



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY PROJECT



Proceedings of the Workshop on

Empowerment of Fisher Women

**in Coastal Ecosystem of Andhra Pradesh,
Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu**

THE COASTAL ECOSYSTEM OF
ANDHRA PRADESH, KARNATAKA, KERALA
AND TAMILNADU
ON
13th & 14th OCTOBER 2003
AT
UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM
P. N. G. RANGA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY
RAJENDRANAGAR, HYDERABAD - 500 002



**ANGRAU Auditorium, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad
13th & 14th October 2003**

ROLE MODEL- CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESSFUL FISHERWOMEN

R. Sathiadhas* Vijayakhader**, Femeena Hassan*, H. Mohammed Kassim *,
N.S. Sudhakara ***, R. Narayanakumar*, K. Dhanpal**, and J. Lakshmi**

Introduction

Women forms about 50% of the human race. It is well known that poverty, hunger and malnutrition are comparatively more among coastal fisher folk. Coastal fisheries being a common property resource, stake holders in the upper strata with better equipments and facilities are empowered to earn higher income which is further widening the gap between the rich and poor .

The unequal distribution of income coupled with illiteracy and lower socio- economic status leads the fisher families into this deplorable situation. The National Agricultural Technology Project entitled "Studies on Fisherwomen in coastal ecosystem of Andhra Pradesh, Karnatka, Tamilnadu and Kerala" explored the socio-economic status of fisherwomen and found the families where in women are actively involved in one or other occupation has flourished and achieved all round development. Adequate training on different post-harvest activities has been provided to different stakeholders of various villages for the empowerment of women. In this context it was felt appropriate that some of the fisherwomen who has excelled in their profession on their own and contributed substantially for the higher socio-economic status of their families will be depicted as role models. Three such cases in the southern coast of Kerala and two in Karnataka state are one in chennai and one in Andhra Pradesh given below .

1. **Mrs. Thressia** – A successful clam processor cum- vendor at Thekkumbhagam in Kollam District of Kerala

Name of the fisherwoman (Age in years)	: Mrs. Thressia (46 years)
Husband	: Mr. Joechan (52yeras)
Children:	: Mrs. Sisily (29 years)
	: Mr. Antony (25 years)
	: Mrs. Subi (23 years)

ADDRESS: JoechanThressia Nivas
Chavara. South,
Thekkumbhagam,
Kollam.

Mrs. Thressia Joechan is an enterprising fisherwoman. She has come up in the society with her consistent hard work, mental strength and enterprising outlook.

*Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Cochin

** Acharya N.G.Ranga Agricultural University, Hyderabad

Thressia is the youngest daughter among the eight children of a poor fisherman at Thekkumbhagam village of Kollam District in Kerala State.

She got married at the age of 18 years to Joechan., who is also an active fisherman. At that time she has been given 5 cents of land as dowry. They built a hut in that land and started their life with great difficulties. Her husband alone couldn't meet the requirements of the family when a child was born. Hence, Thressia was compelled to work as a fish trader to add to the family income. During those days she used to buy clams and process it by herself and sell it in the nearby households. The money, she earned from this was hardly sufficient for the family. The household expenses also increased when the demand for many items enhanced day by day. As she could not go to school, she had a great desire to send at least her children to school, and for this she was ready to work hard.

Clam collectors will bring clam from the backwaters by morning about 10' 0 clock. At that time she used to buy 25 buckets of clam. Each bucket contains 10 kg clam, which gives 1 kg meat. So on an average, she gets 25 kg meat per day. For processing, she is engaging eight ladies, who are paid Rs.8/bucket. They could finish off processing within 4 hours. So this forms only a part time job for these ladies. But she gets the satisfaction of providing jobs to the ladies of her neighbourhood. The processed meat is sold to export companies @ Rs. 18-25/ kg. But the company is taking the meat only thrice in a week as the purchase order for clam is less. So on other days she used to sell the shucked meat in the market, which gives only 14-15 kg. The clam shell, each vessel weighing about 15 kg, is sold to some agents of cement factory fortnightly. Every fortnight there will be 5-8 vessels of shells. This gives Rs. 40/-vessel. So monthly, on an average, she gets Rs. 500/- by selling the shell.

Now she could earn an amount of Rs. 10000/month from clam processing and vending. This income supplements the income of her husband from fishing activities.

