

CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

In Fisheries, women belonging to traditional fishing communities are engaged in fish vending activities from time immemorial. With the advent of modernizations technology, intensive fishing dominated the fisheries sector. The benefit of technology intensive fishing has been grabbed only by a few with capital. Those without capital like the traditional fishermen are thrown out of self-employment and became crews in mechanized boats. Fisherwomen who are engaged in post harvesting fishing activities are relegated to inferior status in both earnings and esteem. The centralization of fish landing centre and priority to export and processing units to meet the global requirement have brought a number of changes in the employment structure of fisherwomen. In recent years, mechanized boats are involved in intensive fishing leading to the depletion of fish stock. Eventually the traditional boats owners are not getting sufficient quantity of marine fish for their livelihood. In order to modernize the marine fisheries sector a number of plans, policies and schemes have been introduced. Development agencies have extended subsidies cum loan to fishermen for acquiring mechanized boat.

Even though fishing is a state subject, both state and central governments have taken initiative to develop fisheries. In Karnataka, mechanization process was initiated during the Second Five Year Plan. In the year 2008-09 there were 3759 mechanized, 5357 motorized and 21,659 traditional boats operating in coastal Karnataka. There are 6 fishing harbors and 25 fish landing centers in the State. But the operation of the traditional boats is more in Uttara Kannada district compared to other two coastal districts. At present, there are 187 ice plants, 27 Cold storages, 13 freezing plants, 11 frozen storages, 8 canning plants and 20 fishmeal plants existing in the three coastal districts of Karnataka. The Central and State Governments allocate for the implementation of various fisheries development schemes, development of infrastructure and welfare assistance to fishermen. In the year 1988-89, the Government made a budgetary allocation of Rs.933.14 lakhs. The same had been raised to Rs.9036.53 lakhs in

2008-09. The budgetary allocations had been utilized to create infrastructures such as the construction of fishing harbor, fish landing centers with berthing facilities, dredging of fishing harbor, subsidy for the construction of fish markets and link roads to fish landing centers.

A number of institutions have been established to finance and assist fish harvesting, storing, long distance marketing of fisheries and creating physical infrastructure necessary for the promotion of fishing. Marine Product Export Development Authority (MPEDA), National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC), National Federation of Fishermen's Corporation (FISHCOPFED), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Karnataka Fisheries Development Corporation (KFDC), South Canara and Udupi District Cooperative Fish Marketing Federation Ltd and Fishermen Cooperatives are some of the important institutions established for the development of fisheries. At present, there are 108 fishermen cooperative societies in the coastal districts. The Central Government has initiated many developmental and promotional schemes for the benefit of fishermen. Subsidies were provided for rapid motorization of traditional fishing boats. Provisions have been made for the remission of Central Excise Duty on High Speed Diesel on mechanized fishing vessels. Subsidies were provided for the improvement of mechanized boats. Assistance and subsidies were given to the purchase of fishing equipments, for the installation of life saving equipments in fishing boats, purchase of electronic equipments for deep-sea fishing and to purchase tempo rickshaw with insulated icebox.

A number of relief measures and insurance schemes are created to insure the life of the fishermen and to give relief in case of accidents and calamities. Centrally Sponsored Group Accident Insurance Scheme is founded to insure the life of those who are exposed to hazards of natural calamities while fishing. Distress Relief Fund is established to provide compensation to the victims of calamities. In order to assist the fishermen during the lean season, Savings Cum Relief Scheme is established. To provide shelter to those fishermen who do not have their own houses, Matsya Ashraya Scheme is initiated. For skill development in fisheries activities, training programs are extended in Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering Training. Central Institute of Fisheries Technology and Fisheries Training and Extension Programs train the fishermen

in fish harvesting, storing and related other activities. A cursory glance at these programs is sufficient to understand that all these programs are aimed at fishermen who are engaged in fish harvesting. Reaching deep sea, catching or harvesting fish, storing, carrying them to long distances or exporting are the major concerns of these policies. Most of these activities are carried on by fishermen. Hence, fishermen are the focus of these programs. This issue would be more clear when we examine the fisherwomen's perspectives on the fisheries development programs.

