

A STUDY ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF WOMEN FISH VENDORS IN RAMANTHURAI

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ABSTRACT

Despite of the enormous increase in the fisheries population there still exist the poverty and financial instability in the life of fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu. They are at the lowest level of their profile in terms of their socio-economic conditions. Fisherfolk is almost neglected in the plan periods. Allotment to these vulnerable section is almost nil in the Government budgets. If this is being the case for fishing community, the women from this smaller population escape the eyes of policy makers. Women fish vendors are a small portion of this fisherfolk who believe in building up their status and give education to their children by way of their hard work. Though these fish vendors work hard and supported by the Government by way of financial inclusiveness there is no prosperity and development in the life of this section. The socio-economic and cultural backwardness of the fisherfolk should be analysed from the point of view of their income and expenditure pattern The present study is an attempt to analyse the various issues related to women fish vendors in a tiny village Ramandurai in Kanyakumari District. A total of fifty fish vending women were selected for the study and the collected data were shown in percentage.

Key words: Fisherfolk, Socio-economic, Government, fishing community, cultural backwardness.

1.INTRODUCTION

Fishing has been one of the oldest economic activities of human race. It comes next to agriculture. Fish and other sea food constitute an integral part of a wholesome food provision. Specially, fishes of several varieties serve as tasty and healthy food with protein and fat content. The 'omega' a chemical element found in fish has immense medicinal value. Experts believe that such properties of fish could be consumed even by persons having heart problems. They have both nutritive and curative powers. Fish has a curative culture of creditable value. In India, many good and rare varieties of fish are found. 'Prawn' seems to be the queen of fishes. They enjoy international market and earn the most precious foreign exchange commendably. Millions of people all over the world have been profitably engaged in fishing and fish trading over the years. In a sense, fish and fisherfolk are together and inseparable to a great extent. They go to the sea, stay, and search, catch fish, spend even nights, take risk and bear uncertainties and venture bravely and rewardingly. Still the fruits of their struggle around water do not always reach and rejoice the men and women. Many hurdles and riddles seem to prevail and persist. It is a real problem and a paradox too. Fishing has been a traditional occupation for a sizable section of the population. The economic conditions of these fishermen mainly depend on the fish catches. Fisheries development is essential, both as a means of improving food production and as a means of improving the quality of diet in most of developing countries. As a source of protein, vitamins and essential minerals, fish provides an ideal supplement to the inhabitants of many.

There are varieties of fishes and they are classified according to the shape and size. Fishing is not a mode of earning regularly throughout the year. Due to the natural calamities and government bans it is stopped for a certain period. During this period, the people go to neighbouring state for fishing or they involve in fishing related activities such as net repair. Fish marketing is done on a high level during the seasons. In the off season, the fishermen suffer a lot to meet their personal and family expenses. Fishermen also save during seasons and they are able to overcome the difficulties for the rest of the year. The economic status of women fish vendors' is very pathetic. Majority of the women fish vendors are the single earning member of the family and they face number of problems relating to finance as well as their social implication.

2.OBJECTIVES

The study aims at analysing the socio-economic conditions of women fish vendors in Ramandurai. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse the demographic profile of the sample respondents
2. To examine the income, saving and borrowing pattern of women fish vendors in Ramandurai
3. To find out educational and social status of family members of the respondents.
4. To study the problems faced by women fish vendors in marketing their fish.

3.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Verduijin (2000) had conducted a survey in Kanyakumari District to find the basic needs of coastal fishing communities, which inhabit the 68 km stretch of the coast. Over the years, the intensity of fishing has increased partly on account of the increase in the active fishing population, partly due to the lack of alternative income generating opportunities and partly due to motorisation and mechanisation of fishing crafts. The resource has not kept up with the increase of effort, which results in a sharp reduction in catch per unit effort. Since the usage of mechanisation in 1958, artisanal fishers have with dismay compared the landings of the mechanised crafts with their own meagre catches. Besides, the artisanal fishers have often seen their nets destroyed by mechanised boats. With this background, the survey points out that the major problem as given by respondents is the non-availability of safe drinking water followed by sanitation and health care.

Narayanakumar et al., (2000) have studied the socio-economic conditions of marine fisherwomen in India. The changes that have been brought about by the mechanisation of fishing industry in terms of income and employment generation and investment on fishing equipments have been discussed. The marine fisherwomen in India, in general are socially and economically backward. Hence, any innovation in marine fisheries including new technologies besides increasing the yield from capture and culture sector should be economically and technically efficient and socially acceptable. Any sort of technological innovation, financial scheme or management practice needs to be analysed to assess its socio-economic, environmental and ecological impact such as family size, age structure, employment potentials, education and living standards of fishermen and this will help identify the constraints obstructing the realisation of full potential of development schemes and adoption of new technologies.

