

Collective Action of Puspita Bahari Fisherwomen on the Demak Coast: Building Solidarity for Social Transformation

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Abstract

Fisherwomen on the coast of Demak face various gender injustices amidst environmental crises and public policies that lack gender responsiveness. The Puspita Bahari community serves as a platform for fostering solidarity, advocacy, and grassroots leadership among these women fishers. This study was conducted in three villages supported by Puspita Bahari—Morodemak, Margolinduk, and Purworejo—located in the Bonang sub-district of Demak. By integrating the analysis of spatial, temporal, and violence dimensions (STV) within the feminist everyday political economy framework (Elias & Rai 2018) with the theoretical lens of collective action (Kabeer 2020), this paper examines how Puspita Bahari's collective action resists marginalisation and simultaneously promotes social transformation in the daily lives of coastal women. The research underscores the importance of recognising fisherwomen as agents of change, endowed with local knowledge and collective strength, in realising gender-just development. Incorporating their voices into policymaking processes is crucial for meaningful and sustainable social transformation.

Keywords: coastal communities, gender injustice, fisherwomen, collective action, social transformation

Introduction

"After getting married, women here have more responsibilities because fishing is an economically uncertain job. They have to think about how to meet their needs, and debts are always their responsibility. Men don't care as long as they can go to sea and earn whatever they can and leave the rest to the women" (Mrs M 2024, Interview, December).

This excerpt highlights the extraordinary burden carried by fisherwomen. These resilient women play a key role in driving the family economy. They participate in fishing, processing the catch, and selling their produce at local markets. At the same time, they also carry out care work (Youwikijaya et al. 2023; Villarosa-Tanchuling 2017). However, women's roles in the fisheries sector are often overlooked in development and social protection policies due to societal dichotomies such as 'production-reproduction', 'domestic-non-domestic', and 'wage-non-wage' work (Pratiwi & Gina 2017). This issue is further exacerbated by cultural norms and misinterpretations of religious texts that depict fishing as an exclusively male occupation (Pratiwi & Gina 2017; Wahyuni, Niko, & Elsera 2022).

Several studies confirm that the marginalisation of fisherwomen is systemic. For instance, Kitoilei et al. (2022) examined the practices of fisherwomen in Fiji who combine local knowledge with scientific methods to survive the climate crisis and pass on their expertise to their daughters. This is an excellent example of regeneration for the empowerment of women in coastal and island communities in the face of environmental crises. In Indonesia, efforts to mitigate disasters caused by the climate crisis have not received much publicity (Wouthuyzen et al. 2017). Villarosa-Tanchuling (2023) identified similarities in the circumstances faced by fisherwomen in Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, where they struggle to access production resources due to male domination of land and aquaculture business management. Azizi, Hikmah, and Pranowo (2012) highlight how women are excluded from decision-making processes, particularly with regard to productive fisheries management activities, despite often carrying out these tasks. In everyday life, fisherwomen contribute more than half of the household income (Laila & Amanah 2015). They also employ survival strategies such as investment and side jobs. These include becoming a caterer, producing

salted fish, shelling mussels, working as a shopkeeper, and doing anything else that can generate income (Wardhani 2017; Wahyuni 2017). Unfortunately, this contribution is not matched by recognition, policy support, or resource distribution.

Based on this, various movements have emerged to fight for the rights and justice of fisherwomen. One such movement is the Puspita Bahari fisherwomen's

community in Demak Regency, Central Java, which continues to grow through a spirit of solidarity and refuses to remain silent in the face of injustice. Its members campaign for identity cards that recognise them as fishermen, form women's cooperatives, fight against domestic violence, and advocate for environmental issues. This collective action, structured from daily experience, has become a starting point for social transformation in coastal areas.



