

A Study on Inclusive Development in Fisheries Sector based on Gender Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the gender issues in inclusive development in the fisheries sector mainly focusing on gender discrimination. Gender inequality and discrimination challenges the social economic and environmental sustainability of the fisheries sector in achieving inclusive development. The fisheries sector is a male-dominated sector. Although, millions of women are engaged in this sector their work has been systematically discounted and devalued. This paper reviews the gender discrimination on; labour division, accessibility, and power relations, which hinder the sustainability and development process in marginalized communities. There should be a strong focus on involving and empowering women in particular because income earned by this group is more likely to benefit the overall family, especially children. The paper concludes that gender sensitive research can help in ensuring that the conditions for achieving the development sustainably, in the context of climate change and development aspects.

INTRODUCTION

As the world fisheries sector strengthens against the numerous odds, with more produce and income generation, directly contributing to the food security of a majority of the population, in 2016; is responsible for providing essential nutrition for 3 billion people. The fishing sector in the third world countries, apart from being more vulnerable when compared to that of developed nations who have better tools and means to exploit the resources, on a gender perspective, the sector is still not much in favour of equality in division of labour and remuneration. Coming to India, the peninsular country, and fisheries, being one of the major primary sectors, providing employment to over

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14 million people, plays a crucial role in the country's export industry, food and national income generation. However, the sector is highly engulfed by the crises of gender discrimination and gender inequality, directly related to the slow growth of the sector in terms of social, economic and environmental sustainability, hampering the inclusive development of the sector owing to various reasons, about which this paper deals. Meanwhile, riding on a robust demand for its frozen shrimp and frozen fish in international markets, India exported 11, 34,948 MT of seafood worth an all-time high of US\$ 5.78 billion (Rs 37, 870.90 crores) in 2016-17(MPEDA 2017).

Lying on the southern tip of India, Kerala, with 590km of coastline, amounting to 10% of the total coastline of India, with a comparatively very high density of population and rich marine resources, is a leading consumer and producer of fish. Ironically, the sector is highly male

dominated despite women contributing well in post-harvest activities, resource management and decision making

Covering both their household and community together. The paper deals with the questions of gender discrimination prevailing in the sector and the need for adopting inclusive development strategies.

ON THE VULNERABILITY ASPECT OF THE SECTOR AND THE GENDER INEQUALITY:

“A coastal area profile presents a variety of information required for effective decision-making and planning, including environmental and socio-economic information and the analysis of problems and opportunities for sustainable coastal development” (FAO). Fishing communities being the most vulnerable, faces a lot of harmful backwash effects, despite being a primary livelihood option since time immemorial, for the occupants of 8129km long coastal belt in India; where, about 12.49 lakh fisher folk operate using diverse craft-gear combinations with regional and seasonal variations.

The indicators of vulnerability of the Kerala fishermen are related to the geographical, social, environmental, technical, equity related, policy related, gender specific, urbanization, economic and political aspects. Climate change and pollution together leads to the depletion of marine species, causing a crunch of resources; and poverty being a chain of crises, leads to the trapping of fisher folk in poverty (Bene, 2003). Backwardness remaining the hallmark of fisherman, poor adaptive capacity, low educational attainment, poor health facilities, low expectation, alcoholism, lower sex ratio, high population density, lack of access to water, sanitation, power (Asian Development Bank, 2003), poor linkages/organizational setups, financial instability, outmoded technology and competition also add fuel to the flames. Additionally, already latent evil of gender discrimination makes it worse for the fisherwomen, who, in spite of their contribution, are often underpaid and unrecognized. This “vicious circle of poverty needs to be broken for a virtuous circle of prosperity” by 2030. (John Joseph, 2015).

On the gender perspective, the results showed that, in Kerala, despite the relatively favorable fisherwomen empowerment index (Shyam, Geetha, 2013); violence and sexual harassment against fisherwomen are on an increasing trend, with several social and economic barriers.

