



## CONSTRAINTS FACED BY FISHER WOMEN IN TUTICORIN DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

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### ABSTRACT

India is endowed with a diversity of inland and marine water resources which sustains a large fishery sector in the country. With a coastline of 8118km, the country ranks third in total world fish Production and second in inland aquaculture. India contributes nearly five percent towards global fish production. Marine fisheries sector in India provides a gainful source of employment income and livelihood to the million of fisher folk. The socio-economic status and livelihood status of these fishermen assumes significance in formulating fishery development programmes for augmenting the fisheries production and raising the socio-economic status of people involved in this sector

**KEYWORDS:** marine water, fishery sector, fish production, fisherwomen

### INTRODUCTION

India is endowed with a diversity of inland and marine water resources which sustains a large fishery sector in the country. With a coastline of 8118km, the country ranks third in total world fish Production and second in inland aquaculture. India contributes nearly five percent towards global fish production. Marine fisheries sector in India provides a gainful source of employment income and livelihood to the million of fisher folk. The socio-economic status and livelihood status of these fishermen assumes significance in formulating fishery development programmes for augmenting the fisheries production and raising the socio-economic status of people involved in this sector.

In India women play a key role in the development of fisheries sector in addition to their role of household managers in most of the fisherman families. The contribution of the fisher women penetrate every aspect of post-harvest handling, preservation, processing and marketing of seafood products. They provide an integral link between the producers and the consumers of fish.

The average Indian fishing family, finds it difficult to earn a livelihood throughout the year. Therefore, the vast potential available among the unemployed fisherwomen needs to be used, which can be done by making them capable of doing some activities on their own.

The role of fisherwomen on fishery activities mainly depends upon the socio-economic status of the fisherman families. In India the socio-economic status of the fisherwomen are poor. They are confronted with many problems.

### REVIEW OF EARLIER STUDIES

Krishna Srinath (1987) observed that, women in general are hopeful of improving their lives through the development of fisheries activities in the inland and show readiness to acquire new skills and undergo training for the same. But poverty and to certain extent, ignorance have hampered their progress.

Ashalatha et al (2002) analysed the changing role of fisherwomen of India and pointed out that women in value addition sector indicated low price for products and lack of assured markets as main constraints.

Vijaya Khader and Sathiadhas found that about 60 percent of fisherwomen carried out post-harvest activities to earn income. Food expenditure comprised 60.68 percent of the earned income contributing to the major share of the spending.

Swathilakshmi (2011) found that the variables like annual income, scientific orientation, annual expenditure, annual debt and annual savings were found to have a positive and highly significant relationship with the livelihood index of fisherwomen. Vijaya Khader and Sathiadhas found that about 60 percent of fisherwomen carried out post-harvest activities to earn income. Food expenditure comprised 60.68 percent of the earned income contributing to the major share of the spending.

Manju parthania Bisurs and Mr.Rama Mohan Rao (2014) in their study came to the conclusion that the goal for women in fisheries is to make them self-reliant and productive for improving their own and family's living standard. Increasing entrepreneurial activities in post-harvest regiment of fisheries for women provide more and more employment opportunities. Fisherwomen should be provided adequate knowledge and training on awareness of natural disasters and its management. Computer based trading module shall be designed for employment opportunities .

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Fisherwomen play a vital role in fishery activities'. Fisher women role is inevitable. In certain parts of the marine villages, fisherwomen have to spend a major part of their time in fetching drinking water from roadside public hydrants. They make decision on the size of family expenditure, pattern of family expenditure and on the household activities. They are taking responsibilities both on domestic and income earning activities for the welfare of their families. In such a circumstance, there is a need for an assessment of socio-economic status of fisherwomen. This assessment will help the policy makers to frame welfare programmes for the upliftment of poorer fisherwomen. This will result in the development of fishermen families.

Increased competition, declining resources and difficult working conditions make their work as challenging. The seasonal nature of the employment in the fisheries sector displays a distorted picture about the percapita earnings of fisher folk and this is quite correlative with their poverty status. The problem is more acute for the women stakeholders mainly due to the prevalence of wage disparities favouring man. Although fisherwomen contribute in all spheres of development both at micro and macro level, it is approximately quantified or recognized. So it is essential to analyze the role of women in fishery activities. Empowerment of fisher women will lead to socio-economic development of fishermen society.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has following objectives.

1. To analyse the role of women fisher folk in fishery activities.
2. To study the socio-economic status of fisherwomen.
3. To find out the problems faced by the women fisherfolk.
4. To provide solutions on the basis of findings.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is an empirical study based on survey method. This study is based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data were collected from the fisherwomen in Tuticorin district.

For collecting the primary data a multistage stratified random sampling method was used. The Tuticorin district constitutes the universe. The fishing villages in this district are the stratus. The number of fisherwomen are the primary

and ultimate units of the sample respectively. There are 23 marine fishing villages in Tuticorin district. Out of the 23 villages 8 villages have been selected at random. By employing random sampling technique 200 respondents were selected. From each village 25 fisherwomen were selected.