Figure 1. Flood situation in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency

Source: Personal documentation 2024

The conditions on the coast of Demak Regency are becoming increasingly complex due to the climate crisis and non-inclusive development projects. Tidal flooding has been a significant issue for over two decades and has been exacerbated by the construction of the Semarang-Demak sea wall, which has increased abrasion and flooding (Utami 2024). Several villages have been permanently submerged, and tidal flooding is spreading towards the centre of Demak City. There has been criticism of the lack of local community involvement in project planning, which could result in their needs and aspirations being overlooked. This includes the needs of fisherwomen, who depend heavily on the coastal ecosystem (Utami 2024). Their narratives reflect the broader struggle to rewrite development policies from a gender perspective, addressing issues such as subordination, discrimination, and limited access to basic services for women (Namirah & Ruwaida 2023). These challenges are indeed more structural and cultural in nature. Therefore, women's collective action is an important process of positive change, carried out consciously and collectively through groups.

Several studies demonstrate the effectiveness of women-led grassroots organisations in promoting

social change in various contexts, such as encouraging public participation, promoting financial inclusion, and challenging gender stereotypes (Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. 2023; Ghosh & Ghosh 2024; Herdiansyah et al. 2019). This activism shows that women can improve the socio-economic conditions of their communities and expand their political representation when given the opportunity to lead and network (González-Malabet 2023). Nevertheless, structural patriarchy and tokenism remain serious obstacles (Safira & Dar 2024). Documenting successful local practices is therefore crucial to strengthening the collective action of grassroots women in driving social transformation, including in the fisheries sector.

Naila Kabeer (2020; 2012) emphasises that collective action enables women to build self-awareness, solidarity, and the capacity to take action. When women come together, they create a shared understanding of justice that can change norms. According to Kabeer (2020), collective action is a dynamic and contextual form of women's agency through historical and social processes of collective struggle. This is important for understanding how communities such as Puspita Bahari can mobilise their members to fight systemic

marginalisation. Puspita Bahari's collective action is a tangible manifestation of transformative work that strengthens women's position within their households, communities, and relationships with the state. They do more than survive; they drive change.

Women's experiences are viewed as a political arena in which power negotiations occur. This paper addresses the key question: *'How does the collective action of fisherwomen in the Puspita Bahari community become a strategy to resist marginalisation and promote social transformation in their daily lives?'* To answer this, the paper applies Kabeer's (2012) framework of collective action alongside the 'Feminist Everyday Political Economy' approach (Elias & Rai 2018). This approach considers how space, time, and violence shape women's lives. Together, these frameworks reinforce the idea that collective action is both a strategy for and a response to dismantling oppressive power relations.

Theoretical framework

This study employs the 'Feminist Everyday Political Economy' framework, which was developed by Elias and Rai (2018). This framework describes social reproduction in the lives of fisherwomen through three dimensions: space, time, and violence. These dimensions are commonly abbreviated as STV. 'Space' refers to the physical and social environment in which women interact with the economic system. 'Time' highlights the double burden experienced by women when performing various roles. 'Violence' encompasses physical violence as well as structural inequality and discrimination, which perpetuate the marginalisation of women. This approach helps to reveal the complexity of gender inequality within a broader socio-political context. STV analysis enables us to examine the daily lives of fisherwomen, who often face gender inequality, environmental challenges such as tidal flooding, and marginalization in public policy. However, this framework does not explicitly discuss women's collective action as a strategy for social change. Therefore, the author integrates it with Naila Kabeer's (2012; 2020) conceptual framework of women's collective action.

This framework positions collective action as one of the most transformative aspects of women's agency, enabling them to build solidarity, voice shared experiences, and challenge structural injustice through community organisations, social movements, and trade unions. Participating in social movements enables women to strengthen their position in the economy and in society, while also challenging patriarchal

