

Let's Get to Know

# Puspita Bahari

The Fisherwomen's Movement in Coastal Demak



This zine is a collaboration between Puspita Bahari and the University of Leeds.

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**Mantra to The Mother Ocean**

*Thank you, Mother Ocean, for giving life to us, our children, and our grandchildren.*

*Mother Ocean, who has protected us, given us life, ensured we do not go hungry, ensured we do not experience drought. Thank you, Mother Ocean, for sustaining us.*

*Mother Ocean, thank you for guarding our waters. Water is our lifeblood, Mother Ocean; we feel your love flowing through our veins and flesh, the source of all life on Mother Earth. For this, we will not stand idly by if human greed harms you.*

*We ask for forgiveness for the greedy actions of humans that continue to hurt you and cause you pain.*

*Mother Ocean, in our daily prayers and chants, we promise to always sow goodness for the universe and strive with all our might to protect you.*

*Mother Ocean, we, the women from all corners of the world, will continue to fight to protect you from all forms of violence and greed.*

*World Women's March 2023*  
**Masnuah, Susan Herawati, and Soka Handinah**  
**(Puspita Bahari)**



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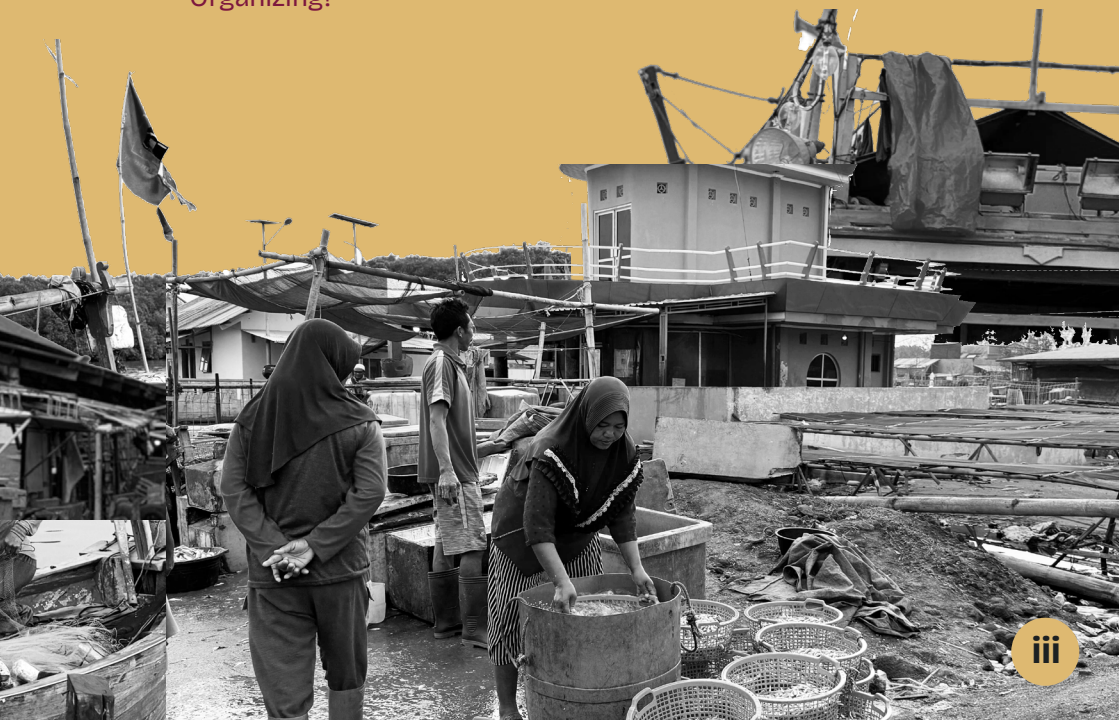
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# What is Puspita Bahari?

*Puspita Bahari was born as an oasis amid the strong patriarchal culture in coastal communities and masculinity in the fisherfolk movement.*



We are Puspita Bahari, a fisherwomen's community in Demak Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. We were founded in 2005 with the spirit of empowering fisherwomen and helping them improve their welfare and escape and break the chains of patriarchal culture.

Puspita Bahari was born as an oasis amid the strong patriarchal culture in coastal communities and to challenge the continued dominance of masculinity within the fisherfolk movement.

