

[Homepage](#)[Latest News](#)[Search](#)[Languages](#)[Contact Us](#)[About Us](#)IPS Direct to Your
Inbox!your email

- Global Affairs
- Africa
- Asia-Pacific
 - Afghanistan
 - Iran
- Caribbean
 - Haiti
- Europe
 - Union in Diversity
- Latin America
- Mideast & Mediterranean
 - Iraq
 - Israel/Palestine
- North America
 - Neo-Cons
 - Bush's Legacy

Subscribe

- Development
 - MDGs
 - City Voices
 - Corruption
- Civil Society
- Globalisation
- Environment
 - Energy Crunch
 - Climate Change
 - Tierramérica
- Human Rights
- Health
 - HIV/AIDS
- Indigenous Peoples
- Economy & Trade
- Labour
- Population
 - Reproductive Rights
 - Migration&Refugees
- Arts & Entertainment
- Education
- Express Freedom
- Women in the News
- Columns
- In Focus

- Readers' Opinions
- Email News

What is RSS?

LANGUAGES

- ENGLISH
- ESPAÑOL
- FRANÇAIS
- ARABIC
- DEUTSCH
- ITALIANO
- JAPANESE
- NEDERLANDS
- PORTUGUÊS
- SUOMI
- SVENSKA
- SWAHILI
- TÜRKÇE

INDIA: Fishermen Struggle As Seas Change and Fish Dwindle

By **Keya Acharya**

VISHAKHAPATNAM, India, Aug 4 (IPS) - At Pudumadaka beach, 60 kilometres from the coastal city of Vishakhapatnam in southeastern India, 40-year-old Ummudi Bangaraiah stares hopelessly at the day's catch of 4 kilos of sardines, the money from which, when divided by the five other fishermen in his boat, will not pay for one meal for his family.

If Ummudi is lucky, he will miss the moneylenders skulking on the hot noonday beach, waiting to wrest either money - at exorbitant rates of interest - or the fishermen's choicest catch as payment in kind.

Held in a vice by private financiers and reeling under relentless external threats - displacement, mechanised trawling, industrial activity and the changing nature of the seas - traditional fishing communities along India's 7600 kilometres of coastlines, numbering 1.1 billion people at the last census, are in deep trouble.

"The coastline is being used like a dustbin," charges Arjilli Dasu, chief executive officer of the Vishakhapatnam District Fishermen's Youth Welfare Association (DFYWA), which operates in 25 fishing villages near Vishakhapatnam.

"There are coastal industrial 'corridors' with major thermal, steel, petrochemicals, fertilisers and 6-lane highways," he explains, "And a port almost every 50 kilometres, all of whom appear to have forgotten that traditional fishing communities have lived and fished off these coastlines for centuries."

Effluents from these industries have turned Vishakhapatnam's blue seas to a dull grey and are choking the fish to death.

"We are witnesses," says Chodipalli Yerrinaidu, member of the Traditional Fishermen's Society set up by DFYWA in Pudumadaka 4 years ago. "We see small dead fish floating in the seas, we see dead tortoises on the beach."

"Because of effluents being released into the sea, the fish have gone 40 kilometres away," says 44-year-old fisherman Gantipalle Chinnakasulu, from Wadapeta village, some 60 kilometres away from Vishakhapatnam. "We don't even get the old varieties any more."

Dasu says that around 30-35 indigenous fish species have disappeared, including varieties of shark, big snapper and the well-known delicacy, 'Bombay duck'.

Industrial activity has also displaced 120 fishing villages near Vishakhapatnam in the last 5 years alone.

The Indian government's Gangavaram port here gave jobs to just 600 of the 3000 fishermen it rendered jobless.

Fishermen's unions speak of overall government neglect of traditional fishermen, with help being extended only to the mechanised trawling sector.

The situation is aggravated by there being no one government department responsible for the coastlines of India. "There are 11 different government departments [defence, agriculture, coastguard, science and technology, surface transportation, oil and natural gas among others] working here. But there is no Ministry of Fisheries in the Union government," says Dasu.

Many on this coastline have migrated to the Andaman islands, 1200 kilometres away from the mainland, hoping sustain the only livelihood they know - some have stayed behind and become temporary labourers.

The women here - mostly wives of fishermen - are fish-vendors who are also impacted by dwindling fish catches, lesser incomes, lack of proper storage and poor transportation.

There are no buses that service the fishing villages to help the catch reach a bigger market - forcing these women into overcrowded rickshaws that then become accident-prone.