norms and structural inequalities. Kabeer (2012; 2020) views collective action as a reflective and political form of women's agency in the struggle for social justice. This framework is particularly relevant to the study of the Puspita Bahari fisherwomen's movement when considered alongside Elias and Rai's (2018) approach to 'Feminist Everyday Political Economy', which examines the manifestation of gender inequality in terms of space, time, and violence (STV). Through collective action, women fishermen overcome the multiple burdens of threatened living space, depleted time, and violence. They also build collective political agency, which is capable of challenging their exclusion from decision-making processes and equitable coastal development.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted in December 2024 in three villages supported by the Puspita Bahari programme: Morodemak, Purworejo, and Margolinduk. These villages are located in the Bonang subdistrict of the Demak regency in Central Java. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with members of the Puspita Bahari community, as well as with two representatives from each village, in order to explore the role of women in the division of labour, their access to resources, and their participation in decision-making processes. The discussions also aimed to identify the overall workload of women. The FGDs employed a gender analysis tool based on the Harvard and Moser framework (March et al., 1999). This method examined collective views on the role of women in the community, labour division dynamics, and involvement in decision-making. Following the FGDs, in-depth interviews were conducted with five Puspita Bahari members, the Morodemak village secretary, the neighbourhood association (RT) head, Masnuah (the founder of Puspita Bahari), and local non-members. Next, observations were made over two full days regarding the activities of fisherwomen and the physical environment in three villages in the Bonang subdistrict, almost all of which had been flooded by the tides. During these observations, in-depth interviews were conducted with a family consisting of a fisherwoman, her husband, and their children to study gender roles, activity calendars, and gender relations in their daily lives.

Marginalisation of Fisherwomen on the Demak Coast in the Context of STV

Fisherwomen play a vital role in the social and economic sustainability of their families, yet their

contributions are rarely formally recognised. The concept of 'space' highlights the importance of considering the physical and social dimensions of the environments in which economic activities take place, including households, workplaces, and other public spaces where women interact with the economic system.

"Bad weather prevents fishermen from going to sea. Access to Dukuh Tambak Polo (Purworejo Village) has been completely destroyed by tidal flooding. On top of that, there is conflict with a sand mining project that is making everything worse" (Mrs DY 2024, FGD 7 December).

Understanding 'space' helps identify how social and economic structures influence women's access to resources. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre

(1991) states that 'space' is a social product that reflects power relations. In the context of fisherwomen, the space used for fishing and managing catches constitutes 'perceived space', while the policies and regulations that limit their access constitute 'conceived space'. Their daily experiences of challenges, such as tidal flooding or conflicts with environmentally destructive projects, constitute their 'lived space'.

The spaces of production (the sea, ponds, and markets) are dominated by men, creating barriers to women's full participation in economic activities. 'Space' is an arena of contested power, and fisherwomen are disadvantaged at both local and national levels. Women are vulnerable to chronic fatigue due to the perpetuation of social reproduction.



Figure 2. Women's Living Space in Bonang Subdistrict, Demak Regency

Source: Personal documentation, 2024

Access to and control over resources reveal significant gender inequalities. Adult women have limited access to economic resources, such as capital and equipment, which are essential for increasing their productivity in fishing and small businesses. Despite possessing the necessary skills and knowledge, they often rely on their husbands or other male family members for access. Girls and boys also experience differences in access to education and training. Boys tend to receive more support to continue their formal education, whereas girls are expected to help with household chores or get married. This creates an entrenched cycle of inequality whereby women and girls continue to be marginalised in terms of access to and control over important resources.

Access to social networks is an important way for fisherwomen to strengthen their position in the community. Puspita Bahari plays a strategic role here by creating a collective space where women can share experiences, build solidarity, and advocate for their rights. However, regenerating leadership poses a significant challenge as many girls marry and migrate, with their husbands often forbidding them from participating. Additionally, the community stigmatises Puspita Bahari as a place for rebels because many of its members are women who have suffered domestic violence and dared to file for divorce, as well as women who go out to sea independently.

"Actually, we are more tired than men. Men just go to sea. Once they return, that's it. Women, on the other hand, start working at dawn and continue until the work is finished..."

We also manage the money — we handle it and sell our products. Our husbands only know how to fish... We usually take care of everything at home" (Mrs F 2024, Interview December).

The dimension of 'time' reveals how fisherwomen are trapped in temporal exploitation. As reflected in the above quote, women are involved in both production and care work. Although husbands sometimes participate, their contribution is limited. Demak fisherwomen also have to wake up earlier and go to bed later than men in order to overcome challenges such as tidal waves and to prepare provisions for fishing. This illustrates the double burden they face, which negatively impacts their physical and psychological health. They often experience chronic fatigue, stress, and other health problems due to a lack of time to rest. These conditions can affect their long-term well-being.