With her hard work and better management of money, she could give college education up to degree level to her son. Her elder daughter who studied up to plus two got married to a person working in Gulf country. The younger daughter who also studied up to plus two got married recently to a person working in Gulf country

Now she is having a somewhat good house with modern amenities like TV, Fridge, and Phone etc. Her message to the society is " **If hard work and perseverance is there, women can reach to any level.**"

2. Mrs. Amalorphavam – An enterprising fish vendor at Poovar in Thiruvananthapuram District

Name of the fisherwoman (Age in years)	: Mrs. Amalorphavam (52 years)
Husband	: Mr. Joseph (Late)
Children:	: Mr. Pushparaj (29 years)
	: Mrs. Sossamma (27 years)
	: Mrs. Reena (25 years)
	: Mrs. Preseetha (23 years)
	: Miss. Sritha (18 years)

ADDRESS: Door No.224/VI
Erukkaal vila,
Poovar,
Thiruvananthapuram..

Amalorphavam is hailing from the Poovar village in Neyyatinkara Taluk of Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala State. She is 52 years old and working as a fish vendor. Currently she purchases the fresh fish from Poovar, Vizhinjam, Neerody and Puthyathura landing centers and sells at distant markets like Palayalam and Parasala.

She is an illiterate. She is the 6th daughter of Mr. Sabarimuthu and married to one Mr. Joseph during 1968. Ms. Amalorphavam was involved in net mending before her marriage. Although her husband is engaged as a shore seine operator, the income earned by him is not sufficient to take care of the entire family. Since the job opportunity in net mending has drastically declined Mrs. Amalorphavam is frantically trying to find out an alternative occupation in those days to help her husband to feed the family.

Initially she could purchase fish for an average amount of Rs. 100/- and sells the same to about Rs150/- as a head load vendor. With the increased transportation facilities, she has shifted her activities to the nearby markets in Poovar and Neyyatinkara. On those days she used bamboo baskets / aluminum pots for transportation of fish.

Now she uses plastic containers for transportation and uses ice for maintaining its quality. Her investment is about Rs. 2000/-, for day to day fish purchase alone and hire auto rickshaw for transportation. The daily earnings range from Rs. 100-500 per day. Although her husband expired in 1992 while in fishing, she could bring up her family of five children, one boy and four girls.

Her son studied up to graduation and currently working as Assistant Chemist in Titanium factory at Thiruvananthapuram. Three of the other daughters are married to fairly rich families. The last daughter is studying for her degree course. Now she is a member of the Self Help Group of Poovar and commanding reasonably good respect among the neighbourhood. Amalorphavam is a happy woman now and strongly suggests that woman in fishing villages can easily take up fish trade or dried fish trade as an occupation.

3. Mrs. Bhageerathy – Fishing cum-marketing as a family enterprise

Name of fisherwoman (Age in years) : Mrs. Bhageerathy (56 years)

Husband : Mr. Thankappan (71 years)

Children : Mr. Pradeep (34 years)

: Mr. Prakash (32 years)

: Mrs. Pravadha (30 years)

Address - Door No. 478
Kadavi Parambil House,
Aroor Mukkom colony, Aroor,
Alapuzha (Dist)

Bhageerathy was born in 1947 at Pallipuram, a fishing village in Alappuzha District of Kerala. Her father died when she was only 11 years old. Her father and mother were fish vendors. She discontinued her studies at 6th standard after her father's death. The poverty and hunger of family compelled her to seek some employment. Bhageerathy discontinued her studies and started working in a coir factory to support the family financially.

She got married at the age of 20 to Mr. Thankappan, who was a resident of Mukkom colony of Aroor. Shri. Thankappan was a member of a big fishermen family of ten children and he was the 9th member. Initially they were living in a joint family set up with out earning anything for themselves. Bhageerathy was looking after only the usual household work of the joint family.

Ten years after their marriage, Thankappan and Bhageerathy shifted to a small house in 5 cents of land at Aroor Mukkom colony with their 3 children. After shifting to their own house, she thought of going for some job to enhance the financial status of the family. Then she started fish vending. Her husband was having 2 stake nets. The fish, he brought was sold by Bhageerathy first in the nearby households and later in the fish market. When Bhageerathy has taken the responsibility of selling the fish, Thankappan got more time to engage in fishing and net mending. With the joint effort of husband and wife, they could earn more and give good education to their children. But after some years Thankappan's health became weak as he was suffering with TB, Asthma and prostate problems. Then the elder son, who has studied up to Pre-degree also joined in their traditional fishing activities. Bhageerathy continued her job of selling of fish. Now the elder son having his own family and they are staying in a separate house. Her younger son, who studied up to B.Sc. is a Government Servant, working as a fireman. He is also staying with them along with his wife and children.

