

Transformation in gender roles with changes in traditional fisheries in Kerala, India

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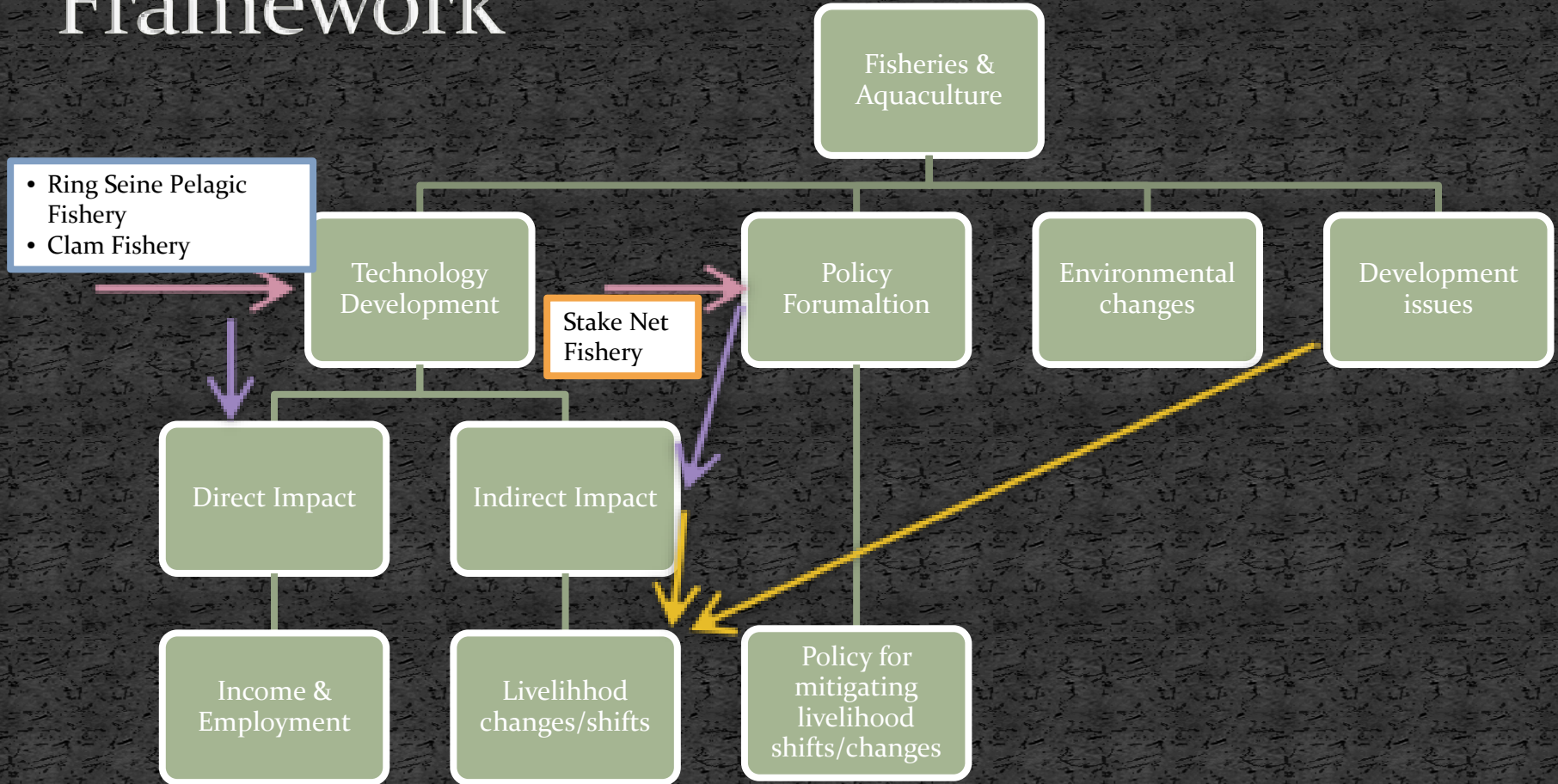
- Universal premise -
 - Any change has an impact
 - Could be positive , neutral or negative
- In food production systems changes can be related to:
 - Technology, policy, socio-political, legal etc.