The dimensions of 'violence' include structural and psychological violence. Continuous tidal flooding, a lack of public infrastructure, and gender-unresponsive policies are clear examples of structural violence that exacerbate women's vulnerability. Meanwhile, psychological violence occurs through the internalisation of patriarchal norms that limit women's participation in public life. Consequently, women find themselves trapped in an oppressive cycle that is difficult to break without robust policy intervention and fundamental social change (Elias & Rai 2018). Masnuah, the founder of Puspita Bahari, revealed that domestic violence is common in the area and tends to be ignored by the community, including community leaders. One woman, Mrs E, recounted being beaten by her husband almost every day for over a decade, not knowing what to do. In fact, she was the main breadwinner. Her neighbours turned a blind eye while she was beaten until she bled. With the help of Puspita Bahari's advocacy services, Mrs E finally found the courage to leave her husband. This story reflects the deep-rooted internalisation of patriarchy that reinforces the subordination of women within the household. A lack of social support and knowledge of their rights leaves victims feeling helpless.

Limited access to education is also a form of structural violence, as it prevents fisherwomen from developing the skills needed to improve their standard of living. They have to work harder to support their families, yet their efforts go unrecognised. All of the fisherwomen interviewed agreed that they did not want their children to become fishermen, as they did not

want them to experience the difficult life that they had experienced themselves. They continue to encourage their children to go to school, even if it means leaving the village.

However, there is also a problem in that boys are prioritised for higher education, while girls are encouraged to find work outside of fishing or to get married. One of the girls interviewed recounted that she and her peers were encouraged to work at Bank Mekar. There, labour exploitation occurs through unreasonable work targets and dangerous conditions, as many people dislike Bank Mekar. After deciding to quit, the interviewee was pressured into getting married immediately.

In reality, these factors reinforce each other to make women more vulnerable. One of the interviewees, Mrs D, recounted how she had once been forced to deliver a baby on a boat because tidal flooding had cut off access to healthcare facilities. Tragically, the baby died upon arrival at the hospital. This experience clearly illustrates the interrelation between the 'space' dimension and structural 'violence'. A lack of adequate access to health facilities due to poor geographical conditions and infrastructure reflects spatial exploitation, while policymakers' indifference to the community's basic needs constitutes structural violence.

This study confirms that the dimensions of space, time, and violence in STV theory are interconnected in shaping the experiences of fisherwomen amid the climate crisis and social marginalisation. Without gender-just policy changes, the exploitation of fisherwomen will continue to increase, threatening the sustainability of coastal communities. A Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) approach is required to ensure women have equal access to space, time, and resources, and to alleviate the multiple burdens and violence they endure.

To overcome this marginalisation, structural changes to public policies must focus on gender justice. Programmes to improve women's skills and negotiating capacity are important for creating inclusive policies. Puspita Bahari's work in Demak, which involves training and advocacy for women's rights, could serve as an example for other coastal communities to follow. Collective action is the main strategy through which fisherwomen can combat marginalisation. They survive in the face of challenges and lead social and structural change towards a more inclusive future.

Puspita Bahari's Collective Action as a Strategy for Social Transformation

Naila Kabeer (2012) emphasises that collective action is a means of forming women's agency that challenges oppressive norms and structures, as well as being an economic strategy. When women come together, they construct shared meanings about the injustices they experience. Organised women can resist patriarchal constraints and access hidden opportunities (Kabeer 2020). The resistance of the fisherwomen in Puspita Bahari's collective reflects the transformative power of collective action, as described by Kabeer. The movement emerged from direct experiences of injustice.

Since its establishment on 25 December 2005, Puspita Bahari has grown to become a driving force for positive change. Starting with just 30 independent fisherwomen in Morodemak Village, it has spread to other coastal villages in Demak Regency and established networks with fishing communities across Indonesia and beyond. Masnuah revealed that there are currently around 100 Puspita Bahari members, including traditional fisherwomen, aquaculture practitioners, and people from all walks of life, who are united by their solidarity with marginalised fisherwomen and other vulnerable groups. Two decades since its establishment, Puspita Bahari has successfully supported over 1,500 coastal women and other marginalised groups. These women carry out collective work to urge the government to take concrete action, voicing their needs and pushing for women to be recognised as an important part of resource management, particularly in the water and fisheries sectors. Puspita Bahari shows that women can not only survive, but also lead the struggle.