The secondary data were collected from the published and unpublished records of the Commissioner of Fisheries, Chennai, Assistant Director of Fisheries, Tuticorin. Fish Exporters Chambers. Tuticorin. Export Development Authority. Tuticorin Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Cochin, Central Marine Fisheries Research institute, Tuticorin, and Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute Mandapam.

## PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Tuticorin is also known as -Pearl City. It is one of the major seaports in India and Tamilnadu. Tuticorin is the headquarters of Tuticorin District.

Tuticorin enjoys a unique position along the Gulf of Mannar in the east coast of India in view of the facilities available for the development and exploitation of the marine fisheries of the region. The district started functioning as the twentieth district in Tamilnadu with effect from October 20, 1980 with Thoothukudi as its head quarters.

Tuticorin is in South of Tamilnadu about 590 kilometres south west of Chennai and is geographically located in the Gulf of Mannar. The climate of Tuticorin is extremely hot and humid. It is situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of Tamilnadu State and bounded on the north by the districts of Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar and Ramanathapuram, on the east and south-west by the districts of Tirunelveli.

## SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF FISHER WOMEN

In India, the fisher folk community has a very low status. Fisher communities have accepted religions, which proclaim equality of man, even in these groups they still find themselves on the lowest run of the social ladder. They have been isolated and unorganized. As far as the women in the fisher women communities is concerned their role is not recognized by the society.

A detailed socio – economic survey was carried out by well structured interview schedule. The data were collected on age composition, family size, occupational pattern and annual income.

### Age composition of the sample fisherwomen

Table . 1

Sl.No.	Age Level	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1.	20-30	20	10
2.	31-40	50	25
3.	41-50	105	52.5
4.	Above 50	25	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Primary Data

From the table 1 it is seen that 10 percent of the sample fisherwomen are in the age group of 20-30, 25 percent of the sample fisherwomen are in the age group of 31-40, 52.5 percent are in the age group of 41-50 and the remaining 12.5 percent of them are in the age group of above 50.

### Literacy level of the respondents

Literacy is an important determinant of socio – economic status of any community.

**Educational status of the Sample Fisherwomen**

**Table. 2**

Sl.No.	Educational status	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1.	Illiterates	90	45
2.	Primary Education	70	35
3.	Higher Education	20	10
4.	Higher Secondary Education	18	9
5	Degree	2	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Primary Data

Table 2 brings out the educational status of the respondents 45 percent of the respondents are illiterates, 35 percent of the respondents completed primary education, 10 percent of the respondents completed higher education, 9 percent of the respondents completed higher secondary education and remaining 1 percent of the respondents finished degree.

**Average Annual Household income and Percapita Income of the fisherwomen’s family**

The income earned by the members in the fisherwomen’s family are pooled together to arrive at annual income. The percapita income is one of the important parameters to evaluate the economic status of a society. So the percapita

income is also calculated. Annual percapita income of the fisherwomen’s family is computed with the help of the following formula

$$\text{Annual Percapita Income} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (F + FR + OT)}{\text{Average family size}}$$

Where i = The individual household

F = Annual Income from fishing

FR = Income from fishery related activities.

OT = Income from other sources

**Average Annual household Income and Percapita Income**

**Table .3**

Source of Income	Amount in Rs.
Average Annual Income from Fishing	2,47,300
Average Annual Income from fishery related Activities	48,700
Others	9200
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,05,200</b>

Source : Primary Data

The average annual income is worked out as Rs.3,05,200. The average size of the family is worked out as 6.56. It is calculated from the primary data.

$$\text{Annual Percapita Income} = \frac{3,05,200}{6.56}$$

= Rs.46524

This result shows that the percapita income of the fisherwomen family is not satisfactory.

**Area of Participation of Women in Fishery Activities**

**Table .4**

Occupation	No. of Fisher Women	Percentage
Prawn Peeling	30	15
Drying and curing of fish	50	25
Fish vending	70	35
Net repairing	20	10
Processing Plant workers	30	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 reveals that among the fisher women engaged in fishery related activities, 15 percent of them are peeling workers, 15 percent of them are indulging in curing anti drying of fish. 35 percent of them are engaged in fish vending. 10 percent of them are indulging in net repairing and 15 percent of them are processing plant workers.

**PROBLEMS FACED BY FISHERWOMEN**  
**The following problems are identified in the study area**

**Low literacy level**

Fisher women in the study area are not fully literate. 45 percent of them are illiterates Low literacy level resulted in ignorance. Literacy is considered as an indicator of development. Low literacy level indicates the low level of development of fisherwomen.

**Poor housing and sanitation**

Fishing village in the study area are remote and inaccessible. So the fishing villages lack proper health and water facilities. The sanitation is very poor in the fishing villages.

**Health**

Taking of balanced diet and nutritional food is a vital factor determining health. Fisherwomen in India generally suffer from malnutrition and dietary imbalance. Fisherwomen in the study area reported that they suffered from knee pain and back pain. Some of the fisherwomen faced the problem of obesity.

