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## Assessing Human Development among Marine Fishers In Kerala: A Fisher Development Index (FDI) Approach

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Growth and development are two different connotations in the context of fishers. Over the years, the fisher community in Kerala has had a Human Development Index (HDI) which are lower (by 16%) than the general population of Kerala State. Many development indices take into account the state of fishers in a community. However, the fisher community is intertwined with the complexities of the natural resource system, whose mismanagement; unsustainable practices and other inter sectoral conflicts lead to situations wherein fishers are unable to get adequate returns. With this focus, an attempt was made to develop a Fisher Development Index (FDI) based on the fact that fisher well-being is dependent on resource sustainability, state of technology and infrastructure support; all of which lead to substantial externalities on the fisher development across the production and distribution domains. The study documents the fisher growth and development over years in terms of four components namely, social status, economic wellbeing, technological proficiency and resource sustainability. The results are a set of values comparable with the HDI. The study found that over the 15 years, the HDI scores were improved due to an increase in values for income and literacy. However, the FDI was improved by 74% due to very high improvements in technological proficiency and moderate improvement in the economic wellbeing of fishers. The wide use of communication and fishing aids has been attributed to the increased literacy rate of the fishers over time. There is also a positive relation between government expenditure on fisher welfare and the increase in FDI and HDI over the period pointing to an affirmative policy impact. The Fisher Development Index poses considerable options to the state policy planners in developing fisheries policies for ensuring continued fisher welfare and sustainable marine fisheries management.

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