Puspita Bahari plays an important role in advocating for the rights of fisherwomen to their living and economic spaces. One of their key initiatives, which has inspired other fishing communities, is their campaign to secure formal recognition of fisherwomen as 'fishers' in official documents such as identity cards and fishing licences. This recognition gives women access to government programmes, including subsidies for fishing equipment and skills training. One of the skills taught is how to process seafood to make it more durable and increase its value. During our visit to the Puspita Bahari Secretariat, we saw a variety of handmade seafood products, the tangible results of this training. Fisherwomen interested in joining the production team can now optimise their time while strengthening their position as key contributors to their households and communities. The production of these processed foods offers flexibility

in terms of time, with no set production targets. They can work at home or at the Secretariat, according to their preferences. The Secretary of Morodemak Village stated that nearly 90 per cent of residents live below the poverty line. Therefore, the ability to produce an economically valuable product is crucial.

Puspita Bahari is involved in production and has also established a women's cooperative. This gives them access to capital, reducing their dependence on large investors, who are difficult to access without collateral, and predatory loan sharks. Although exploitative, loan sharks remain an option in cases where houses need to be raised to prevent flooding or when conditions make it impossible to go out to sea. This cooperative, therefore, provides loans while also functioning as a savings account and social safety net. With a flexible savings and loan system, fisherwomen can arrange loans and repayment times based on the fishing season or production cycle. This gives them more freedom to manage their finances without pressure from outside parties. The cooperative fosters solidarity among its members by providing a platform for women to support each other and share experiences of overcoming economic and social challenges.

"We set up a cooperative like this in Tambakpolo. We were taught at Puspita Bahari, after which we were given the independence to set it up in our own village. This makes things much easier, as accessing the village by motorbike is difficult due to flooding on the road. The road to our village floods and cannot be accessed by motorbike. We travelled here by bicycle and had to hurry back before nightfall" (Mrs SD 2024, Interview December).

SD is one of the first 31 fisherwomen to have their occupation recognised on their ID cards. She has become a catalyst for change in Tambakpolo, encouraging other fisherwomen to unite and build a better system, and holding regular meetings to share solutions. In addition to cooperatives and food processing training, Puspita Bahari organises training in waste management and mangrove utilisation, thereby enhancing the economic value of their products.

However, as mentioned above, the lives of coastal fishers in Demak, particularly women, are under continued pressure from a combination of factors. These include the impact of sea sand mining and the construction of the Semarang-Demak toll road, which destroyed around 46 hectares of mangrove forest. The installation of sea fences has also restricted access to the sea. Sea sand mining accelerates coastal erosion, resulting in the loss of agricultural land and fishponds, as

well as a decline in fish catches. This forces many women to change from farming to fishing or the travelling trade. The construction of the toll road, which acts as a sea wall, has destroyed the vital mangrove ecosystem, which provides natural protection against erosion and serves as a habitat for marine life. Meanwhile, the installation of sea fences has restricted fishers' movement, increased their operational costs, and reduced their fishing areas.

Consequently, fisherwomen face a double burden of loss of livelihood and increased domestic work due to tidal flooding. They also experience difficulty accessing health services and psychological pressure due to their unofficial social status. In July 2023, therefore, Masnuah said that coastal communities and members of Puspita Bahari staged a silent protest. To date, Puspita Bahari continues to actively voice the demands of local communities in various forums, calling for the state to implement policies that favour them. Puspita Bahari plays a key role in this context, not only in the Bonang subdistrict but also in other areas, such as the Timbulsloko area of the Sayung subdistrict, where almost the entire area is submerged by seawater. Puspita Bahari has also begun to expand its reach by raising awareness of the urgent need to address the climate crisis in various international forums alongside other fishing communities.

