

Awareness Campaign for Fisherwomen

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Women in fishing communities have decision-making role in community management. With the increasing commercialisation of fishing industry, women's access to post-harvest operations in fisheries has been declining. It is estimated that only about 20 percent of women from traditional fishing households get opportunities for income gen-

eration from fishery related activities which are seasonal. Nearness to fish landing and processing facilities is one of the determining factors of women's participation. Prawn peeling is an activity in which women are engaged in large numbers. But the economic benefits are distributive as more the quantity of prawn to be peeled, more will be the number

number of women required to do the job as the commodity is highly perishable and the processing plants are equipped for taking up huge quantities.

The extent of involvement of women from traditional fishing households in these activities is to be examined. There are many instances of women from fishing households migrating to other states to earn a livelihood mostly living from shrimp processing. Their conditions are reported to be deplorable. Net making is another activity in which machines have displaced women power. Thus as a result of marginalisation and lack of alternatives and also the irregularity of income from fishing, women in traditional fishing communities are adversely affected. There has been remarkable improvement in housing and clothing contributed by fishery-dependant development. Impact of modernization is another aspect which requires detailed study. The need of the hour is to draw the attention of the women in traditional fishing communities to various useful functional jobs available to them and the means to mobilise the same.

Research project on fisherwomen

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has been carrying out research programmes to understand the socio-economic conditions of women in fishing communities. An action research to develop a methodology to empower the target group through extension education has thrown light on many issues involved in their progress. The study is carried out in Chellanam fishing village near Cochin. Wards I-IV of the village have been adopted and women from the fishing households are organised into a society which is named as Matsya Mahila Vedi. Assessment of the needs of the target group showed that income generation among women-folk was most urgent. The first step towards achieving this is to organise a series of extension education activities.

The Institute has been organising a number of extension programmes (in the villages) involving R&D agencies in fisheries and other areas of development, with the help of Matsya Mahila Vedi.

A five-day awareness campaign for fisherwomen was organised by the Institute with the objective of bringing about



Dr P.S.B.R. James, Director, CMFRI, delivering the Presidential address at the inaugural session of the campaign. Seated are Dr. Krishna Srinath, Scientist, CMFRI, Mr. Dominic Presentation, M.L.A. Mrs. Mariamma Verghese, Regional Director, Workers Education Centre; Mr. K.J. Leanus, President, Chellanam Panchayat and Rev. Father Norbet Kochikaran Veetil, St. George Church, Chellanam.



Participants of the campaign attending a lecture





A participant presenting her impressions on the campaign at the valedictory session. Seated are Dr. M.K. Kandoran, Principal Scientist, CIFT, Dr. K. Gopakumar, Director, CIFT and M.S. Rajagopal, Principal Scientist,

awareness among women about their situation and means available to them to develop income generating enterprises. Forty women from among fishing and prawn farming households nominated by Matsya Mahila Vedi participated in the campaign. The campaign was sponsored by Central Board of Workers Education.

The campaign was inaugurated on 16 August 1993 by Mr. Dominic Presentation, M.L.A., who reiterated the role of Institutes like CMFRI in human resource development. Dr. P.S.B.R. James, Director, CMFRI who presided over the session highlighted the relevance of the technologies for culture of clams and other molluscs for the women in the

locality. Mr. K. J. Leanus, President of the Panchayat, Mrs. Mariamma Verghese, Regional Director of Workers Education Centre, Mr. J.G. Menon, NABARD and Miss. P.A. Mable, Secretary, Matsya Mahila Vedi offered felicitations. The valedictory session of the campaign was held on 20 August, 1993. Dr. K. Gopakumar, Director, CIFT delivered the closing address. Mr. A.B. Mathew, District Council Member and Dr. M.K. Kandoran, Principal Scientist and Head of Information, Statistics and Extension Division, CIFT, spoke. Dr M.S. Rajagopal, Principal Scientist and Head of Fishery Environment Management Division, CMFRI chaired the session.

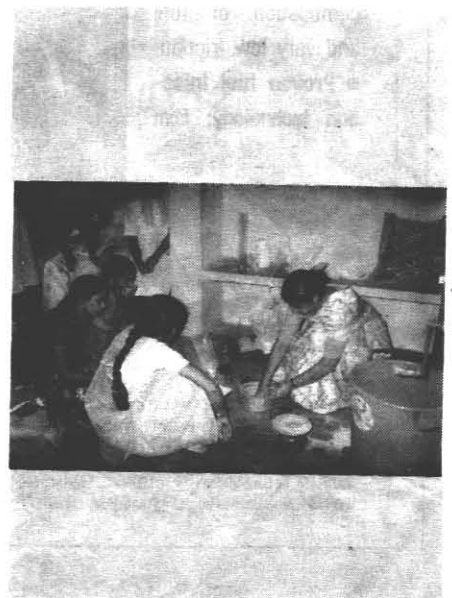
Evaluation

An evaluation of the campaign indicated that it was for the first time that needs of women in this village were addressed to, integrating various aspects of the problem. Income generation through on-farm feed production was considered to be very appropriate as the technology was very simple. The recipes had been developed by CMFRI. It was proposed to organise intensive training in feed production during the year. The participants felt that creating awareness on financial support was crucial as people are often misguided by local advices. Alcoholism was the major problem which shattered their household economy. The campaign recommended the need for more such programmes concerned with the issues confronting fishing community. Target group organisation should be promoted. Village level forums such as Matsya Mahila Vedi could provide the leverage for communication and participatory approach to development.

The curriculum

The curriculum included the topics given hereunder. The communication methods used were lectures, discussions, demonstrations, simulation games, film/shows, posters, charts and handouts.

| Topic | Resource agency |
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| Need for self-employment Need for organisation and cooperation Leadership-concept, meaning and functions | Workers Education Centre |
| Interpersonal relationship | CMFRI |
| Enterprise building Enterprise management Entrepreneurial qualities | Institute of Management in Government |
| Social evils | AddictionCounsellingCentre (Project of Government India) |
| Involving women in prawn farming Scientific prawn farming seed collection and identification | Kerala Agricultural University CMFRI |
| On-farm prawn feed production- an activity for income generation | CMFRI |
| Group concept in fisheries enterprises | CMFRI |
| Fish processing technologies | CIFT & IFP |
| Development support for fisheries enterprises | MPEDA & NABARD |



Demonstration of on-farm prawn feed production, by Dr. Manpal Kaur, Scientist, CMFRI.