In Demak, women are placed in subordinate positions. Poverty and violence against women are rooted in cultural views that place women as *Konco Wingking* (a friend who is and/or working behind) with roles of *Macak* (dressing up), *Masak* (cooking), and *Manak* (giving birth). These values render women's voices, positions, and leadership invisible and unheard.

As a pioneer of the fisherwomen's movement in Indonesia, Puspita Bahari builds solidarity among fisherwomen to fight poverty, gender inequality, and climate injustice.

To date, Puspita Bahari has 100 members and has benefited more than 1,500 coastal women and other vulnerable groups (elders, people with disabilities, informal workers, female heads of households, etc.).

We recognise that solidarity among fisherwomen can be achieved if critical awareness is maintained. We nurture critical awareness and solidarity by networking, collaborating, and supporting grassroots communities and feminist movements in Indonesia. This includes supporting and being part of the Indonesian Fisherwomen Sisterhood (*Persaudarian Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia/PPNI*), networking forum for fisherwomen's movement in Indonesia.

For Puspita Bahari, fisherwomen have the right to be visible, to lead, and be free from poverty and violence.

Long live the women's movement!



*Long live  
the women's  
movement!*





# Who are Fisherwomen?



Fisherwomen are women involved in the fisheries industry chain from pre-catching, catching, to post-catching. This means fisherwomen are those who prepare catching equipment, go to sea, process, sell, and market the catch.

The existence and contribution of fisherwomen in Indonesia are still not recognized by society and the state. The presence of fisherwomen tends to be invisible because they are still considered "helping their husbands." In 2016-2017, Puspita Bahari advocated for the recognition of fisherwomen's rights and successfully changed the job status of 31 fisherwomen on their ID cards from Housewives to Fishers. For us, changing job status on ID cards is a political step for the recognition of fisherwomen's existence and contributions.





# What Do We Do?



## 1. Community Organizing

As a movement, it is important for us to gather as much strength as possible. Therefore, we continue to nurture and expand our movement. One of the activities we do is meet monthly to share stories, problems, solutions, and support. We warmly welcome anyone who wants to join this movement.

## 2. Managing Multi-purpose Cooperatives

We set up and manage cooperatives engaged in production, marketing, savings and loans. Currently, the cooperatives operate in three villages (Purworejo, Margolinduk, and Morodemak) with assets of around 25 million Rupiah. Cooperatives are a form of mutual cooperation from, by, and for fisherwomen. We hope these cooperatives can help with business capital and help women escape debt and the vicious circle of moneylenders.





### 3. Leading Training on Making and Marketing Seafood Products

The training we provide includes skill enhancement to make seafood crackers, chips, peanut crackers, shrimp paste, and various seafood products. We hope that with this training, women can become economically independent. These seafood products are then marketed inside and outside the city.

### 4. Providing Assistance and Protection for Victims of Gender-Based Violence

Puspita Bahari has three case assistants. From January to May 2024, Puspita Bahari assisted 15 cases of violence against women, which were then referred to partner legal aid institutions.



## 5. Advocating for Fisherwomen's Rights

The lack of recognition of fisherwomen's identities and rights drives our advocacy. We voice the needs and issues faced by fisherwomen that are very specific, unique, and gendered.

## 6. Providing Legal and Social Awareness Education

Legal and critical social awareness education is very important for fisherwomen. Puspita Bahari provides various education and training, including on gender equality, the elimination of domestic violence, and awareness of the right to living space amid the coastal climate crisis.





In leading the above movement, Puspita Bahari is supported by diverse parties, including NGOs, private sector, government, communities, universities, and individuals.