Another important thing that Puspita Bahari does is take a leading role in combating all forms of violence against women and vulnerable groups. It collaborates with LBH APIK Semarang to provide legal advocacy and assistance, and serves as a safe space where victims can share their stories. Despite frequently receiving threats from those who oppose these changes, they remain undeterred. Violence is also reflected in the controversy surrounding land destruction carried out by officials in coastal villages. According to Permen ATR/BPN Number 17/2021, land destruction refers to land that cannot be used as intended due to changes in form caused by natural events such as abrasion and tidal flooding. When residents are vulnerable both economically and administratively, unscrupulous village officials exploit regulatory loopholes and their purchasing power to buy these lands at very low prices.

They then resell the land to investors and development projects at double the price. Consequently, companies have fenced off areas and prohibited residents from carrying out activities in the vicinity. This situation has caused unrest among fishers who are threatened with losing access to their fishing grounds. Masnuah recounts how many fisherwomen tried to

adapt by working as pond fishers instead, although this often failed to meet their daily needs. In addition to fencing off areas, unscrupulous village officials have also been known to rent out unsold land to residents at high prices. They have also been involved in land mafia groups, falsifying land ownership certificates to obtain compensation for development projects.

Fisherwomen are particularly vulnerable as they generally do not have ownership documents in their names. Consequently, they lose access to vital land resources. In Demak Regency, several regional and village regulations govern land use. One of these is Demak Regency Regulation No. 6/2011, which stipulates land use zoning, including for coastal areas. This regulation also grants village and regional governments legal authority to manage and supervise land use. Demak Regency Regulation No. 6/2024 also provides budgeting guidelines, including asset management allocations. Unfortunately, this management is often opaque and misused for the personal gain of village officials, for example, buying damaged land at low prices and selling it to third parties at a high price.

These practices exploit residents' ignorance of the legal status of land and their lack of access to legal aid. Puspita Bahari plays a crucial role in providing legal protection to vulnerable groups. The case of land grabbing on the coast of Demak is an example of an exploitative situation that is difficult to resolve, as people often consider this kind of injustice to be an inevitable part of life. This occurs in the power relations between village officials and vulnerable groups, such as fisherwomen. These groups will continue to be disadvantaged through the abuse of authority, resulting in the loss of access to land and resources, which exacerbates poverty and dependency. Social structures and local policies that do not consider gender perpetuate this injustice further, ultimately making fisherwomen more economically and socially vulnerable (OXFAM 2013). Puspita Bahari's collective action plays a crucial role in confronting this cycle of exploitation. They provide support to empower fisherwomen to negotiate, assert their rights to resources, and challenge unequal power relations (Kabeer 2020).

Puspita Bahari also builds networks that influence public policy on addressing the impacts of the climate crisis and the welfare of coastal communities. These networks encompass various communities and institutions, including KIARA (the People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice), the Indonesian Fisherwomen's Association (PPNI), LBH Semarang, KRUHA (the People's

Coalition for the Right to Water), and the Humanist Foundation. According to Kabeer (2020), Puspita Bahari is powerful because it fosters internal solidarity and operates politically within public and structural spheres through such networks. Puspita Bahari is moving towards becoming a citizen actor who demands accountability from the state.

Puspita Bahari's ability to promote collective action through social media is an example worth following. They regularly hold public discussion forums in partnership with fishing communities, media personnel, and academics, both online and offline. The collective action carried out by fisherwomen within the organisation demonstrates complex, multi-layered empowerment practices that can be understood in depth through Naila Kabeer's (2020) framework. In this case, 'power within' is evident in the growing awareness among fisherwomen of their rights, contributions, and capacities, which were previously subordinated. 'Power with' is reflected in the solidarity among women to support each other and build networks between coastal communities. 'Power to' is expressed through concrete actions such as establishing women's cooperatives, advocating for the inclusion of 'fisherwoman' on identity cards, and protesting against environmentally damaging projects. According to Kabeer's framework, collective action is a means of fighting for rights, as well as a space for producing new meanings and articulating women's political agency, which has long been excluded from decision-making processes.

These findings align with the 2013 Oxfam report, which emphasises the pivotal role of collective action in improving market access and strengthening women's position in the value chain. Oxfam also emphasises the importance of safe spaces and equal relationships within groups for this transformative potential to be realised fully. In the context of Puspita Bahari, this safe space is created through continuous mentoring and mutual support, as well as by strengthening women's business management and social advocacy skills. The strategic partnerships established by Puspita Bahari also increase women's access to resources and political influence. According to the FAO (2018), collective action by women in the fisheries sector is highly effective in addressing the gender inequalities that often hinder women's access to resources, training, and decision-making processes.

