

**Occupation of the Coast-II:
Intensive Shrimp Aquaculture on the East Coast**

OPEN CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
Abstract deadline - 11th September 2020
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Photo Credit: Kaelyn Maehara, 'On the Water' film

Geographic scope of the publication:

This publication will consist of papers from four coastal states of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, as well as one Union Territory of Puducherry. In addition it will feature interviews with people from the ground to highlight the everyday experiences of engaging with this form of commodity production.

Focus of the publication:

[Occupation of the Coast-I](#) was published for the World Forum of Fisher People General Assembly which was held in December 2017. The focus of this first edition was to provide an overview of the changes and challenges faced by coastal communities in general, and fishworkers specifically, with regards to the Blue Economy development framework in India. Building on our learnings from this and in order to update on specific trajectories of change this second publication focuses on intensive shrimp aquaculture on the East Coast of India. Through contributions from academics and community members from four coastal states and one union territory, Occupation of the Coast-II aims to bring together insights on the micro-scales of shrimp production by encompassing labour, ecology, caste, gender, livelihoods and the economy. The core objective of each paper will be to highlight the specific relations of production, both vertically in terms of the production process and

horizontally across landscapes. From these diverse points of view we hope to problematize the narrative that promises a conflict free transition to the Blue Economy in India.

Background:

Shrimp has been the fulcrum of fisheries development in India since independence. While the first boom in fisheries exports, seven decades ago, was driven by the mechanisation at sea and the resulting export of wild-caught shrimp, since liberalisation, and particularly since 2008, the growth has come in the form of intensive shrimp farming. In 2019-20, India exported a total of 6,52,000 tonnes of frozen shrimp, most of it coming from intensive fish farms, and largely relying on one species, the Pacific White Shrimp. Frozen shrimp exports from India account for 72% of the foreign exchange generation from the seafood basket, and totalled to USD 4.89 billion last year..

In terms of the quantity to export value ratio, frozen shrimp is by far the most profitable sector to invest in; it is no wonder that both the new fisheries policy and the scheme introduced by the GoI during the pandemic show intensive shrimp aquaculture as a thrust sector. The documents related to these show that India has a total potential of brackish water resources of 12.4 lakh hectares and saline/alkaline affected areas of 12 lakh hectares which are suited for the farming of shrimp. Currently India utilises less than 7% of land area of this potential.

A regional distribution of area under cultivation (AUC) along India's coastline and the estimated production (EP) on these lands show that the states on the East coast of India dominate the production share. Of this too, there are significant differences in the species produced, the per hectare productivity, and the relations of production. Thus, national data on production and exports is unable to capture the regional diversities and the micro-scales of production.

Distribution of shrimp production:

Total area under cultivation in India: 1,52,595 hectares

Total area in East Coast: 1,42,912 (93.6%)

West Bengal- 55,211

Odisha- 11,486

Andhra Pradesh- 64,222

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry- 11,993

Total estimated production in India: 6,90,001 tonnes

Total production on East Coast: 5,78,450 (84%)

West Bengal- 76,534

Odisha- 42,735

Andhra Pradesh- 4,59,181

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry- 45,234

Notes for authors:

Research undertaken thus far on the subject shows a range of trends related to the negative impacts of intensive shrimp farming in local settings. There is almost a universal consensus that the pollution/effluents from shrimp farms are released untreated into the neighbouring environments; small-scale fishworkers being the biggest casualties of this massive industry. Reports from fishworker unions highlight the cultural, social, and political and land-use changes that this form of commodity production is inducing in coastal village units; a unit where fishworkers as such were marginalised in governance and representation, and now further impacted by a diminishing material base for the production and reproduction of their livelihoods.

In a caste society like India, land and capital are both mediated by historical hierarchies within the caste order; further fishworkers are communities which have historically been landless, instead looking out to sea for sustenance and survival. Thus, this shift in seafood production entrenches the caste order, particularly subjecting caste fishworkers to a precarious position within the production chain. Much like caste, the historical landlessness of women, and the absence of their consent in household decision making, means that shrimp farming disproportionately affects women.

Finally, the state in itself has retreated from the realm of regulation and welfare provision, instead leaving producers to face the perils of the market, and with it to the extra-economic forms of violence and dispossession, as discussed above. The Coastal Aquaculture Act of India which regulates this sector, is in itself a suspect law, and is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court. Similarly, most farms which have undergone a land-use conversion of agrarian lands are in violation of state regulation. And finally, in the absence of any price controls, producers are often left to bear the burden of informal credit, and recovery, mechanisms, and have to content with a globally fluctuating market; the losses during the lockdown are an indication that the state is currently disinterested from guaranteeing prices and regulating markets.

Thus socially, ecologically and economically, intensive shrimp farming has differing forms of impacts given the class dynamics of agrarian production in the regions under the scope.

Format:

The publication is looking for a wide range of submissions ranging from shorter opinion pieces, interviews to even full length academic pieces. Given the timeline, we believe that the time is only available to submit, or perhaps update, already existing work. Given the constraints of time, we are having to restrict the submissions to English. However, we would like to follow this publication up with another one, as part of our ongoing work on the subject; for this future work, we think it is very important for vernacular submissions to be published and thus would request contributors to write in to us to discuss the possibility of working on non-English pieces in the near future.

For this publication, we envision the following formats of submissions:

1. Full-length academic papers (6000-10000 words);
2. Open Space submissions deriving from ongoing research (3000-5000 words);
3. Data related to shrimp production that could be household surveys, value chain analysis, geospatial mapping, land-use change etc.;
4. Any form of primary research that lends insights into the social relations of shrimp production;
5. Photo-stories.

Timeline:

11th September: Deadline for submission of abstracts

14th September: Intimating the authors of selected abstracts and finalizing the scope of piece/modalities

1st October: First draft to be submitted by authors to TRC

5th October: TRC copy-edits and sends back to the authors

15th October: Final piece submitted by authors

1st November, 2020: Publication finalised

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