# Where are We Organizing?

*Java sea*

**Kongsi  
Purworejo**  
15 members

**Morodemak**  
65 members



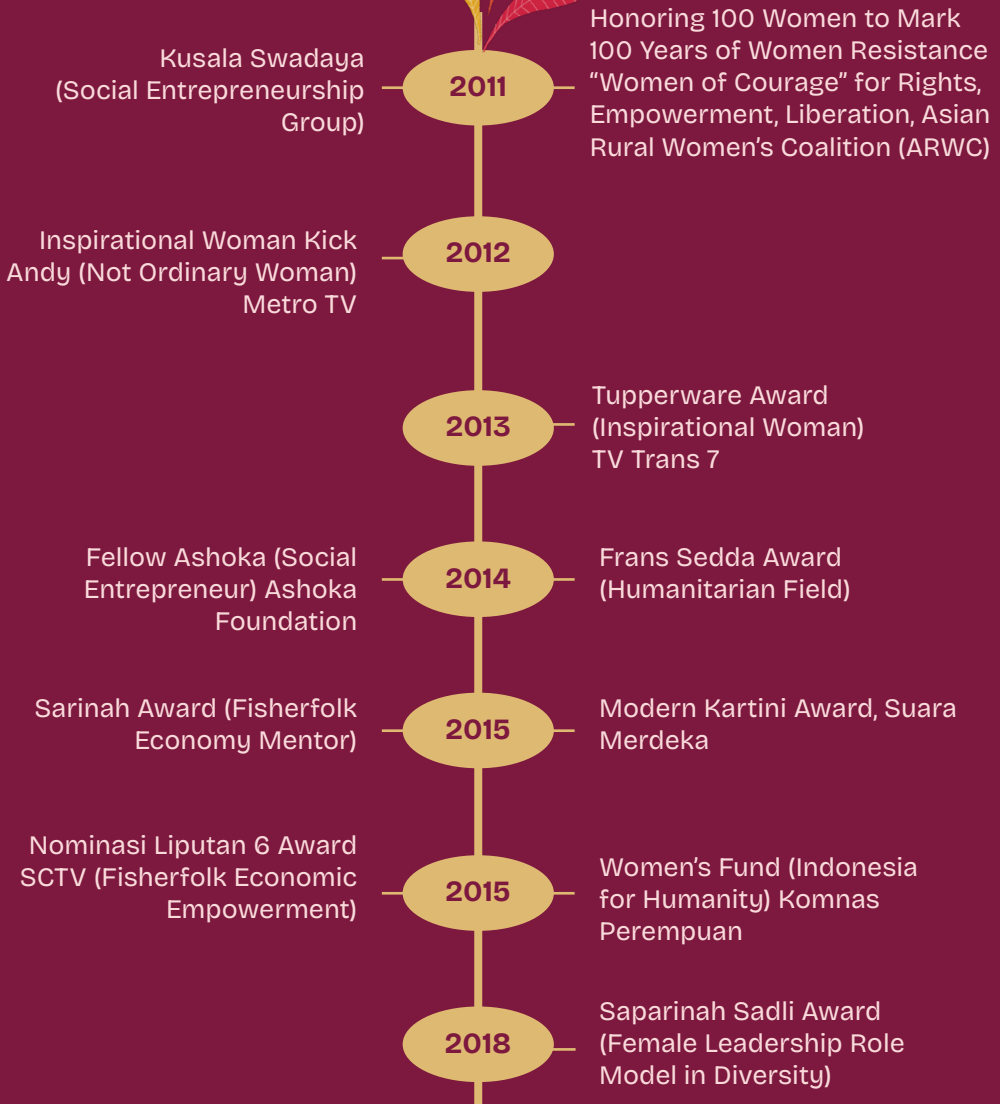
**Tambak Polo Purworejo**  
29 members

*Demak Regency, Central  
Java Province, Indonesia*

**Margolinduk**  
65 members

Puspita Bahari members are spread across Morodemak, Margolinduk, and Purworejo Villages. We are continuously organizing in other coastal villages in Demak Regency.

# Our Recognitions







## Song

### **My Ancestors**

*created by: Ibu Sud*

*My ancestors were sailors  
Likes to sail the vast ocean  
Crashing the waves, with no fear  
Weathering storms is usual*

*The wind blows, the sails spread  
Waves crashing on the shore  
Brave youth, rise now  
To the sea, we go together*