Jese Verebalavu1 (2009) in her paper even though artisanal fisherwomen have never been educated about basic business management, they have learned a lot about it first hand over the years by selling at the markets. They have also gained knowledge about the importance of keeping their resources as clean and hygienic as possible for the market. Hygiene is illustrated in the type of preservation and packaging of their resources. Income generated from artisanal fisherwomen, small business owners, and female employees of the two fishing companies has a multiplier effect on their families and communities. The contribution of women in industrial fisheries has a huge impact on the individual fishing companies and nation as a whole. In both fishing companies, more than 50 per cent of all employees are women. A significant contribution of the income generated by women in both artisanal and industrial fisheries goes towards their children's education (e.g. primary school, high school and tertiary level). This research has noted that women's involvement in fisheries in Fiji, although under-reported, is having a significant socioeconomic contribution towards their households, community and nation as a whole.

Gupta (2006) in this work on "Challenges in sustaining and increasing fish production to combat Hunger and poverty in Asia" has concluded that while there are ample opportunities for fish and fisheries to make a major contribution to food and nutritional security and to contribution to the eradication of the poverty, the number of challenges that need to be addressed, their requirements and that political will, policy change and effective and efficient implementation. Our fight against hunger is a long process and we need patients, endurance and great commitment.

Research Gap

The researcher had made a review of a number of research works, studies and books already published relating to the study undertaken. The researcher gained significant insights into the several aspects, dimensions, prospects and the labour conditions and problems of the women fish vendors at various places and stages. The researcher identified that there were only a few research undertaken focusing the female fish vending sector. Moreover there is no study on linking the financial inclusion and the development of women fish vendors particularly in Ramandurai.

4.METHODOLOGY

Data required for this study is both primary as well as secondary in nature. Primary data were collected through interview schedule and the secondary data were collected from books, journals, thesis and websites.

PERIOD OF STUDY

This study covers a period of two years.

TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

The collected data is represented by percentage.

FINDINGS

1. The study reveals that thirty two percent of the sample respondents are of 60-65 years of age, eighty eight percent of them are married and fifty six percent are educated up to the primary level.
2. The study also shows that seventy eight percent of the sample respondents are from Nuclear family and seventy four percent are living in concrete house.
3. The study shows that all the respondents are living own house because the Government had provided free a house to the people living in this area after the Tsunami.
4. Forty two percent of the sample respondents are forced to carry out this work because of their poverty and twenty two percent of the people are doing this work because of their illiteracy.
5. Forty percent of the sample respondents are engaged in this traditional work for the past 25-30 years.
6. This study reveals that eighty percent of the sample respondents are retailers among which thirty six percent of the sample respondents are having monthly income of above 2500 rupees.
7. The study also shows that eighty percent of the sample respondents having the habit saving. Among which sixty three percent of the sample respondents are saving through chit funds.
8. Sixty eight percent of the sample respondents are borrowing money from outside source. Forty three percent of the respondents borrow their required amount from chit funds.
9. The study also shows that thirty five percent of the sample respondents having a debt of Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1, 00,000.
10. The study also shows that eighty two percent of the respondents use auto as transportation mode.
11. Thirty six percentage of the sample respondents are working for 12 hours.
12. The study also shows that forty two percentage of the sample respondents have the problem of headache and twenty percent were affected by leg pain and hip pain.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Employees state insurance facilities can be provided to women fish vendors in Ramanthurai.
2. Government should provide adequate transport facilities for the people living in Ramanthurai.
3. Brokerage commission should be regulated by cooperative societies.
4. Own village market facilities should be provided by Government, Cooperative societies or NGO's
5. Easy and quick loan facilities can be provided by Nationalised Bank for women fish vendors so that they may not approach the private chit funds.
6. Education loans with subsidies can be provided to the fish vendors' family.
7. Government can take initiative to set up at least a primary health centre and provide medical facilities to the fish vendors as well as for the whole village.

5.CONCLUSION

Fish vending women are facing all the problems faced by any other unorganized sector in general. But the sad part here is this sector is not even considered as one among the unorganized labours. They have no representations in any financial inclusive programme. They are been included in some Self Help Groups because of their community representation. The government provides financial assistance for the fishermen during the ban period. If there is no fishing then this fish vendors have no earnings but the same financial assistance is been denied to them. The Government should consider this section as an unorganized sector and provide all the financial and marketing assistance to them. Moreover the financial inclusiveness program be specifically extended to this sector.

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