Gender Dimension

The study found that only 59.24 percent of the respondents have become the members of the fishermen cooperative societies in coastal Karnataka. Large number of fisherwomen depends on Self Help Groups to meet their credit needs. Nearly 46.19 percents of the fisherwomen have become members of Self Help Group (SHG) to seek help through Micro finance. The rate of interest charged on the loans taken from Self Help Groups is far higher than rate of interest charged by the cooperatives. Besides, loans of cooperatives are being subsidized by the government. Compared to their own male counterparts fisherwomen need to pay more interest on the loans. Thus, they are deprived of the facility of cheap loans. Interest rate variation is known to the fisherwomen and most of them prefer to have loans from the co-operative societies. But the co-operatives are not designed to finance the activities normally taken up the female members of fishing communities.

Not only co-operatives, almost all the development programs are not designed keeping in view of the needs of female members of the fishing community. The study found that only a few fisherwomen have benefited from the Government sponsored schemes. Only 31.3 percent of the respondents could avail the benefits of 'Matsya Mahila Swavalambana Yojana.' Secretaries of the fishermen cooperative societies are of the view that fisherwomen demand more insulated icebox. But the study found that only 23.9 percent of the respondents got the insulated icebox. The supply of health care is also short of demand. Only 45.38 percent of the respondents secured the 'Yashaswini' Health Insurance Card. Housing is another important demand of fisherwomen. However, the Government program of providing subsidized housing ('Matsyashraya' Housing Scheme)

reached only a small fraction (7.61 percent) of the fisherwomen. A small number of fisherwomen (1.9 percent) got the benefit of Matsyavahini scheme. Savings cum Relief Scheme gives relief to the fishing community during the lean season. Even this benefit is availed by a small segment of the fisherwomen. There are regional variations in absorbing the development programs. It was revealed from the study that in Uttara Kannada district all the Government Sponsored schemes are less absorbed by the respondents in absolute as well in relative terms. Moreover, the development programs initiated for the development of fisherwomen have the features, which are more amenable to those who go for capital-intensive fisheries activities.

Most of the fisherwomen could understand that the fisheries development policies have not been designed taking into the interest of fisherwomen. The study found that nearly 79.9 percent of the respondent expressed that the modernizing policies of fisheries are not gender sensitive. But 14.1 percent of the respondents stated that there is a separate policy for fisherwomen because fish processing industries and fish landing centers have absorbed the fisherwomen in modern sector of fisheries. Only 2.4 percents of the respondents have attended the skill development programs needed for handling the post harvest fisheries technologies. In Uttara Kannada district, no respondents have participated and they were not aware of such programs. Those who attended the training program felt that the programs imparted in the training centers require more capital investment and to market the products of such programs they require further investment.

A large number of fisherwomen (59.07 percent) were the sole earning members in their family. Most of the respondents spend their earnings on food items. As a result, only a few own land (18.15 percent), vehicle (5.69 percent) TV/Radio (33.81 percent), Household gadgets (14.95 percent) and House (4.63 percent). Nearly 52.67 percent of the respondents have less than Rs.500 savings per month. Mechanization and resulting increase in the fisheries production has not benefited the female members. A number of reasons could be put forward. Mechanization has led to the development of centralized fish landing centers. The centralized landing centers are dominated by the wholesalers and middlemen with whom fisherwomen need to compete. Nearly 74.35 percent of the fisherwomen expressed that the fish landing centers are dominated by intermediaries and wholesalers who keep away the fish vending women from participating in the auctions.

