality in fisher communities. We advocate for systemic changes that protect fisherwomen from GBV, which frequently serves to silence their voices and render their labour invisible. Development and adoption of a dedicated policy against sexual harassment was a significant step for WFFP. This policy safeguards women within our own organization, creates safe spaces for participation, and sets a standard for the broader movement. These combined actions, thematic campaigning, advocacy and internal policy were launched to remove barriers preventing fisherwomen from fully gaining visibility and leadership, both at the community-level and globally.

International Women's Day 2026: An event to sustain momentum

On March 8, 2026, WFFP organized a significant event to mark International Women's Day, building directly on the key takeaways and



Commemoration of the First International Fisher Women's Day on 5th November 2025, Bangladesh

momentum from the GFA 2025. This event provided a global platform for fisherwomen and allies to reflect on achievements, share strategies, and reinforce our collective demands. It highlighted the indispensable importance of fisherwomen's labour to food security, community economies, and cultural continuity, while advancing our plans to make this labour fully visible. The event connected the International Fisher Women's Day celebrations, the five-week campaign themes, and our broader fight against invisibility and violence, in addition to demonstrating the continuity of our activism across key dates in the calendar for women's rights.

Strengthening structures for lasting visibility and eradication of invisibility

To ensure these gains are institutionalised and expanded, WFFP has taken important steps to strengthen our organizational structures for women's participation. As per the outcomes of the eighth General Assembly (GA8) and discussions at the GFA 2025, the women's assembly nominated one member to the Coordinating Committee (CC), with Faye from PAMALAKAYA in the Philippines selected as the interim representative. Other nominees included Susan from the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations (CNFO), Yasmine Kasmi from Pakistan, Subashini Kamalanathan from Sri Lanka, and Benchawan Pengnoo from Thailand. This inclusive and regionally diverse leadership

ensures that our efforts to fine-tune demands, assess campaigns, and develop action plans are guided by those directly affected, guaranteeing that the invisibility of fisherwomen's labour is addressed from the ground up.

Our unwavering commitment to fisherwomen's visibility and rights

In conclusion, the achievements WFFP has realised – the growing recognition of November 5 as International Fisher Women's Day, the impactful five-week campaign that illuminated multiple dimensions of fisherwomen's labour, our targeted actions and policy to address violence against women, and the inspiring International Women's Day event of 2026 – are direct results of deep and sustained organization-wide commitment. We have effectively tackled the invisibility of fisherwomen's labour through recognition, historical documentation, identity assertion, rights framing, and inclusive structures. Our future plans to eradicate this invisibility center on deepening our historical legacy, concretising regional action plans, refining global demands, and maintaining united voices in all advocacy spaces. This work benefits not only fisherwomen, but women in general, and strengthens our collective fight for gender justice. WFFP remains fully committed to this path, confident that through continued solidarity and strategic action, the labour of fisherwomen will be universally visible, respected, and protected. 🦋