



# Gender Mainstreaming and Impact of SHGs: A Pragmatic Expedition from the Fish Value Addition Sector of Kerala

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## ABSTRACT

A rational assessment of the impact of women SHGs in gender mainstreaming was conducted among the fish value addition production units operating at Puthuvypu and Arakkunnam of Ernakulam district in Kerala. Based on socioeconomic surveys and in-person interviews, analysis of empowerment levels, performance levels, gender characteristics, and economic viability were done using standardised data collection techniques. Empowerment Index was calculated using data based on 8 pertinent dimensions. To evaluate the gender mainstreaming features in terms of equity and equality to access to resources, participation profile, decision-making, etc., the male and female counterparts of the households were individually interviewed. Male equivalents play a compelling role in decision-making, the gathering of raw resources, the conveyance of the finished product, etc. even though women dominate most tasks. Lacunae identified in Empowerment Index computation give feedback to proceed in the right direction and to follow appropriate changes in the manoeuvre of the microenterprise. The indicative economics of the enterprise's payback period of less than a year serve as evidence of its cost-effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Gender mainstreaming, Self help group, Empowerment index, Performance level

## INTRODUCTION

The definition of “gender mainstreaming” (GM) places a strong emphasis on evaluating the implications for both men and women of any intentional action, such as laws, policies, or programmes, at all levels and in all contexts. In order to ensure that both men and women benefit equally and that inequality is prevented from spreading, it is a way to make women's and men's concerns and involvements an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres (ECOSOC, 1997, UNESCO, 2000). The gender mainstreaming strategy outlined in Lombardo (2005) of the European Union (EU) constitution is “integrating” as opposed to “agenda-setting.” For the purpose of examining how mainstreaming has been applied in the EU constitutional convention, five indicators of its use has been used as a starting point: a broader definition of

gender equality, the integration of a gender perspective into the mainstream, equal representation of women, the prioritisation of gender policy goals, and a change in institutional and organisational culture. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals and international human rights agreements both include gender equality as a commitment to the global community (William *et al.*, 1995; Charlesworth, 2005; Kelly, 2005; FAO, 2007, 2011). According to the FAO State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011 reports, if female farmers had equal access to agricultural inputs and services as male farmers, their farms' yields would be significantly higher. According to a World Bank analysis, lowering gender disparity results in better nutrition, less infant and child mortality, increased economic output, and quicker economic growth. Similarly, GM which aims to change societal consciousness rather than only increase the proportion of women in a certain institution, it is important that, policies' impacts on both men and women are

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thoroughly examined before being put into place (Jacqui, 2010). In light of this, efforts were conducted to evaluate the influence of SHGs on gender mainstreaming among the fish value addition industries in two sites in Kerala's Ernakulam district.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

An action research-based pragmatic methodology was followed in this paper. As a part of the DST, New Delhi funded<sup>1</sup> project, two successfully operating value added fish production units were established in Puthuvypu and Arakkunnam of Ernakulam district of Kerala state by mobilizing SHGs (10 members each from 10 families in each unit). Women's participation was ensured from the mobilization phase onwards. Interactive meetings for awareness creation among fisherfolk beneficiaries were organized about the value addition units at the site for the SHGs. The technical assistance was provided by the experts from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of CMFRI. A training pamphlet in vernacular was distributed to the SHG members as a ready reckoner for convincing the value-added fish production technology. The impact of interventions was assessed through the gender analysis, the performance level of SHG, Empowerment Index (Krisha, 1990) and economic feasibility analysis through socio-economic surveys undertaken in the locality. To assess the aspects of gender mainstreaming in terms of equity and equality for access to resources, participation profile, decision-making aspects, gender needs analysis, etc., (Daly, 2005), the male and female counterparts of the families were separately interviewed, making 40 the final sample size for the study. The Average Operating Cost for the SHG firm was first calculated for the economic feasibility analysis, and the Average Annual Net Return was evaluated and then the average annual net return was assessed. Thereafter, the Break Even Point (BEP) and Pay Back Period (PBP) of the enterprise were estimated. A map showing the locale of study i.e. Puthuvypu and Arakkunnam of Ernakulam district in Kerala is presented in Figure 1.

Utilizing relevant scales and indices modified for the project, the Performance level of SHGs and



Figure 1: Map showing the locale of the study

Empowerment Index were assessed. The same metrics developed by NABARD, including group size, member type, meeting frequency, timing, attendance, participation, collection of savings within the group, amount to be saved, interest on internal loans, utilisation of savings amount by SHG, loan recoveries, bookkeeping, accumulated savings, and knowledge of SHG rules, were included in the checklist (arranged in 3 point continuum) used to evaluate the level of performance (NABARD, 2007; Shalumol, 2015). Similar to this, the Empowerment Index was quantified using 8 variables (Meena *et al.*, 2012), including capacity building, decision-making patterns, capacity building, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, economic empowerment, and political empowerment. The difference between the ratings obtained based on the perception of the SHG members before and after joining the SHG and the same was used to calculate the degree of empowerment. The scores acquired for each dimension were first made consistent before being multiplied with the weights given by the judges while relevancy testing.

