

Seminar

Road to Balem [CoP-30]

Rising Tides & Sinking Rights

Climate Crisis and the Struggles of Fisher People

28 October 2025 || CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka, Bangladesh



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জলবায়ু সংকট এবং
জেলদের সংগ্রাম ও নাগরিক
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The COP30 Presidency proposes translating the results of the Global Stocktake into 6 major thematic pillars and thirty 30 objectives

1. Transitioning Energy, Industry, and Transport

[Tripling renewable, doubling energy efficiency]

2. Stewarding Forests, Oceans, and Biodiversity

[Protect- conserve ecosystems, promote sustainable models]

3. Transforming Agriculture and Food Systems

[Land restoration, & resilient agricultural practices]

4. Building Resilience for Cities, Infrastructure & Water

[Water & Solid Waste management]

5. Fostering Human and Social Development

[Social & human dimensions of climate action, jobs, health, and justice]

6. Cross-cutting Enablers and Accelerators

[Like climate finance, technology, and capacity building, etc.]



Climate Crisis; Fishermen's Struggle "Rationale of the Case Study"

- A. Climate change is not **just an environmental crisis** but a **profound human rights** emergency
- B. Disproportionately affects Fisher peoples, who are **true guardians of ecosystems**
- C. **Facing violations of their fundamental human rights-**
[Food, Nutrition, Territories, water, housing, health, education & culture.
- D. **Initiative of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) to produce 10 case studies from 3 continents –**
 - Asia [Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand]
 - Americas [Belize, Brazil and Ecuador]
 - Africa [Kenya, Senegal and South Africa].



Bangladesh's case study, developed by the COAST, based on the Bhola Island

CASE STUDY ON BHOLA- BANGLADESH

1. Geographical Context

- Lies at the heart of the Meghna River estuary
- Hosts vibrant and diverse ecosystems
- Critical hub for fisheries, particularly hilsa fishing
[Almost 12% of the country's total fish production-*DoF-Yearbook 2022–23*]
- 2 villages, **Balaram Shura & Gangakirti**, selected for the case study [Dhonia Union of Bhola Sadar]
- Lie close to the increasingly destructive banks of the Meghna River
- Around 400-500 fisher families in these Villages:
[Approximately 250-275 families in Balaram Shura and 200-225 in Gangakirti]



2. Fishing families in Bhola are facing growing ecological disruption caused by climate change

A. River Erosion and Land Loss

- Over the past 3 to 5 years, erosion has intensified
[Annual rates sometimes reaching 10-15%]
- Around 16,000 hectares of land were lost between 1992-2022
[GIS and RS-Based Monitoring of Bank Erosion Along with Meghna River at Bhola]

B. Sea-Level Increase and Saline Water Intrusion

- Emerging threat for fishers in Balaram Shura & Gangakirti
- Around 1.5 million hectares of coastal land *[Saline Soils of Bangladesh-20]*
- Reducing crop yields by an estimated 3.5 million tons annually
- Bangladesh could lose at least 30% of food production by 2050 *[IPCC]*



2. Fishing families in Bhola are facing growing ecological disruption caused by climate change

C. Unpredictable and Extreme Weather Events

- Unseasonal rainfall & cyclones over the past 2 decades
- Cyclone Amphan in 2020 displaced over 200,000 people
- Submerged 1,000 hectares of farmland [IFRC Report 20]
- Increase 2°C water temperature over the last 20 years [BFRI]

D. Flooding, Polluting, and Contamination

- Floods affect around 7,000 hectares of land every year
- Major income losses for more than 60% of fisher families
[National River Erosion and Flood Management Project Report, 2023]
- Degrading water quality, reducing fish quantity and quality due to floodwater [Carrying agricultural runoff, industrial waste, and plastic pollution]



3. Climate impacts are threatening many of the human rights of these communities:

A. Right to Food and Nutrition

- Over 50% of 20-25 key breeding and nursery zones in the Meghna estuary have deteriorated over the past 15 years
- Hilsa stocks have declined by 20-25%* in the last decade
- Fishers estimate their daily catch has dropped by 30-50%
- Middlemen typically pay 10-20% below market prices
[Lack of cold storage, transportation & direct market accessibility]



A-2020 COAST survey revealed that during the bans

- 23.3% of fisher families earned less than BDT 5,000 & 60.8% had no income at all
- Increased domestic violence rates by 51.8%
- Malnutrition is rising, with stunting rates already exceeding 30%
[UNICEF Bangladesh, "Child Nutrition Status in Coastal Belt, 2022"]

**Assessment of Spawning and Nursery Habitats of Hilsa in the Tetulia and Meghna River Estuaries]*

B. Rights to Territories

- Bhola loses nearly 1,200 hectares of land annually to river erosion*
- Submerging homesteads; forcing fishing communities to relocate again & again
- Over 95% of households in the area report having been displaced at least once
- More than half have experienced multiple displacements in the past 5 years
- **Repeated displacement strips communities of their right to territories**



C. Right to Water

- Fishers' families can no longer rely on their tube wells, as the water has turned saline
- Women walk 1-2 km daily to collect potable water
- Increases their physical burden and reduces the time available for income-generating activities.

**CEGIS- Erosion Mapping Report for Bhola District*

D. Right to Culture and Right to Education

- The Meghna, once a source of rich biodiversity & predictable ecological rhythms, has changed drastically
- Erratic tides and disrupted migration patterns have rendered traditional knowledge less effective
- Dropout rate in the secondary cycle (grades 6-10) is 70-75%



D. Impact on Women –The Unseen Burden

- ← Women's family livelihood contributions are always overlooked
- ← The climate crisis is reducing homestead farming, increasing malnutrition risk
- ← 70% of previously productive arable land is no longer usable
- ← During the ban, women often have to skip meals to prioritize the needs of their children.

Local Fisher says, "We used to read the tide by looking at the moon. Now, the water doesn't follow the same rhythm, reflecting the collapse of traditional ecological predictability and inherited wisdom."

4. Recommendations [Human Rights –Based Climate Justice]

- A. Recognize that fishermen & coastal communities are the most climate vulnerable
- B. Emphasize on implementing **real climate solutions** [Nature-based] offered by the fisher-coastal -indigenous communities worldwide.
- C. Recognize the vital contributions of fisher peoples as stewards of the world's waters
- D. Recognition of their role in restoring, conserving, protecting, and collectively managing local aquatic and coastal ecosystems.
- F. **Implement long-term non-structural mitigation measures** (e.g., beach /bank nourishment, coastal vegetation, living coastlines, proper sediment management) to address coastal erosion & related impacts
- G. Strict measures to stop environmentally destructive activities to protect the ecosystem



- H. **Develop participatory climate adaptation measures** that strengthen resilience over forced displacement or livelihood abandonment;
- I. Ensure that any conservation initiatives (state or private) **do not violate and expropriate fisher peoples' customary governance rights**
- J. Ensure **adequate and timely compensation and reparations** to secure lives, livelihoods and uphold human rights for fisher communities
- K. Centre and uphold the rights and interests of fisher peoples and indigenous coastal communities **in all responses to climate change.**
- L. **Invest in community-led adaptation** & guarantee their including women's full inclusion in climate policies from planning to implementing efforts
- M. Support women-led food processing grassroots groups and cooperatives

Establish a legal framework that brings national laws into line with international standards

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)
- SSF Guideline
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)



**World Fishers Say:
Systems Change! Not Climate Change!**



Let's discuss.....