Oxfam India is helping these communities to cope by supporting the DFYWA in disaster-relief, infrastructure-building such as fish markets and income-augmenting activities.

But, as climate change becomes reality on India's coasts, sea surges and the ingress of the sea inland are changing the shape of coastlines. Dwellings are collapsing all along the coastline as the sea invades villages.

Hundreds of kilometres away from Vishakhapatnam, at Keelamunthal on Tamilnadu state's coastline, 45-year-old Nagaratnam points 200 metres out to sea. "Twenty years ago, the shoreline was there," he says. The coastline has now visibly travelled inland.

Professor Bhanu Kumar of oceanography at Andhra Pradesh University at Vishakhapatnam says global warming impacts on the eastern Indian coastline have been "drastic" in recent years.

Tropical storm depressions, usually precursors to cyclones, were a steady feature of the coastline, with at least 3-4 depressions occurring each September, Kumar said. These provided the area its rainfall - which is vital for fish breeding and growth. In 2008, there were no tropical storm depressions.



Friday, August 07, 2009 05:24 GMT

RELATED IPS ARTICLES

- ▶ Who's Harming Fish Stocks? Trawlers or Artisanal Fishers?
- ▶ CLIMATE CHANGE: India's Monsoon Predictions More Uncertain
- ▶ CLIMATE CHANGE-INDIA: Tackling Transfer of 'Green' Technology

RELATED TOPICS

- ▶ Asia-Pacific
- ▶ Development
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Money Matters: Economy, Trade and Finance
- ▶ Troubled Waters

**Obama:**
A New Era?**Financial Meltdown****MOST POPULAR**

- ▶ Q&A: 'Time to De-Grow'
- ▶ GERMANY: Nuclear Power Falls, And Nobody Notices
- ▶ CLIMATE CHANGE: 75 Million Environmental Refugees to Plague Asia-Pacific
- ▶ Q&A: About Peas in a Pod
- ▶ CHINA: U.S. Nervous About China's Growing Footprint Across Africa
- ▶ MIDEAST: Obama Maneuvres Between Jewish Israelis, Jewish Americans
- ▶ INDIA: With Nuke Submarine Launch, India Displays its Growing Military Prowess
- ▶ U.S.: Coal Power Hitting Roadblocks
- ▶ BURMA: Suu Kyi's Trial Gives Rare Glimpse into Burma's Judicial System
- ▶ HEALTH-AFGHANISTAN: Private Care - Designed to Make Money

Arjilli Dasu confirms that fishermen know that the decline in rainfall has affected fish-breeding. "That meeting of freshwater and salt water is very good for fish growth," says Dasu.

Oxfam India is now pushing for climate-adaptation methods like those it conducts in the community through the DFYWA as a matter for policy in India.

Adaptation measures include disaster-preparedness drills, ice-boxes and counters for fish-transportation, fish-aggregating devices that allow shoals to nest within their folds, health and social security insurance packages for fishermen.

"We even take the responsibility of educating the girl child till the age of 18 for an annual premium of 33 cents in the event of her father's death," says Kanakaiah, adviser to the United India Insurance Group, at Vishakhapatnam.

Professor Kumar says that the best help for the community is to restore the mangroves that have been devastated by human activity all along India's coastlines.

"Mangroves provide a multiplicity of adaptation and mitigation options," says Kumar, "They restrict the sea-ingress that is happening today, while encouraging fish breeding and ecological balance."

India's new Minister for Environment, Jairam Ramesh has recognised the need for mangroves along the coastlines. He has withdrawn permission to build a new airport on mangrove-land at Navi Mumbai, near Mumbai.

(END/2009)

[Send your comments to the editor](#)

-  News Feeds
RSS/XML
-  Make IPS
News your
homepage!
-  Free Email
Newsletters
-  IPS Mobile
-  Text Only

[READ IN IPSNEWS.NET >>](#)

ECONOMY, TRADE & FINANCE



► **HEALTH-AFRICA:**
Better Tools to Target
Malaria

[More >>](#)

REALITY CHECK - Missing the Millennium Development Goals?



► **HEALTH-AFRICA:** Family
Planning: Expand Role
For Private Sector

[More >>](#)

ENVIRONMENT



► **ENVIRONMENT-CHILE:**
Anti-Coal Plant Activists
Get Death Threats

[More >>](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Subscription](#) | [News in RSS](#) | [Email News](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Text Only](#)
Copyright © 2009 IPS-Inter Press Service. All rights reserved.