<sup>1</sup>Project on "Empowerment of Scheduled Caste fisherfolk through Entrepreneurial Capacity Building of Self Help Groups in marine sector" under SCSP scheme of DST, New Delhi

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Empowerment Index (EI) and Level of Performance of two SHGs from Puthuvypu and Arakkunnam in the Ernakulam district engaged in the production of value-added fish were quantified and shown in Table 1. To determine the statistical difference between the mean empowerment index scores before and after joining the SHG, paired t tests were carried out independently for each of the SHGs. All eight empowerment factors taken into consideration for the current study's paired t test results were highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), demonstrating a considerable rise in empowerment scores following the formation of SHG. Performance levels for Puthuvypu and Arakkunnam groups were estimated at 69 and 62 percent, respectively.

The time devoted by participants for various phases of the entrepreneurial activities were measured and quantified using a three-point scale (Always =3, Sometimes =2, Never =1). The results presented in the Figure 2 showed that though all the entrepreneurial activities are equally important for the success of the venture, the participants were spending more amount of time in packing and labelling of the product. Another important activity which takes considerable amount of time is primary processing like cutting and cleaning. At the same time respondents said that purchasing of the quality raw materials was the least time taking entrepreneurial activity.

An assessment of gender perspectives in gender roles in terms of access to resources, participation in various activities and decision-making in various stages was done by interviewing male and female respondents in the study. The access to resources is categorized in various heads, i.e., female alone, male <female, male = female, male >female and male alone and data is collected separately from male and female respondents. The results on access to resources are presented in Table 2.

The opinions of men and women in the above aspect were similar without any significant difference. Almost all the resources and facilities were equally likely accessible by both men and women. But the resourcing of the raw materials was typically done by the male members. Resources such as extension services, cleaning facilities and labelling and packing resources were reported as equally accessible to males and females. But in the case of pickling resources, a different pattern of access was observed, indicating more access for the females than males. Men and women essentially agree on the same points when it comes to engagement and necessity (Sahoo *et al.*, 2009; Raghavan, 2009; Vipinkumar *et al.*, 2008, 2017 & 2018). Similarly, the participation profile of the members (Table 3) showed that in value-added fish production units, the important activities like extension services, cleaning/peeling of fish, packing and labelling and other inputs are being performed with equal participation of men and

**Table 1: Impact of fish value addition based SHGs on women empowerment**

Empowerment dimensions	SHG 1: Value added fish production unit, Puthuvypu			SHG 2: Value added fish production unit, Arakkunnam		
	Average Empowerment Index		t value	Average Empowerment Index		t value
	Before	After		Before	After	
Confidence building	0.330	0.798	42.39**	0.360	0.687	42.98**
Self esteem	0.360	0.799	53.31**	0.351	0.698	37.12**
Decision making Pattern	0.371	0.710	43.85**	0.381	0.699	42.89**
Capacity building	0.339	0.759	33.50**	0.330	0.689	32.99**
Psychological empowerment	0.289	0.798	20.78**	0.338	0.698	17.18**
Social empowerment	0.348	0.777	54.99**	0.348	0.739	41.28**
Economic empowerment	0.358	0.818	42.92**	0.302	0.810	28.88**
Political empowerment	0.327	0.753	14.58**	0.269	0.728	14.32**