**Access to credit**

In general fisherwomen community have less access to credit. So the problem of non-availability of credit the interest rates are also high.

### Marketing problems and costs

Fisherwomen face difficulty in marketing the fishery products. Lack of marketing strategies, lack of proper transport facilities, low price for fishes and stiff competition are the major problems faced by fisherwomen in marketing their produce. High transportation cost is one of the major problems encountered by the fisherwomen in the study area. Marketing costs involve commission or fees to middlemen, market taxes, cost of ice, transportation charges, food, interest on loan etc.,

### Problems faced by peeling workers

The decentralization of the peeling activity had a severe impact on its workers. Now out of the factory sector, they were forced to join in the ranks of unorganized sector. Low investment in peeling sheds made it as an unstable industry. There is no possibility of bargaining. Another major problem in this industry is that competitions are coming from various women belonging to other communities. The wages in the peeling industry are very low.

### Working capital

The main problem of the fish vendors is uncertainty in their income from the day's sales. This is because the consumers decision on buying fish may change. The fish vendor obtain her fish from fish traders on credit basis, and have to make regular payment in order to get fish from the trader. If the sales of the fish vendors are reduced, this will ultimately affect the working capital of the fish vendors.

### Procurement of fish and transportation

Procurement of fish is a difficult task. It involves much investment and expenditure. Fisherwomen go to harbor to procure the fish. Fish is highly perishable in nature and has to be sold quickly. But as it is generally not allowed in public transport, it is carried on head or carried by bi-cycles. A women fish vendor has to travel a long distance to sell her fish, Because of the perishable nature of fish, the fisherwomen are forced to sell their fish at lowest price.

### Garett Ranking

Fisherwomen in the study area are asked to specify the problems faced by them and rank them. Later by using the Garett ranking technique these ranks were converted into percent position. The following formula was used to calculate the percent position.

$$\text{Percent Position} = \frac{10 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where  $R_{ij}$  = rank for  $i$  the factor by  $j$ th individual  
 $N_j$  = Number of factors ranked by  $j$ th individual  
 Here 0.5 is subtracted from each rank because the rank is a interval on a scale and its midpoint best represents an interval. The percentage scores were converted to mean score value and then ranked

**Garett Ranking Table**  
Table. 5

Sl.No.	Problems faced by fisherwomen	Mean score value	Rank
1.	Stiff competition	60.35	III
2.	Heavy marketing Expenses	65.73	II
3.	Family Tie	50.25	IV
4.	Financial problem	70.02	I
5.	Health problems	50.01	V
6.	Gender Discrimination	49.01	VII
7.	High procurement cost	49.15	VI

Source : Primary Data

Table 5 presents the problems faced by fisherwomen in the study area. The fisherwomen ranked, the financial problem as a major problem faced by them. Fisher women ranked the problem of gender discrimination as number 7.

### Recommendations of the study

In the study area, Fisher women are suffered from lack of institutional finance. They mainly depend on money lenders and fish traders for their fishery activities and family expenses. The middlemen and fish traders charge ex-orbitant rate of interest. So it is recommended that institutional credit facilities should be made available to the fisherwomen. Micro finance and fisherwomen SHG's should be enlarged.

Fisherwomen are suffered from high procurement prices. Government can take measures to regulate the procurement price of fishes.

In certain remote fishing areas, the infrastructural facilities are very poor. So the government should take necessary steps to improve the infrastructural facilities in the fishing villages.

Heavy expenses involved in storing of fishing and brining the fishes to local market is an important problem faced by women fish vendors Government can provide ice and storage facilities at subsidised rate.

Fisherwomen face stiff competition from whole sale traders and fishermen. It is recommended that training shall be given to the fisherwomen on trading and marketing of fishes.

Socio – economic empowerment of any society mainly depends upon education. Fisherwomen empowerment is related with education. In the study area 32.86 percent of the fisherwomen are illiterates. So the fisherwomen should be encouraged to have education.

Gender discrimination is also prevailing in the fishery sector. The Socio – economic empowerment of fisherwomen will result in the elimination of gender discrimination.

Fisherwomen co-operative society shall be started in all fishing villages in order to provide credit facilities and training to the women fisherfolk.

Sanitation facilities should be improved in the fishing villages. In order to improve the health of the fisher women, Primary Health Centre should be opened in all fishing villages.

Awareners programme can be organized by the Government in order to make the fisherwomen to aware of their political and legal rights.

During the off season Government shall provide financial assistance without any rate of interest to the poor fisher women.

Awareness campaign should be organized by the Government in order to make the fisherwomen to aware of the small family norms. If they are aware of the small family norms, the size of the family will be a optimum one. This will lead to improvement in the standard of living of the fisherwomen families.

## CONCLUSION

Fisherwomen in the study area are playing double roles in the development of fishermen society. In a fishermen family, the responsibility of house hold management and the responsibility of getting and repaying debts will be mainly on the women shoulders . Most of them are earning members and engaged in fishery activities. But their life standard is very poor when compared with other women in India. So prior recognition should be given for the development of women fisherfolk.

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