FISHERWOMEN AS A SOCIAL ACTOR - GENDER ROLE IN FISHERIES

Paradoxically, even if the fisherwomen (around 5 lakhs) play a substantial role in the secondary sector of fisheries in aquaculture production, pre harvesting (net making), harvesting and about 50% relatively lower capital intensive post-harvest activities of fish drying, prawn peeling, sorting, grading, fish packing and fish vending, they are more vulnerable than men; facing discrimination, especially by those engaged in handling, transporting and storage.

When the traditional fishing communities practice gender based division of labour; pressurized also by the taboos related with women going to the sea, women involve mainly in near shore and shore based activities, thereby limiting their role in actual fishing, especially for subsistence. The absence of viable alternate jobs makes them try forming groups and adhere to their occupation, facing the burdens of extended area covered, extra trading time (nearly 8-10hrs) and indebtedness.

In the dry fish trade of northern Kerala, women produce and sell directly to consumers, or to merchants. Some self- help groups have promoted production and marketing, due to development in processing industry. But many others work for low wages as labour, processors and sorters for huge units and landing centres in both the unorganized sector and the organized sector where they dominate in prawn/shrimp processing and peeling work (Bhatta, 2003). However, development of peeling industry was a curse to them. “In Kerala, peeling work dominates the occupation scene

with nearly 45%of the total work force, followed by small fish traders (23%), processing plant workers (16%), fish curers/ dyers constituting 7%, beach workers (6%), and remaining constituting inn value addition”(Sathiadhas, 2005).

The role of women in handling and management of coastal resources, their understanding of the reasons for environmental degradation and laws and regulations pertaining to use of coastal resources gender issues involved in sustainable development was conducted in Kerala and Tamil Nadu (Krishna, 2002). Upare (2002) highlighted the effective fisheries management through community and development based participation in improving standard of living, initiatives for credit availability, nutrition and self-reliance. Major issues confronting the women in capture fisheries such as social, economic, institutional etc. are discussed and their perception towards social, economic and institutional issues are discussed (CMFRI, 2001). Women empowerment and thereby the community development is the holistic approach required. A study by Ashaletha, et al.,(2001) envisages the direct and indirect role of women in marine sector and their perception on various social, economic, institutional, technological issues. Nair (1998) aims at identifying the multi-faceted role of fisherwomen and emancipating them through the programmes of Matsyafed.

The table shows a division of labour based on gender perspective in small scale fisheries:

Table 1

CATEGORY	FEMALE FISHERS	MALE FISHERS
Fishing ground	Near shore fishing (Choices depend on accessibility, ability to attend home affairs, severity of the fishing operation due to weather, available opportunities, scale of operations)	Off shore fishing
Target fish		Mostly on fin fish and valuable invertebrates
Work	Mostly invertebrates (Choices depend on accessibility, ecosystem, value, quantity, fishing technology, scale of operations)	More risky Main
Income	Less risky (Choices depend on fishing technology, distance from the shore, sea condition,	Basically harvesting

Engagement	responsibilities, obligations, working conditions) Main/Supplementary (Depends on fishing duration, culture, household condition (male/female headed, marital status), quantity, household economy, vulnerability, policy changes)	Both day and night Good
Fishing time	Pre and post harvesting (Depends on home affairs, demographic factors (age, marital status, and age of children) commitment, working hours, culture, safety)	
Relationships in the governing system	Day time (Depends on home affairs, child caring, weather, dedication, economy, safety, Culture) Poor	
*Table from Koralagama, Dilanthi; Gupta, Joyeeta ;Pouw, Nicky R. M., 2017, “Inclusive development from a gender perspective in small scale fisheries” , Article in Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, Feb.2017, pg 3.		

The lack of gender equality in division of labour is evident from the table. Despite lots of women empowerment programmes and self-help groups and them playing a remarkable role in balancing the credit requirements and acting as investors; limitations in active decision making, male dominated organizational setups, superstitions and patriarchal setup, deepens the inbreeding disparity.

ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Concentrating on removing the plights of the marginalized. inclusive development can be aptly defined as a pro-poor strategy that emphasizes and consolidates the contributions of all the stakeholders, in addressing development approach. Social inclusion is the approving action and strategy for equality and against marginalization, to make changes in the circumstances and habits that leads to social exclusion; however, without making compensations.

In fisheries sector, the pitiable situation of the fisher folk, in a grip of subsistence economy, indebtedness, mass poverty (79% of fisher households) and isolation, in order to have gender equality through inclusive development on an enduring basis, addressing the poverty and empowering the women to enhance capacity building, public participation, to address the social and economic crises of suppression and also to mark their place in political forefront. The various women welfare measures by the government have aided in attaining social and livelihood security for the fisher folks up to a large extent (KSPB,2014). Owing to

the criticism on the exclusionary pattern of Kerala government Kudumbasree or Janashree about certain vulnerable communities not enjoying its benefits fully (Shihabudheen,2013) ; programs specifically for fisherwomen, like Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen which initiates, encourages and strengthens the locally organized social organizations among fisherwomen, aids in enterprising the skill of expertise, to have access to the various women welfare schemes, promote their education , basic infrastructure and health facilities. Micro enterprises and SHGs linked to any financial institution in order to obtain credit facilities, like RashtriyaMahilaKosh, NABARD, banks; can be assisted technically or financially by local self-government or NGOs, GramaPanchayat, Municipalities, Corporation, or resource departments. The flagship programmes of SAF, and the Theeramythri mainly aims at the social and economic emancipation through encouraging employment. This can act as a great relief for BPL fisherwomen, who does jobs like vending and trading of fish, apart from household support, as it helps to achieve a financial stability; and non SHG members, can organize occupational ones to start micro enterprises. In Kerala, 80% of the income generating groups were formed by the women beneficiaries. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was implemented, with over 91% beneficiaries as women in Kerala. Regarding political empowerment, after the implementation of Panchayati Raj in early 90s and the decentralization of power in the local self-government department bringing a reservation for women first up to 33% and then to 50%, women empowerment has increased on a great sense. A majority of them had basic awareness like possession of government documents, and believed that women leaders would be able to understand their plight better and take adequate measures.

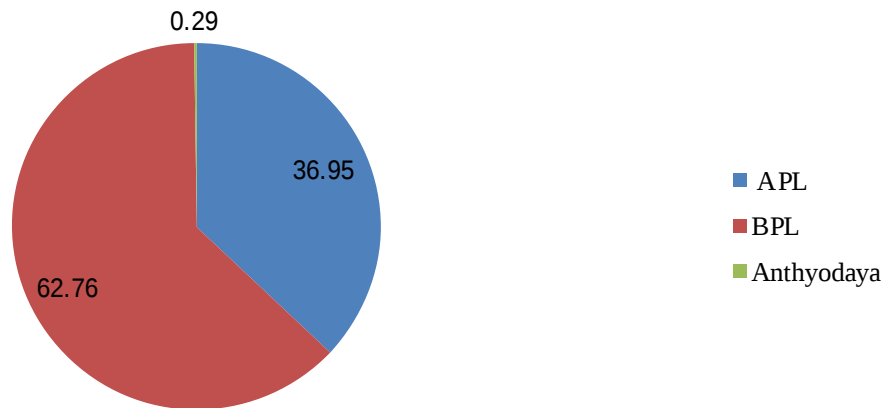
METHODOLOGY

Field survey was done to know about the methods of existing fish drying and storage practices, socio economic conditions of fisherwomen, and constraints in the sector, markets availability, etc. The information was then used for selecting the fisherwomen group, who needed the capacity building. Standard interview schedule was used. Secondary data was mainly collected from the district fisheries DD offices and the Kerala state fisheries website.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF RESPONDENT HOUSEHOLDS

The respondents were categorized into three groups viz., those coming under Above Poverty Line (APL) , Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Andhyodaya scheme, among which 62.76% of the respondents fall under the BPL category indicating the poor economic status of the marine . Approx. 37% were of APL category.