The one and only daughter Pravadha, studied upto S.S.L.C, was also married at the age of 22 to an official working in a private firm. Now Bhageerathy is a contented and happy woman as she could bring the children to a reasonably good status. Now they own a good house with modern amenities like Fridge, Television, Telephone, mixi and also own a Motor cycle.

Although Bhageerathy underwent Bypass surgery, during 1994, she is not ready to sit idle. Now also, she is selling the fish caught in their stake net, in the nearby market. Whenever more catch is obtained it is salted and dried. This also gives the family some additional income.

Bhageerathy states that women in fisheries sector can always play a key role to supplement the family income. They can always promote the habit of savings and this will help the family to tide over the lean season and also make appropriate productive investment. She feels that fish trade always form the easiest and alternative employment avenue for fisherwomen of coastal region.

4. SMT. BANUMATI KARKERA – FROM FRESH FISH VENDING TO ICE PLANT OWNERSHIP

Smt. Banumati started her fresh fish selling business in early 1970's when she was 16 years old with a capital investment of just Rs. 500/- taken as loan from Canara Bank, Hoige Bazar, Mangalore. She ventured into this trade, as she was illiterate and poor. Her daily routine involved buying of fresh fish through auction at Mangalore landing center, carrying on head load to Jeppu market about 2.. Kms away and vending till 7.00 PM. Banumati continued her retail fresh fish trading business for nearly a decade. During this period, her business grew from initial single basket to 10 baskets per day, which made her to go in for a three-wheeler tempo. Within few years she repaid her loan and with the bank's encouragements purchased a matador van. She extended her business to neighbouring Kerala State, which is just 25 Kms away.

The high demand for fresh fish in Kerala State made her to expand her territory as far as Kasargod, Cannonore and Calicut. Banumati affectionately called Banakka, realized that the use of ice is essential for long distance transportation of fish. She was experiencing difficulty in purchasing ice. The demand and cost of ice was high on days of heavy landing. This made Banumati to think about starting an ice factory. Though she was reluctant initially, with encouragement from her family members and bank, she established "Gajanana Ice and Cold Storage" in 1986 with a capacity of 15 tonnes per day at Hoige Bazar about 2 Kms. from Mangalore fish landing center with an investment of Rs. 8 lakh. The factory was inaugurated by Shri.S.K.Amin and Shri. Blasius D'Souza, then M.L.A and Minister respectively. With the advent of multi-day fishing, the demand for ice has increased considerably. Every deep sea trawler require 5-6 tempo loads of crushed ice per trip (about 4 tonnes)

Smt. Banumati attributes her success to hard work and her will to cross all hurdles with a desire to earn more. She is married to Shri. Prabhakara Karkera, who is a hard working fishermen.

Smt. Banumati has four children – 2 sons and 2 daughters. The daughters are happily married and settled. Her elder son looks after the ice plant and the other assist the mother in fish marketing

business. Smt. Banumati is in her fifty's now, actively working for nearly 12-16 hours a day. In addition to ice factory, she manages the trading of fish on large scale, sending consignments from Mangalore and receiving fresh fish from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and other parts of Karnataka. She is experiencing a slag in her business due to the entry of too many traders for too little fish, as it was vice versa 30 years ago.

Banakka is choosy about the quality of fish, she avoids fishes of trawl catches, buys only purse seine and gill net catch as the fishes are fresh and last longer in ice. The increased electricity tariff has reduced her profits. She feels that the recovery of money from fishermen depends on fish landings and quantity of catch per boat. Smt. Banumati says that remaining as housewife alone restricts women where as if she manages both in and out side the home that brings contact with many people providing opportunity and building self-confidence. Smt. Banumati concludes the interview by saying, "**Success comes to those who work hard and put sincere efforts, whatever may be the profession**"

5. SMT. HEMAVATHY PUTHRAN of KARNATAKA – FOLLOWING THE FOOT STEPS OF HER MOTHER IN DRIED FISH MARKETING

Hemavathy was introduced to traditional processing of fish by her mother Sheshamma in late 1960s when she was only 12 years old. Since then she is processing all types of fish. Fish varieties mostly used by her are Mackerel, Sardine, Soles, Anchovies, Small sized Shrimps, Silver belly and Lizard fish. Hemavathy is of the opinion that the processing of fish is highly labour intensive and requires support and co-operation of all the family members. One person alone cannot manage it. One of her sister assists Hemavathy in purchase of fish at the landing center and sends by tempos to drying yard. Hemavathy has employed five labourers on daily wages for curing, salting drying and packing the end products. The drying season extends from September to May nine months in a year. In the first three months, Hemavathy concentrates on smaller quantities of fish, which are dried partially for a day before they are sold. Her investment varies from Rs.5000-10000/- per day and gets her money back with in 2-3 days.