Nearly 64.91 percent of the respondents stated that fish dealers have a contractual arrangement with boat owners. In addition to the above problem of getting fish in the landing centers, fisherwomen face the problem of transportation also. Most of the times, the landing centers and retail markets (where the fisherwomen sell) are in different places. In the case of large buyers, they have their own transportation arrangements. But fisherwomen who make small buying need to make their own arrangements. Sometimes they join and make collective arrangements to transport the fish to the market. However, in both the cases the cost of retail sellers increases significantly and reduces their competitiveness in relation to the large buyers. Hence, the centralized fish landing has caused many problems in terms of arrangement of transportation, more time and is cost involved in traveling, preservation and maintenance of fish.

In Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, male vendors from other communities also compete with the fisherwomen in retail markets. Male members are more active both in the landing centers and in the retail markets. Some of them own two wheelers and supply fish to hotels, hostels, dines, restaurants and to different remote places. Besides, male retailers sit along with the fisherwomen inside the market and try to capture local markets also. Along with this competition from the male members, fisherwomen need to face competition from the hi-tech fish sellers. Middle class families living in cities prefer to buy fishes from hi-tech shops, which have mechanized the cleaning, cutting and other processes involved in the retail outlets. Thus, the fish vending women have to face competition both from the male members and from the capital-intensive retail outlets. Even the Government agencies established for fisheries development make the life of fisherwomen miserable. KFDC, which is meant for fisheries development has opened retail sales outlets in the district centers that has affected the market share of fisherwomen. All these factors made the fisherwomen to spend eight to nine hours in the market to earn income enough to sustain their basic needs. The meager income generation and low social status force the next generation of fisherwomen not to opt for this occupation. Nearly 86.83 percent of the respondents' girl children told that they are not interested to continue their parent's occupation.

Some fisherwomen work as daily wage laborers in the landing centers and fish processing industries. Earnings of these women are very less (Rs.200 to 250 per day) and

they can hardly spend on their health and save for lean season. Saving for lean season is essential because their employment is highly seasonal. Deep-sea fishing is banned during rainy season. These women are jobless during the rainy season. Due to multi days fishing, women in this sector need to wait for a minimum of two days for their contracted work with mechanized boats. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents expressed that it was the group leaders or contractors who decide the wages for unloading and loading work at the fish-landing center. The general disparity in the wages of male and female members continues here also. The male members get better wages (Rs.350 to Rs.400 per day) compared to women workers. Working hours are not regulated. Sometimes these women workers begin work early in the morning at 4'o clock and continue to work till 5'o clock in the evening and spend 10 to 12 hours in a day for loading and unloading work. In the fish landing centers canteen, toilet, waiting room, drinking water, information center and water supply facilities are available to wage earners. However, the same facilities are not available to fish vending women in the centralized fish market. This is mainly because in fish vending sector more women and fewer men are working. Hence, intra-gender inequality in providing the basic facilities is evident in fisheries sector.

The mechanization of fishing has given rise to many processing plants in coastal Karnataka. A large number of women are attracted to this sector. It was observed that 45.95 percent of the fisherwomen in fish processing industry are engaged in cutting of mackerel, pink perch and peeling of prawns, nearly 45.95 percents of the respondents are in packing section and 14.28 percent of the respondents in Udupi district are employed as lab technicians. But male workers of this sector are engaged in loading, supervising and quality controlling in processing centers and sheds. In fish processing units nearly 29.73 percents workers have night shift. Women in fish processing units work for 9 hours in a day. However, there is a disparity in the fixation of wages between men and women workers in this sector. It was observed that nearly 48.13 percent of the respondents have joined the fish processing units to support the family income. There are two types of processing units. One is core fish processing units and the other is sub-contracted processing units. In core fish processing units there are facilities like canteen, hostel, and provision for food, medical benefit, provident fund, drinking water, toilet and weekly holiday. However, these facilities are not available to female fish workers in the

processing units, which are sub-contracted. In addition, most of the women work in the sub-contracted processing units.