Change	Positive	Negative
Mechanization	improving food production bringing in more area under cultivation fishers going farther and deeper for more fish	exclusion (not necessarily intentional) small farmers women

This study.....

Framework
Components

Framework



Components (for looking at those aspects)

Component	Description
Activity profile	Who does what
	When
	Where
Resources, access & control	What resources are available
	Who has access to what resource
	Who has overall control over the resources
Institutional constraints & opportunities	Policy, law
Source: Mainstreaming Gender and Development in the World Bank: Progress & Recommendations, Caroline O. N. Moser, Annika Tornquist, Bernice van Bronkhorst, 1999, The World Bank	

- Study area
 - South west India – state of Kerala
 - Kerala has 10% percent of the country's coastline
 - Contributes 20% to India's marine fish production
 - 40% to seafood exports.



- Continental shelf of about 40,000 km² –
 - one of the most productive waters.
- 223 fishing villages
- 11.43 lakh persons depend on the marine resources for their livelihood
- 2.63 lakh active fishermen



- Various fishing fleet
 - Mechanised fishing fleet
 - Trawlers
 - Gill netters
 - Long liners
 - Purse seiners
 - Motorised traditional fleet
 - IBM (in board motor) ring seines
 - OBM (out board motor) ring seines
 - Mini trawlers
 - Gill netters, hooks and liners, boat seiners and shore seiners.
 - Non-motorised traditional fleet





RING SEINE FISHERY

- Seen along in the entire coast of Kerala except for the southern tip
- Plays a significant role in the marine landings in Kerala contributing 51.6%.
- Out of total pelagics, 98.8% of oil sardine, 71% of lesser sardine, 56% of mackerel and 42.6% of white baits landings contributed from ring seiners.

The Ring Seine Unit

- Craft a combination of two vessels
 - Main vessel which is a large inboard mechanized vessel fitted with a winch
 - Smaller skiff (also called carrier) with an outboard engine.
- Main vessel is of an LOA of 65' to 80' while the skiff is about 40' to 55'



Investment

- Steel IBM unit (craft and gear) between Rs 50 lakh to 60 lakh (USD 90,000 – 100,000)
 - vessel, including engine, costing upto Rs. 40 lakh (USD 73,000)
 - gear Rs. 15- 20 lakh (USD 27,000 to 36,000)
- Uncontrolled growth of craft and gear size are the main reasons for the huge investment
 - From wood to steel
 - Powerful inboard engines
- Carrier skiffs
 - Mostly wooden crafts
 - Cost upto 4 lakh (USD 7300)

Small scale
Beach landing
(in early sixties)

Capital Intensive
Labour intensive
Harbour based
Mesh size : 18-22 mm
length : 300 m to 1200 m
depth : 50 m to 110 m
craft: 70-76 feet
crew size : 35-45
operated with inboard engine

- Community - Latin Catholic

- The beach landing facilitated the active participation of women, who took over the post harvest activities like sorting the catches and further marketing or processing.



- With the landings shifting to the harbours and becoming linked to price incentives of the market, women have slowly been marginalised.
- Women engaged in marketing still frequent harbours, for purchase of fish, but the post harvest activities, like handling the catch etc. have been taken over by organised male labour.







STAKE NET FISHERY

- Seen in the backwaters of the state
- Fishers belonging to the *Dheevera* community operate this
- Traditional rights

About the fishery



- Generally operated by the *Dheevera* caste which has traditional rights over *padus* or designated stake net fishing areas/ regions in the backwaters.
- The stake net, known as '*Oonni vala*' in the Malayalam language, is very common in the backwaters of Kerala.
- They constitute a very important gear used for backwater fishing in the state.



The average investments in the gear is approx Rs. 10000 (USD 180) and each stake costs around Rs. 5000 (USD 90)

- The stake conical bag net set in streams and tidal waters to small fish and prawns that are swept along its course and the fishing principle is filtering, the gear non-selective.
- The fishery is based on the lunar periodicity.
- The net is tied in between stakes at the beginning of the low tide and hauled just before the low tide ends.

- Women not involved in harvesting operations.
- Come into the picture only after the catch is landed, sorting the catch and later marketing them.
- On an average they spend 4-5 hours sorting the catch and then the marketing is carried out. The marketing may be carried out both by men and women, depending on the trading arrangements.



