

## Coastal Community in Fostering Blue Economy of Bangladesh



It's well known that Bangladesh is a maritime nation, both geographically and historically. Mainly, after the successful demarcation of the maritime boundary from the neighbouring countries, Bangladesh has pronounced an attested maritime perspective with the inauguration of the national Blue Economy Initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has identified about 26 sectors of the Blue Economy and among those fisheries is an already developed sector with tremendous prosperity in Bangladesh.

Besides, the country has a substantial coastal area along the 710 km coastline, almost one-third of the country's total land area. One-third of country's population living in the coastal region mostly depends on marine fishing or related activities for their livelihood, either part-time or full time. In Bangladesh, the fishers, fish farmers and those supplying services and goods to related industries assure the livelihoods of as many as around 17 million people, with about 1.5 million women.

We can broadly define the role of communities in two aspects, including sustainable exploration of resources that is economic development and sustainable management of the ecosystem that confirms green growth of the resources. Reports say that Bangladesh harvested 43.84 lakh MT of fish in 2018-19, of which a large portion came from the Bay of Bengal and earned foreign currencies from exporting ten categories of fishery products, mainly marine items, to more than 55 countries.

So, who are the main contributors? This considerable achievement in this sector is mainly the contribution of the coastal fishing community, which is hurdling this world's most hazardous

occupation and playing a significant role in eliminating poverty, flourishing the economic stability and providing nutrition to the fast-growing population.

In Bangladesh, the marine fishing profession is, until today, a family heirloom. This occupation is a matter of emotion. So, emotion should be utilized with the best options. Without occupational stability, it would be challenging for the country to support and employ this huge community as an asset. They harness the resources that accelerate the whole chain till export or marketing.

On the contrary, human contributions have also seriously taxed the flexibility of coastal and sea resources, threatening the sustainability of our ocean services and its ability to provide the same quality ecosystem functions for future generations. The maximum direct effect of ecosystem instability events mainly comes from the fishers' end. Most of the destructive ways of fishing and biodiversity loss are the result of poor fishing knowledge. The use of destructive fishing methods, overfishing activities, and disobeying the existing rules and regulations are also their creation.

Sustainably managing our ocean is really crucial to achieving sustainable development. The international community along with development practitioners consider balancing continuous economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion a great and challenging issue both intellectually and practically. Livelihood insecurity and environmental factors are interconnected and entangled in a complex web of human-environment relationships. So, rebuilding or maintaining stable fish stocks cannot succeed without first dealing with community vulnerabilities.

Our responsible authorities and policymakers should consider the issue of reducing coastal vulnerabilities who are taking care of and dealing with the resources directly. These positive vibes of communities are more likely than present policies to lead to viable fishing communities and viable fish stocks considering the threats like increasing pollution, climate change etc.

At this moment our main concern is the changing climate, especially for this highly vulnerable sea-going fisher group. Every year many fishers lose their lives due to the sudden rough weather and having no safety or security protocols. For example, it was an event on March 28, 2022; due to the sudden rough weather, seven fishing trawlers went missing in the Bay of Bengal. According to the Bangladesh Coast Guard, about seven fishermen were missed in that accident. Bangladesh Navy rescued 14 fishers alive from a fishing boat floating for eight days in the Bay of Bengal on November 29, 2021. It was almost 140 km away from Cox's Bazar, whereas communication after 10km in the sea is quite impossible in urgent conditions for Bangladesh.

We need integrated conduct of the existing and formulated policy, actions, affairs and strategies regarding the blue economy for the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. Technological modernization with confirming urgent tools for seagoing vessels including life jackets, spare tools, lifebuoy, first aid box, torch, radio, VHF set, mobile, charger, fire extinguisher and compass etc should be monitored primarily. Most fishers do fishing

keeping life jackets aside. So, awareness building is an important issue. Training in capacity and knowledge development is urgent.

The private sector is the primary driver to continue economic growth, pondering community vulnerabilities through investment and adventurous initiatives that come from the global funds and are vertically integrated into small-scale fishers. Consequently, the government can create legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks and incentives. But should keep in mind that necessity never makes a good bargain. Without confirming their needs, facilities and occupational transparency, governance is just a book without content.

A tiny community with a significant role should never be overlooked. Fisher is the mainstreamer of the sector. The considerable involvement with proper knowledge means more opportunities for employment and more options for maximum exploration and exploitation of untapped resources in a retained way. In this context, their problems need to be addressed to ensure a better life that will encourage them to contribute more to the country's economic stability. A viable community will ensure a viable stock eventually.

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