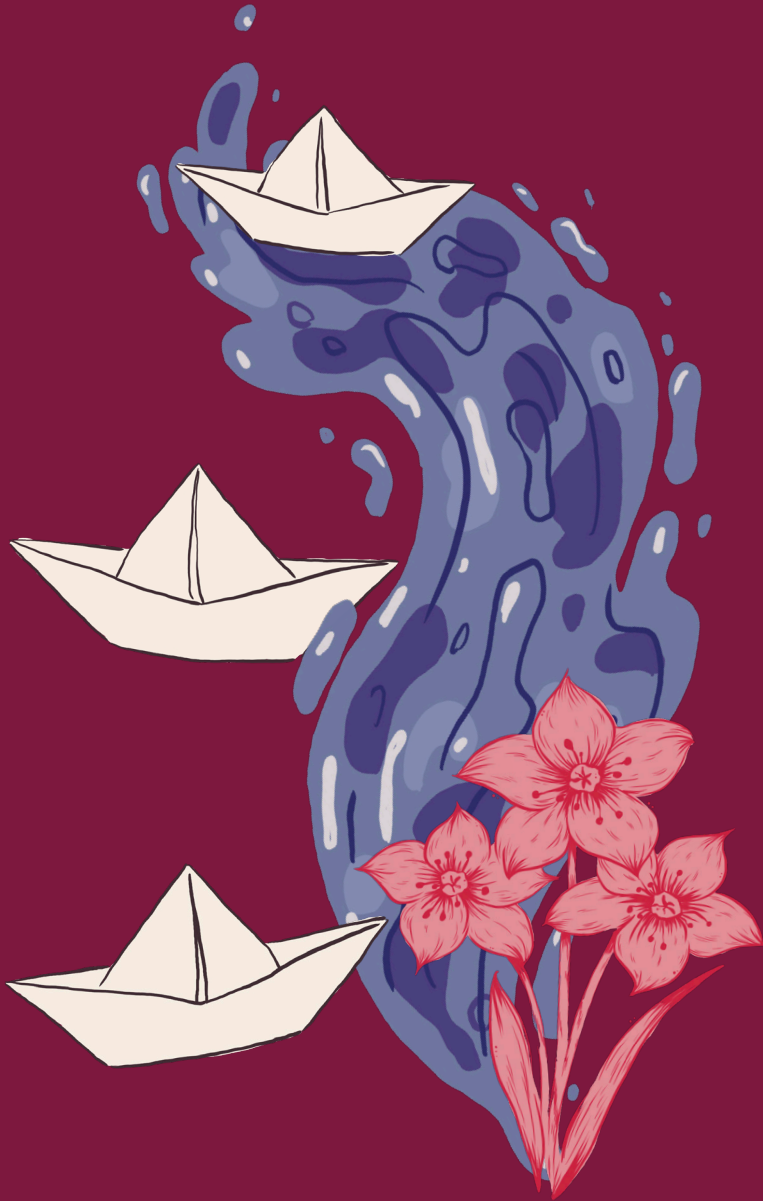
*My ancestors were sailors  
Likes to sail the vast ocean  
Crashing the waves, with no fear  
Weathering storms is usual*

*The wind blows, the sails spread  
Waves crashing on the shore  
Brave youth, rise now  
To the sea, we go together*



Above are the lyrics of a children's song titled "Nenek Moyangku" (My Ancestors). It was created by Saridjah Niung (Ibu Sud), a musician, music teacher, creator of children's songs, radio broadcaster, playwright, and Indonesian batik artist, in 1940. Her compositions have enriched children's music in Indonesia with themes of nationalism. Nenek Moyang refers to both male and female ancestors. In Indonesia we don't use the term Kakek Moyang for ancestors. Nenek means grandmothers and Kakek means grandfathers.

# Puspita Bahari in Our Heart





I am a fisherwoman from Tambak Polo sub-village, Purworejo village. I have been going to sea for over 15 years with my husband. Before meeting Puspita Bahari in 2016, I felt ashamed of being a fisherwoman. When at sea, I would cover my face and chest to avoid being seen. I also often hid on the ship's deck when the day began to brighten. I was ashamed because society often said: *"Wong Wedok kok Miyang!"* (Why do women go to sea!) They believed that women should be at home, not on boats catching fish at sea.

After meeting Puspita Bahari, I realized that what I do is a noble job. I don't need to be ashamed of my job as a fisherwoman. I was also educated about gender. Now, I am not ashamed to be a fisherwoman; I am proud. I no longer hide my identity as a woman. I also realize that I am not just helping my husband, but doing a productive job equal to men.

Now in Tambak Polo, I and other fisherwomen have successfully changed our ID cards from Housewives to Fishers. There are 29 fisherwomen who have changed their ID cards. We have also received insurance cards, KUSUKA cards, and BPJS Employment from the government. There is a sense of emotion and pride accompanying this. I hope fisherwomen in various regions are proud of themselves.

*Siti Darwati*





I am a mother of four and a victim of domestic violence living in Morodemak Village. I met Puspita Bahari and received assistance as a victim of violence. Since 2014, I have joined Puspita Bahari and received various education and training—from gender equality, social issues, to workshops on making seafood products.