Fig. 1. Socio-Economic Status of Respondent Households in the Coastal Districts of Kerala



Source: Primary Data

District-wise data shows that the BPL category fisherfolk is highest in Kozhikkode (90.67%), than in Kannur (91.67%) and Kasargod (73.33%).

NATURE OF FAMILY

In Kerala, fisher folk still continue the joint family system, despite a general shift to the nuclear ones generally. Among the surveyed 1050 families, 79% (approx.) were nuclear families and only the remaining 21% are joint families (mostly in Malappuram and Kozhikode districts).

Table 2 AGE - WISE CATEGORIZATION OF RESPONDENTS

Age Group	Percentage to Total
Up to 10	10.50
11 - 20	17.54
21 - 30	22.13
31 - 40	17.68
41 - 50	15.55
51 - 60	10.63
61 - 70	4.67
71 and Above	1.26

Source: primary data

The serious fact evident here is that the number of aged people is very less among the marine fisher folk in Kerala. Around 94% are below 60 years of age. People above 60 years constituted only 5.93%.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' FAMILY MEMBERS ACCORDING TO EDUCATION (PER CENT)

EDUCATION

Upon analyzing educational attainment of them, only 11.02% are graduates or professional degree holders. Totally, 94.87% have formal education while 5.13% lack formal education. 73% of fisher folk had different levels of education, about 33% had primary education, 34% had secondary level, 6% had above secondary level and the rest 27% were unschooled (Marine Fisheries Census of CMFRI, 2010). According to the population census 2011, literacy rate of Kerala was 93.91 per cent (Eco.Review, 2014). District wise, literacy among fisherfolk is higher in Malappuram district (98.39%), and lowest in Kannur district (87.71%).

Table 3

DISTRICT	UPTO STD.8	STD.9TO12	GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL	NIL
TRIVANDRUM	41.72	34.99	19.18	4.11
KOLLAM	36.98	50.00	8.89	4.29
ALAPPUZHA	50.29	35.40	2.90	10.44
ERNAKULAM	59.23	32.25	5.07	3.45
THRISSUR	46.77	35.92	14.47	2.84
MALAPPURAM	50.29	40.50	7.60	1.61
KOZHIKKODE	40.99	41.76	15.05	2.20
KANNUR	22.46	45.34	19.92	12.29
KASARGOD	36.76	46.11	4.98	12.15

Source: Primary data

It is evident from Table , that the education level of the fisherfolk, particularly in Kannur, Kasargod and Alappuzha need improvement. Also, education at graduate level is lesser among the fisherfolk in Alappuzha, Kasargod, Ernakulam and Kollam districts.

MONTHLY INCOME

Upon grouping the family members of the respondents into five categories based on their individual monthly income, 49.72% of them had no income. Of course, this represents 23% unemployed and 17.41% students. As in fig.4, the average monthly income of 35.1% of the members is below Rs.5000, that of 10.03% members is between Rs.5000 and Rs.10000, and 2.23% have more than Rs15000 monthly. Monthly income of 85.07% (sample size was 782) of the fisherfolk was below Rs.5000 (KUFOS, 2010). Allison(2005) and Béné et al.,(2007) had relevantly observed that the fishery sector earnings are highly uncertain, often seasonal, and unevenly distributed within the sector; fishers owning boats and/or fishing gear earn substantially more net income, than crew laborers.

District-wise, unemployment among the fisherfolk is higher (66.04% in Kasargod followed by Malappuram(61.99%) and Kozhikode(61.66%) respectively. The unemployment range is comparatively lower in Ernakulam and Alappuzha.

HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE

The monthly food consumption expenditure such as rice/wheat, grocery, vegetables, fruits, milk, fish, egg, meat and expenditure for education, clothing, medicine, were collected from the respondents. Even though Kerala had achieved significant improvements in standard of living and social development, the data indicates a poor level of intake by the (General Category) fisher folk.