The FAO highlights that the success of women's organisations in small-scale fisheries depends heavily on their ability to address practical issues such as

access to capital and production tools, as well as challenging discriminatory social norms. Puspita Bahari has demonstrated this dual role by solving practical problems such as debt and livelihood issues, while also promoting the transformation of coastal women's identities and leadership roles. Furthermore, Evans and Nambiar (2013) argue that collective action by women can drive change at three levels: (1) individual agency, through increased awareness and active participation; (2) social norms, through shifting perceptions of women's roles and capacities; and (3) institutional structures, through forming alliances, influencing policy, and participating in public forums. These three forms of change are clearly evident in the context of Puspita Bahari. Examples range from individuals such as Mrs SD, who has become a local leader, to social norms beginning to accept women as fishers and village structures opening up spaces for women to participate in development deliberations. There are also Puspita Bahari's strong strategic partnerships. Thus, the collective action taken by the fisherwomen of Puspita Bahari goes beyond mere survival, encompassing smart, multi-layered political strategies aimed at structural transformation.

Closing

After two decades of struggle, Puspita Bahari has witnessed the emergence of female leaders actively driving change. Focus group discussions have revealed that its spirit has spread to other villages, indicating a social transformation in the form of grassroots female leadership. The fisherwomen who were once supported by Puspita Bahari now have a stronger sense of identity and are no longer afraid to speak out. They have also formed women's empowerment communities in their own areas. This collective action demonstrates that these women are capable of developing leadership skills and becoming agents of change who can redefine their role in development. Women use solidarity to strengthen their position in local decision-making processes. This confirms that the experiences of coastal women are an important narrative in gender-equitable development.

The authors' experience with the Puspita Bahari fisherwomen in the Bonang subdistrict of the Demak regency reveals how women's marginalisation is rooted not only in poverty and the climate crisis, but also in public policies that ignore gender realities. Through the lens of 'Feminist Everyday Political Economy' (Elias & Rai, 2018), we can see that coastal women bear multiple

burdens in terms of space, time, and violence. These burdens can take the form of structural injustice, access restrictions, or cultural stigma and are embedded in their daily lives. Despite these oppressive conditions, the Puspita Bahari community demonstrates an alternative form of women's resistance and struggle through collective action. They build solidarity, lead advocacy, establish cooperatives, and articulate their rights through structured, meaningful collective action.

Kabeer's (2020) theoretical approach shows that collective action by fisherwomen is a strategy for both survival and transformative agency. It is capable of shifting social norms, dismantling oppressive structures, and building women's leadership from the grassroots level. This transformation occurs from the community level to cross-regional networks that seek to influence public policy in the coastal and environmental sectors. This shows that gender-equitable development cannot be achieved without recognising women as agents of change and involving them in decision-making processes.

Fisherwomen possess local knowledge, a vision of sustainability, and collective strength. These factors should inform policymaking rather than merely making them recipients of programmes. Consequently, the state should consider the experiences of women in coastal communities when formulating national policies oriented towards social justice and sustainability. Integrating their experiences would enrich the substance of policies and ensure that marginalised perspectives are incorporated into the national solution framework. One concrete step that could be taken is to implement a decision-making framework based on the experiences of coastal women, strengthening women's representation at the village and national levels. For instance, a quota for fisherwomen's representation could be introduced in the Musrenbang to ensure their needs are considered in village budget allocation. Additionally, participatory approaches, such as focus group discussions, could be employed to incorporate women's perspectives into policy planning, particularly within the coastal and fisheries sectors.

The authors believe that the voices of coastal women should inform policy rather than merely providing supplementary data. When women are given the opportunity to express their opinions, they are advocating not only for their own needs but also for the well-being of their communities and the environment. Puspita Bahari shows that even in an area affected by tidal waves, significant change can emerge.

Coastal women teach us an important lesson: social transformation begins with the courage to speak up, the solidarity to take action, and the courage to dream big!

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