

## Development Programme for Women in Fisheries

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Role of women in fisheries is now being increasingly recognised. However, lack of financial support, management skills, planning and operational constraints retard the progress of their participation. The priorities and targets with regard to increased awareness and information to ensure project success are discussed. Commitment and support of policy makers and government are essential to achieve the goal. The success of project implementation also depends on sharing of infrastructure with research and educational institutions. Appropriate steps are needed at state level to implement gender sensitive projects. Adequate funds also need to be provided for dissemination of technological advancement to the target women group.

**Key words:** Coastal women, gainful employment, training, development programme

Fisheries is a priority sector with great scope for women to get employed. The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) has developed a number of packages for gainful employment of women in fisheries. A project on 'Gainful Employment for Coastal Women' was run at CIFT for a period of three years with financial assistance from the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India. Many of the beneficiaries of the training programmes conducted under the project organised themselves into working groups of different nature and started cottage scale production units. However, the management weakness, inadequate infrastructure for production and marketing, lack of finance etc. resulted in operational constraints causing difficulties in smooth functioning of these units.

### Present Status

Studies to identify fishery technology modules suitable for women's participation were initiated by various research and development organisations from the early seventies. The Workshop on 'Women in Science' organised in Bombay discussed the application of post-harvest technology of fish and shellfish for the socio-economic upliftment of coastal women (Cecily, 1977). In pursuance of the recommendations of the Workshop several projects were drawn up for implementation. A project on 'Women in Fish Processing and Marketing' with projection on informal education and training to groups of fisherwomen from fishing villages on hygienic handling of fish and shellfish, preservation, preparation of diversified products and their marketing was accepted for implementation by Matsyafed, Government of Kerala in 1984. Fisherwomen from villages were trained for short duration on various aspects, and

they, in turn, trained other women groups at different locations followed by establishment of units for production and marketing.

Though successful in the beginning, it met with failure subsequently due to inadequate support facilities, management difficulties, market constraints and lack of financial support. An almost similar programme sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India on gainful employment for coastal women at CIFT was organised for three years from 1986 (Cecily, 1988). Intensive training for three months was given to fisherwomen in handling, preservation and production of diversified products such as fish fingers, cutlets, wafers, pickles, soup powder, fish curry and other ready to cook/serve items. Experimental marketing outlets for the above products were opened in urban centres and participated in food festivals and exhibitions with success. After the completion of the project a follow up effort was taken up by the Centre for Research and Training in Poverty Alleviation and Women Welfare (CRATPAW), a voluntary agency, collaborating with Department of Industries, District Rural Development and Block Development Agencies and Central Social Welfare Board. Many individual and family based projects in small-scale sector came up adopting the technology acquired by fisherwomen. Women co-operative societies, the Cochin Vanitha Fish Processing and Allied Industrial Co-operative Society, Harijan Vanitha Fish Processing Society, Malipuram and Harijan Girijan Co-operative Society, Malampuzha are few such.

Organisations like Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and Krishi Vigyan Kendra trained fisherwomen in the collection of fish and prawn seeds for farming. Utilising the technical know-how from CIFT a unit for fish feed and another for fabrication of cod-ends for trawl nets were established at Chellanam in Cochin.

International organisations like the Bay of Bengal Programme organised various training programmes in the East and West Coasts of India for women to improve the quality of traditionally processed fish products (Edellrand, 1982, Anbarasan, 1985).

For the development of women in fisheries in Papua New Guinea an awareness programme on handling, processing and product development was organised by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation and the experience of the author gained through similar programmes in India was utilised for its successful implementation (Cecily, 1996).

#### ***Development programme for women in fisheries***

Any programme for development of women in fisheries should include the following aspects.

- Documenting the existing areas of women's participation in fisheries
- Imparting informal education and training to rural women in various technologies to develop skill and knowledge for making use of fish resource for self employment
- Assisting women to set up projects and to impart knowledge on managerial and marketing aspects for smooth functioning

- Identifying models for women and making tie up programmes with research and development organisations for sharing knowledge and facilities to strengthen the project
- Identifying basic infrastructure needed in marketing of fish products
- Conducting awareness Workshops for planners and policy makers for successful implementation of development programme for women

### **Project Areas**

Areas suitable for women participation in fish farming, capture, processing and marketing technology are to be identified as models for women to set up projects integrating with other fields in agriculture, forestry and animal science. The development programme should aim at giving exposure to women on hygiene, health, nutrition and food safety, skill development, income generation, awareness raising, leadership training and marketing abilities (Cecily, 1997). The following schedule will help in the execution of such programmes.

- A National Centre for Women's Development is to be set up to identify all the packages available for women's development in all research and development institutions. Regional centres should be opened for training trainers who will have to deliver the technologies to the rural women.
- R&D organisations should transfer technologies to the National Centre free of charge. The infrastructure available with the R&D organisations should be made available to women's organisations while implementing the projects.
- Department of Industries/Fisheries should provide facilities, funds and other supports to women entrepreneurs.
- Women's Cell may be established in all Ministries and other relevant organisations to identify appropriate science and technology packages for the socio-economic upliftment of women.
- Marketing agencies under Centre, State and Public sectors may assist women in fisheries through direct purchase of the products or by other suitable measures to get over the constraints in marketing.
- Healthy working environment should be provided to women working in fishery industry.
- To make aware of the advances in fisheries, seminars, symposia and workshops may be organised periodically.

### **Conclusion**

Documentation of women's packages, effective mechanism for transfer of technology, monitoring and evaluation are the prerequisites for proper functioning of women's development programmes. Such programmes assist women for employment and income generation, equip them with leadership qualities and improve their status apart from developing the fisheries.

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