But after Deepavali that is from November onwards, she shifts to large-scale operation investing huge sums of money on fish and dry the fish for 4 to 5 days. These fully dried products are packed in polythene lined gunny bags and stored till the end of May. The entire stock of the dried fish is stored up to the commencement of rainy season. She disposes her entire stock of dried fish accumulated over the 5 months in June, when the demand for dry fish starts and clears all her loans. She not only gets back her investment but also earns profit. The daughter of Hemavathy is convent educated and interested to peruse her education.

Looking back, Hemavathy feels happy. By following the footsteps of her mother she has achieved what she wanted and she is proud of her profession as she could give employment to five members.

6. Smt. P. Roopavathy, Kovalam fishing village, Kanchipuram

Smt.P.Roopavathy W/o Shri. Panneerselvam, once a very poor housewife turned Self Help Group Organiser hails from Kovalam a small fishing Village of Kancheepurpam District. She was a very poor fisherwoman eking out an earning as small time fresh fish vendor in and around Chennai which is about 45 km on the northern side of her village. Owing to her low income she could not even send her eldest son to a formal education. She has got two sons and her husband is a fisherman going to the sea for fishing and earns a meager wages as a fishing hand which was inadequate for meeting their family expenses. Later her association with the Kovalam Field Laboratory prompted her to start a new venture of supplying live experimental specimens like lobsters and fin fishes to the Madras Research Centre of CMFRI.

She has studied up to eighth standard and she had an opportunity to work as an enumerator for a research project of the institute. At that time, her talents were identified by the Project Leader who initiated the survey. She was motivated to form a Self-Help Group comprising women of similar interest. But the picture was not rosy and there were many objections to her. But she overcame the objections with the help of the awareness meetings organized by Dr.H.M.Kasim, CCPI, Chennai about the importance and advantages of the Self-Help Groups. Now, many women joined the SHG and Smt.Roopavathy became a trusted leader of that group and she is the Secretary of the Self Help Group. This SHG not only functions as an Institution of social inter action but also as a financial establishment rendering services like saving and arranging petty financial assistance for its member for venturing into small time business like fish vending, live fish trade and cured fish sales. Thus a shy and introvert Smt.Roopavathy has transformed herself into a leader and organizer which not only helped to improve the socioeconomic status of her family and also of other members of her village. It is heartening to note that her SHG is not affiliated to any political party and at the same time they also command a considerable influence among all the political parties which operate in the village through their strong conviction on the developmental activities of self improvement. Yes it is very much fitting here to quote her as one of the role model for the fisherwomen.

7. Sri.Gapala Pentamma belonging to Mypadu of Uppada hamlet of Kakinada.

Sri. Gapala Pentamma is a 45 year old fisherwoman living with her son and daughter in law in a small fishing village called Mypadu. Her husband expired during her young age and she was forced to earn herself a living through fish vending and doing fishery related activities of some sort or other. A turning point in her life came when she got trained in net mending offered by State Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kakinada. With that background she planned to start a net making unit of her own in her village. She approached the co-operative banks for loans through DWCRA which is a Self Help Group supported by the State Government. With the financial assistance obtained she started a small net making unit in her hut by employing three fisherwomen at a wage rate of Rs.40 per day. Now she is planning to expand her unit by employing more fisherwomen. Her interest hard work and motivation by the Institutional Organisations saw her emerge as a successful entrepreneur from an average individual. She has some aspirations like diversifying her enterprise in value added fish products after getting trained in that field. She is also seeking financial help to attempt the new venture.

Conclusion

Woman is an economic partner to man, besides biological and social roles performed. Fisherwomen due to the emergence of nuclear families with increased cost of living and needs of the family are taking up small business and trade to supplement their income and standard of living. But when it comes to entrepreneurship, still man seems to dominate the entrepreneurial world. Entrepreneurship is not simply a masculine job. Woman too is equally endowed with the required qualities and managerial abilities that matter in successful entrepreneurship. The statuesque is gradually changing and time has come when one starts thinking, exploring and working towards the woman entrepreneurship.