Factors of Marginalization

It is clear from the empirical evidences that female members are far behind the male members in taking advantage of the development benefits. In order to modernize fishing and to increase production, the state has taken a number of measures such as creating physical infrastructure, establishing institutions to facilitate the fishing, subsidizing the private ventures and providing relief measures in the case of calamities. These modernizing measures could be digested better by those who could invest a large capital to acquire modern boats which are used in deep sea fishing, invest in fish processing units and also in buying fish in large quantities or control supply in the fish market. Those who do not have the required capital but have the skill to capture fish or market fish are also better rewarded. But those who do not have either the capital or the skill to capture fish or invest in large scale buying need to depend on the meager income generated from the retail selling in the markets or earn wages from working in fish processing units or in landing centers. Most of the fisherwomen are found in those activities, which demand more labor and generate less income. Fisherwomen could not take major advantage of the modernization processes, they could only absorb the benefits of the last category of opportunities created by the modernization processes.

One should have capital, land, or modern skills to take advantage of the modernization processes. Most of the fisherwomen possess neither capital nor land. Their educational status is also poor. The 64.14 percent literacy rate among the respondents gives the image of good educational status. However when we dissect the percentage into various levels of education we get the true picture. Majority of the fisherwomen (40.14 percent) had primary education. Only few (18.8 percent) had high school and (5.2 percent) ten plus two education. The level of education influences on number factors. These have direct and indirect impact on the quality of life. Low literacy rate among fisherwomen make them unaware of many credit and welfare schemes available to them. Educational status influences the quality of loan taken for various purposes. Majority of the respondents have borrowed for business purposes. Before taking a loan, the

respondents with higher educational status consider a number of factors such as source of finance, rate of interest, and terms of repayment and so on. Low rate of interest, formal sources of credit, easy installments and higher level of education are directly related. Level of education and co-operative membership are directly related. Nearly cent percent of the respondents, who have the educational level of PUC, have become the member of fishermen co-operative society. Society membership gives access to financial and non-financial benefits of development. At the same, it should be noted that the level of education and income are not directly related. Rate of earning per day is the same to both the more and the less educated. Besides, both the more and the less educated spend a large part of their earnings on the family. The study found that the more educated expect their kids to follow an occupation other than fishing. Women with higher level of education experience lesser level of gender discrimination within the family.

Another factor influencing the absorption of development benefits considered for intensive examination in this study is gender relations within the family. On the size of the family, nearly 50.3 percent of the respondents expressed that their husband's decision is a deciding factor. Besides, in most of the cases, the husbands are not in favor of imparting higher education to their girl children or spending extra on a girl child. Hence, some kind of gender discrimination (favoring male and disfavoring female) is practiced in most of the families. Half of the respondent's male counterparts never help them in cooking, sweeping, getting provisions, and taking care of sick persons. Only a few (1.1 to 4.9 percent), male members help in household chores and in caring labor. Fisherwomen go for work to support the family. In the process, they are burdened with triple responsibilities. They have to work outside and earn to support family, attend household work and take the responsibility of looking after children's schooling, caring of elders and young ones.

Fisherwomen's active participation in economic activities does not guarantee them a major role in decision making within the family. Decisions within the family are not taken exclusively by fisherwomen. Only 44 percent decide the purchase of clothes of their children, 49 percent decide the schools for their kids, 49 percent decide the purchase of valuable assets, 54 percent have voice in the proposal for children's marriage and 52 percent have some say in deciding the celebration of functions at home. In deciding cases

such as savings and investment (52.4 percent), borrowings of loan (55.7 percent) and casting of votes in the election (59.2 percent) female members have better position. In some, female members of the fishing community when deciding matters pertaining to family or private space have more voice. However, in matters relating to public space, consultation with their male household is needed. Modern education has not undone the caste based social stigma attached to fishing. Apart from this, male members from fishing community are not found in the post-harvest activities like fish vending, processing or even loading and unloading of fish. Most of these activities are done by the female members and they bring them in direct contact with the larger society. In other words, its female members who suffer the social stigma attached to the occupation more.