After joining Puspita Bahari, I feel more confident speaking in public. I also have the skills to make processed seafood (which is now my main profession). My concern for other women has been realized by becoming a social worker for women victims of violence. Many victims are still afraid to report their cases and are trapped in the vicious circle of violence. It's not easy for women, especially without assistance and support. I always tell other women that we have the right to live happily, healthily, and free from violence.

I hope victims dare to speak up and report their cases, and that violence in my area decreases.

*Hidayah*



I am a woman from Timbulsloko Village. In 2018, my house slowly sank. At its peak in 2020, my village became a dead village. Residents' activities came to a halt, houses were submerged, and footpaths were no longer visible. My fellow residents and I were isolated. Pregnant women, the sick, the elderly, and the disabled had difficulty accessing health services.

Puspita Bahari, through Masnuah, came to our place to distribute food aid. I was invited to chat with her. Gradually we began to rise, find solutions, and refuse to sink. We built wooden bridges to connect our houses and replace the lost paths.

Before I knew Masnuah and Puspita Bahari, I did not have the courage to talk about the difficulties faced by my village. I felt ashamed and confused about whom to speak to. Now, I and other women in Timbulsloko often gather and foster solidarity. We finally know that we have the right to a decent life, and it is okay to ask about it.

*Rusikah*



## Song

### The Fighting Blood

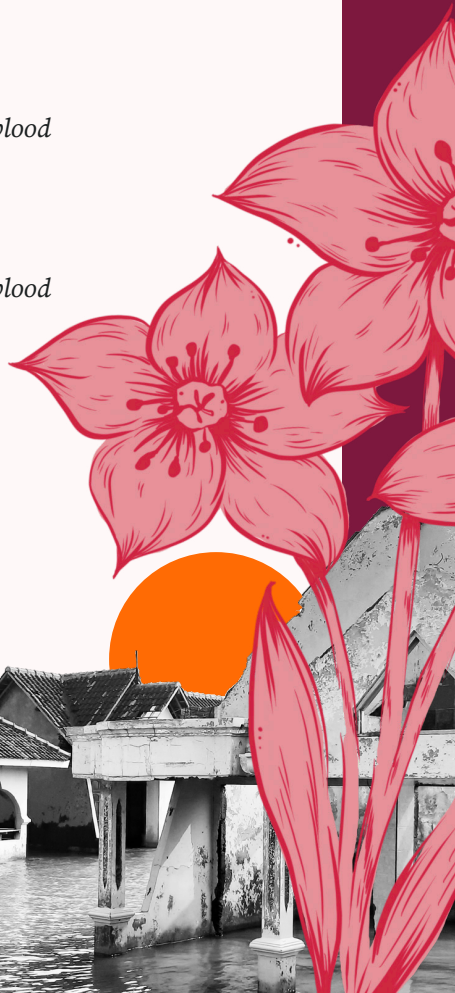
*Here is our land  
Where rice fields stretch wide  
The sea is rich and vast  
Our land is fertile, sir*

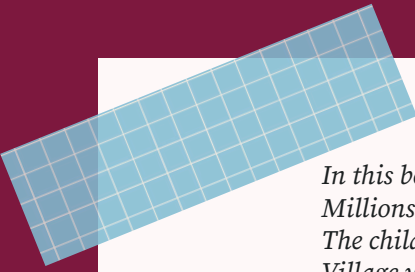
*In this beautiful land  
Millions of people are suffering  
The children of workers don't go to school  
Village youths have no jobs*

*Their rights are taken away  
Evicted and hungry  
Mother, accept our fighting blood  
To free the people*

*Their rights are taken away  
Evicted and hungry  
Mother, accept our fighting blood  
To you we pledge our service*

*Here is our land  
Where rice fields stretch wide  
The sea is rich and vast  
Our land is fertile, sir*





*In this beautiful land  
Millions of people are suffering  
The children of laborers don't go to school  
Village youths have no jobs*

*Their rights are taken away  
Evicted and hungry  
Mother, accept our fighting blood  
To free the people*

*Their rights are taken away  
Evicted and hungry  
Mother, accept our fighting blood  
To free the people*

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*Their rights are taken away  
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Mother, accept our fighting blood  
To free the people*

This song was written collectively by John Tobing, Dadang Juliantara, Andi Munadjat, and Budiman Sudjarmiko in the 1990s. This song is popular among activists and is sung at various rallies, demonstrations and protests.





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