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

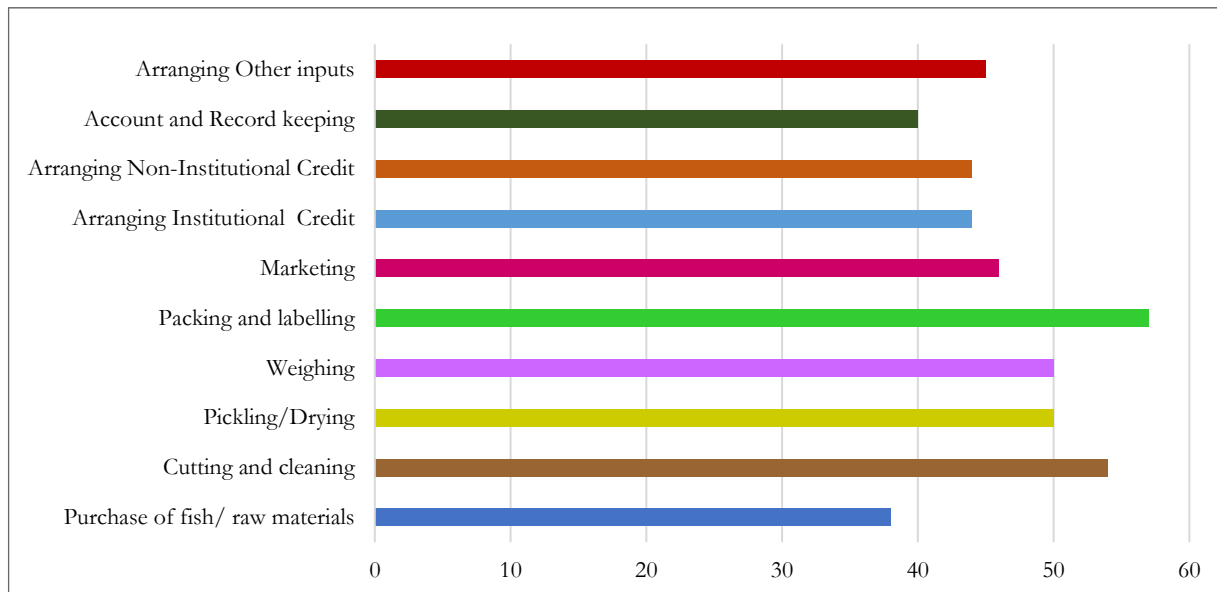


Figure 2: The time devoted for various phases of the entrepreneurial activities

Table 2: Access to resources for Fish value addition Unit (responses in frequency)

Resource Access	Female Alone		M<F		M=F		M>F		Male Alone		No Access	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	Access to resources for purchase of raw materials	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	100	0
Access to Extension Service	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to Cleaning facilities	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to Pickling resources	15	25	35	25	50	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to Weighing facilities	0	0	50	25	50	75	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to Packing and labelling resources	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to Institutional Credit	0	0	25	35	65	50	10	15	0	0	0	0
Access to Non-Institutional Credit	0	0	50	50	50	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to Marketing facilities	0	0	0	0	25	40	75	60	0	0	0	0
Access to accounting facilities	0	0	25	25	75	75	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access to other inputs and resources	0	0	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

women. Purchase of fish/raw material is the only activity men do without women’s participation. It is an exquisite observation that, the major activities of this enterprise are being undertaken through equal participation of men and women counterparts of the families, but the cleaning and pickling participation was solely done by females.

Table 4 shows that the decisions regarding important activities like pickling and cleaning/peeling were made by female counterparts alone. Men and women were unanimously involved in decision-making

in purchasing fish/ raw materials, availing institutional and non-institutional credit, marketing strategies of finished products, etc.

The economic feasibility analysis of the fish value addition production units run by SHGs was undertaken by gathering data on various economic activities for the last three years (Table 5). The expenditure (operating cost) and the returns were analyzed for benefit-cost estimation. The average operating cost and net returns were worked out, and the significant components assessed were the Break Even Point and Pay Back

**Table 3: Gendered Participation profile of the Fish value addition Unit (responses in frequency)**

Activity	Man alone		Men & Women		Women alone	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Participation in the purchase of fish	0	0	100	100	0	0
Participation in extension service provided	0	0	100	100	0	0
Participation in Cleaning/peeling	0	0	0	0	100	100
Participation in Pickling	0	0	0	0	100	100
Participation in Weighing	50	50	50	50	0	0
Participation in packing and labelling	0	0	100	100	0	0
Participation in sourcing institutional Credit	0	0	100	100	0	0
Participation in sourcing non-Institutional Credit	0	0	100	100	0	0
Participation in the Marketing of products	40	45	55	50	5	5
Participation in Account and Record keeping	0	0	100	100	0	0
Participation in sourcing other inputs	0	0	100	100	0	0

**Table 4: Decision-making in various phases of Fish value addition Unit**

Decisions regarding	Man alone		Men & Women		Women alone	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Purchase of fish/ raw materials	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Availing extension Service	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
Cleaning/peeling	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00
Pickling	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00
Weighing	0.00	0.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00
Packing and labelling	0.00	0.00	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
Availing Institutional Credit	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Availing Non-Institutional Credit	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Marketing of finished products	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Account and Record keeping	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Other inputs	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00

Period of the units. The results presented in Table 5 indicated that an Average Annual Net Return of Rs. 205270/- was obtained from a unit with a total fixed cost of Rs. 75000/-. The Break Even Point (BEP) is estimated as 340 kg of fish pickle @ Rs 700/- per kg. The Pay Back Period was 0.37 years. It indicates that with less than a year, the unit is able to equalize the cost and returns.

### CONCLUSION

To put it briefly, an evaluation of the value-added fish production units successfully carried out by Self Help Groups of fisherfolk revealed a few plausible hypotheses that, the crucial tasks of cleaning/peeling

fish, packing and labelling and obtaining other inputs are carried out with equal participation by men and women. The empowerment index calculated for the two SHGs showed that, all the eight dimensions of the empowerment had improved in both the groups after the intervention of action research. Both the groups (Puthuvype = 0.818 and Arakkunnam = 0.810) showed a maximum empowerment in economic dimension after the project interventions. Interrelationships between the factors can serve as long-lasting catalysts for group empowerment and action. The economic analysis of the fish value addition carried out, the measurement scale prepared for calculation of 'Empowerment Index' and schedule prepared for



the Performance Assessment' have good potential for future use in other key areas on a maintainable basis. Dimensions determined by the Empowerment Index calculation that have shown less improvement provide sufficient and adequate feedback to authorities to go forward while planning comparable empowerment programmes.

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