The **Table 4** reflects the same:

ITEM	MONTHLY EXPENDITURE - FISHERFOLK (AMOUNT RS.)	MONTHLY EXPENDITURE – GENERAL CATEGORY KERALA AS PER NSS REPORT (AMOUNT RS.)
Cereals (Rice/Wheat) (7.52 Kgs @ Rs.30)	225.6	216
Grocery including oil	160.0	NA
Vegetables	39.0	94
Milk (2.2 Litres @Rs.32 per Litre)	70.40	96.12
Fruits (700 gms @ Rs.25 per Kg.)	17.5	30
Fish (1.5 Kgs @ Rs.60 per Kg.)	90.0	180.80
Egg	10.4	14.38
Education	174.0	NA
Clothing	141.0	NA
Medicine	619.0	NA

Source:Compiled from primary data and NSS Report, Govt. of India,2011-12.

Evidently from the Table 4, the per capita monthly expenditure on eatables is less than the state average. For instance, upon converting and comparing the state average monthly consumption in rural Kerala average values prevailed in 2013, (Government of India, NSS Report, 2011-12) the cost of milk would be (3.004Ltrs at Rs.32) Rs.96.12, vegetables Rs.94, eggs (4.23 at Rs.3.40) Rs.14.38, fish (2.26 Kgs.at Rs.80) Rs.180.80 and fruits (9.4 Nos.) Rs.30 it is evidence for the lower nutritious food consumption by the fisherfolk. Every expense is not comparable with the NSSO data as the items considered are different. Table 4 also indicate that per capita medicine expenditure is high when the meagre incomes of fisherfolk families are considered.

MAINTENANCE OF BANK ACCOUNTS

The study found that 93.43% of the respondents have bank- or post office accounts, 49.05% have opened accounts with nationalized banks, 22.67% with scheduled banks, 20.38% with cooperative banks and 1.33% with post offices, whereas, 6.57% have no bank account. More than 90% maintaining bank account is a sign of financial literacy among them. The district-wise

figures revealed the number of fisherfolk without bank account being highest in Malappuram(28.33%) followed by Trivandrum(12.22%) and Trissur(12.22%) respectively. In Kollam, Ernakulam, Kozhikkode and Kannur, all the respondents had bank accounts.

SAVINGS HABIT

Mostly they spend the money on liquor, playing cards or other purposes than saving. During dry days, fisherman demanding money for alcohol may lead to miserable situations at home, with children as the victims of this domestic violence. Data reveals that 54.1% of the respondents had no savings. Out of 1050 households, 32.48% have monthly savings upto Rs.1000, and 13.43% were able to save more than Rs.1000 monthly.

INDEBTEDNESS

Owing to the uncertainty and seasonality of occupation, poor earnings, low savings, fishermen are forced to borrow money. Due to lack of awareness, incapability of providing collateral security and inherent non-repayment characteristics, they depend on money lenders to meet day-to-day expenses at an exorbitant rate of interest. The study shows 53.33% of the respondents having borrowed funds. The remaining 46.67% of the respondents had no borrowings. Studies show that nearly 25% of the households have debt amounting to more than Rs.1lakh(KUFOS,2010). The burden of indebtedness was high in Trivandrum(78.33%), followed by Kollam(68%), with FGDs reports showing that they borrow money from the money lenders in the landing centre at unbelievably higher rate of interest of 19.21%p.a.

They also depended on the cooperative banks or cooperative(26%), and 5.14% from the National Backward Classes Development and Finance Corporation. When only 2.67% of the respondents borrowed from the nationalized banks, 7.71% were found borrowing from money lenders.

CONCLUSION

The paper upon analyzing reveals that even with a substantial role in sustaining the region's livelihood, there exist gender discrimination in labour division, wage distribution and power relations, hampering the growth and sustainability of this community. With education, awareness, active participation and employment generation by implementing inter-disciplinary models through SHGs and welfare schemes, they can drive the development process in a faster pace. So, it should be a strong focus on involving and empowering women in particular because income earned by this group is more likely to benefit the entire household. Gender sensitive research helps in attaining the inclusive growth through finite strategies of development, so the sustainable goals can be met for uplifting the vulnerable groups in the context of aspects like climate change and development.

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