This is an ongoing project by IDO aimed at empowering women fishers at the grassroots level specifically those working in post-harvest processing centers, depots, and wholesale markets. The initiative seeks to improve their living standards, ensure their rights and an environment free from violence, and support them in sustaining a peaceful, non-violent livelihood. Women fishers in the proposed project area lack the necessary skills to sustain themselves during the off-season (the lean season), leaving them in highly precarious living conditions. They also lack the skills required to earn a livelihood through alternative means. Furthermore, women working at fish depots and wholesale markets are deprived of fair wages. They are also subjected to various forms of harassment, and the working environment there is neither satisfactory nor women-friendly. Additionally, they lack the capacity to exert influence or assume leadership roles within society.



Women from fishing communities face limited opportunities to bring their products to market and lack connections with market stakeholders or access to financial benefits. To address this situation, the proposed project will implement several measures, including organizing, raising awareness, building capacity, securing fair wages, fostering a collective voice, establishing market linkages, and engaging in alternative economic activities. This is because many of them are poor, widowed, divorced, abandoned by their husbands, or victims of abuse, violence, and the dowry system. They live in unsafe conditions and earn their livelihoods by catching fish and shrimp at wholesale markets,

depots, and in rivers environments where they are subjected to various forms of abuse. They lack awareness and organization; they also lack the leadership, unity, solidarity, skills, and capital necessary to engage in economic activities. If they become organized, conscious, united, and cohesive, and acquire leadership and operational skills while also engaging in work at wholesale markets and depots and in river fishing through access to networks and resources they will be able to earn higher incomes, become self-reliant, and effectively assert their demands.

As a result, their socio-economic conditions will improve, enabling them to live in a peaceful and harmonious environment. To implement the project, IDO will undertake various methods and activities, such as staff recruitment, training provision, organizing refresher courses, conducting surveys, identifying beneficiaries, holding orientation and awareness-raising sessions, organizing and forming groups, providing training on diverse skills, arranging seminars and workshops, and extending financial assistance. Additionally, it will encompass activities such as integration into economic activities, strict supervision, follow-up, monitoring, internal evaluation and auditing, quarterly and half-yearly reports and review meetings, as well as monthly meetings.

Contextual Analysis: Bangladesh is a vulnerable country due to the impacts of climate change, with its coastal regions facing heightened risk. In particular, the Paikgacha and Koyra Upazilas of Khulna district have been identified as disaster-prone and highly vulnerable areas. The fishing communities in these regions are living in extremely inhumane conditions, and their livelihoods are in jeopardy. As employment opportunities dwindle day by day, many are compelled to leave the area and migrate elsewhere. At the same time, frequent human-induced and natural disasters are making their lives and livelihoods increasingly precarious.

Problem Description: The proposed project will be implemented in the Paikgacha and Koyra Upazilas of Khulna district. Women involved in fishing and workers employed in fish processing centers, depots, and wholesale markets lead highly precarious lives. Their lives and livelihoods face a severe crisis due to a lack of technical knowledge, wage disparities, gender-based violence, unsanitary working conditions, and an absence of safety and security in their daily lives. They live in unsafe shelters and earn their livelihood by catching fish and shrimp at wholesale markets, depots, or in rivers, where they are subjected to various forms of abuse. They lack the necessary awareness, organizational strength, leadership, unity, solidarity, skills, and capital required to participate in economic activities. If they become organized, aware, united, and cohesive and acquire leadership and professional skills while also engaging in activities such as working at wholesale markets or depots and fishing in rivers through necessary connections and support, they will be able to earn higher incomes, become self-reliant, and take a strong stand for their rights. As a result, their socio-economic conditions will improve, and they will be able to live in a peaceful and harmonious environment.

Overall Goal: To ensure women's rights and leadership capacity among marginalized women in the fishing communities at the grassroots level in Paikgacha and Koyra Upazilas of Khulna district.