Equality is the essence of democracy. The political involvement and participation of women in various institutions created at the grassroots is essential to articulate fisherwomen's interest. Fisherwomen's political participation is confined to voting in the elections. Beyond voting, very less (11 percent) fisherwomen participated in campaigning for the candidates. Compared to canvassing more number of fisherwomen (25percent) participated in protests and demonstration. Fishing community has caste associations in their respective fishing villages. But no fisherwomen can become the member of the caste association and participate in the caste association meetings. Study found that women's views are not solicited or considered while taking decisions on caste conflicts, rituals, festivals and programs organized by the community. In fishermen co-operative society only 11.1 percent, fisherwomen are Directors. In this, way all the local bodies are male dominated. Therefore, the gender bias in the decision making of local bodies is rampant. Moreover their under representation in the managing committees has made them powerless. The slogan of inclusive development has not translated into practice in the real life and has failed to break the historically formed gender biases.

In the name of development, many mega projects have been established in coastal Karnataka. These projects have evicted many people from their original habitat. In the study, nearly 11.41 percent of the respondents have been displaced from their original habitat. They were given meager amounts as compensation. Displaced fisherwomen, expressed that they had to forgo their hereditary occupation in the new place. The fast growing mega projects and release of their effluents into the sea adversely affected the

fisheries ecology and reduced the fish production. In the study, nearly 85.33 percents of the respondents have stated that there is degradation of fisheries ecology. Therefore, it is difficult for them to get supply of fish in required quantity. In the fish processing industry also, the job is highly fluctuating due to scarcity of fish supply. All these factors adversely affect all the people who depend on fishing. But the impact of these changes felt more by the households in which fisherwomen are the main earners.

Policy Suggestions

Fisherwomen of Coastal Karnataka work from dawn to dusk and sustain their families. But the fisheries development programs focusing on production consider them as passive receivers of development and failed to recognize them as change agents. Their position within the family and community structure is also not good. In both the structures, they are not considered as equal partners with male members. Their inferior status is reflected in the form of discrimination in household relationships, decision making within the family and community and in the distribution of resources. Large amount of public resources are pumped into the production sector. But fisherwomen could not take advantage of these public investments. They are kept out of production sector on the pretext of physical constraints and social taboo. Fisherwomen's employment is considered as peripheral in labor market and is highly insecure and least rewarded. Their existence in post harvest sector is predominately feminized with low status, low return. They are subjected to a number of economic and occupational disparities. These disparities lead to low remuneration, marginal benefits, impoverished working conditions and job insecurity.

In the midst of these hardships, they struggle to survive themselves and to support their families. The growing awareness of the importance of fisherwomen as economic agents and their predominant role in sustaining the family compels us to reconsider the development policies and suggest alternative programs, which are more inclusive in nature. Alternative policy measures need to accommodate the interest of fisherwomen. It could be done either by evolving new programs or by facilitating their participation in ongoing programs. Keeping these things in mind, some programs are suggested.

- Only fisherwomen who are engaged in fisheries activities should be provided with loans at subsidized rate of interest. For prompt and timely repayment of loan, fisherwomen should be provided with rebate on their loan amount.
- At present, fisherwomen are marginally represented in the fishermen's cooperative societies. In order to correct this low representation, fifty percent directorship of the cooperatives should be reserved for active fisherwomen.
- Active fisher women of coastal Karnataka should form a 'Federation' to fight against the market forces that weakens their bargaining power. The federation should evolve a mechanism to disseminate information on issues relating to production and marketing of fisheries to all fisherwomen. To meet the competition from the hi-tech sector in fish vending, fish vending women should form their own co-operative societies and market fish through these societies.
- Deep freezers should be provided to each fish market to maintain the freshness of fish and to avoid selling fish at low prices.
- Fisherwomen should be organized into trade unions. Through these unions, they could lobby for policies, which are amenable to their interests.
- Since a majority of fisherwomen are working at the lower end of the sector there is a strong need for gender budgeting. This budgeting process would enable policy makers to take care of the interest of fisherwomen while allocating development grants.