- The stake net fishery is facing increasing competition from other fishery as well as commercial interests.
- The catches in general have been declining and there is increasing pressure to abandon what had been a way of life for generations.
- In this changing scenario, the need to protect the *padus* from passing on to another family is pre-empted by discontinuing the practice of women getting a share in the *padus* (in the form of dowry).
- Inheritance has been through the male line and it generally passes from father to son.

Social changes

- Fragmentation of families, fragmentation of ownership
- Earlier girl children received as dowry. Now discontinued, owing mainly to economic considerations.
- Single mothers/ widows are taking over the stake nets of their husbands and leasing out the same as there is no other means of livelihood.
- Ritualistic customs still prevent them handling / touching the net during certain times.

Legal issues

- The State no longer collecting taxes, so loss of legal rights.
- Ownership transfer has not taken place for the past two generations.
- May have social implications.





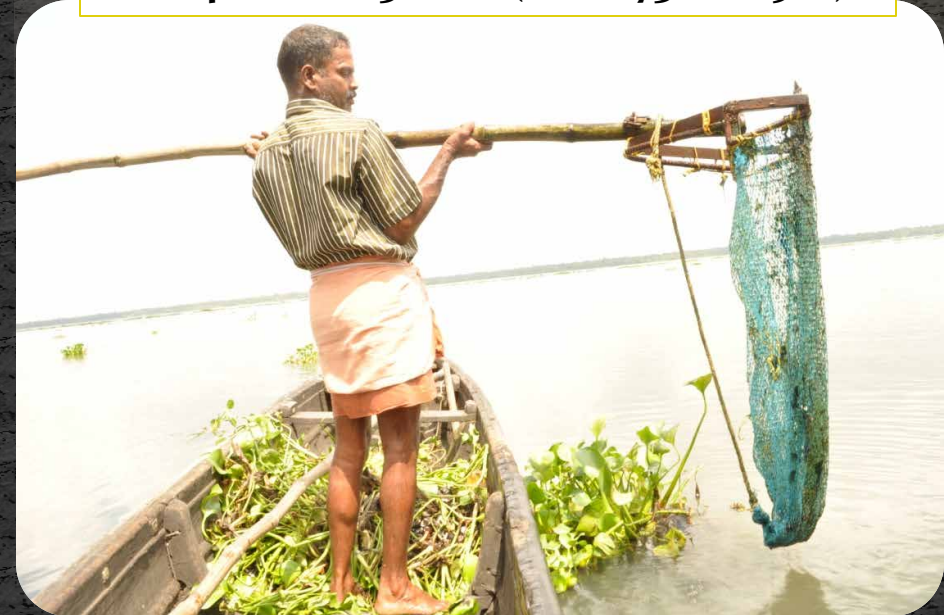
CLAM FISHERY

- Seen in the backwaters
- Family based activity
- Targeting sedentary animals like clams

- Very localized fishery.
- This fishery evolved basically to cater to the lime industry.
- The shells were more sought after than the clam meat.
- Here again the fishermen are from the *Dheevara* caste.
- The fishing which was done by diving and hand picking was an activity women had been actively engaged in (along with men).
- The introduction of small canoes, which have over time become motorised, and the scoop nets have made the activity male centric and now women are rarely seen in harvesting.

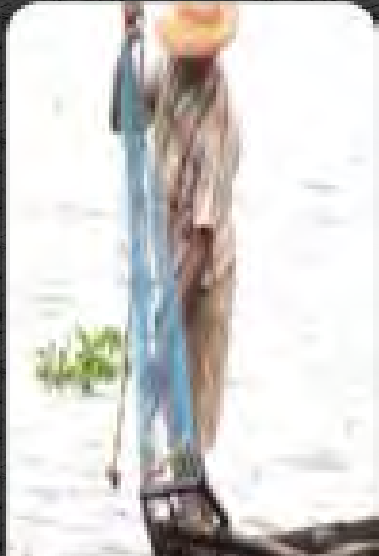


**Average investments range from
Rs. 40000 to 50000 (USD 730 to 910)**



- Women are now restricted to processing and shucking of the clam meat and further marketing of the meat.





Producers
(Clam picker cum
processor)



Wholesaler



Retailer

In Conclusion.....

- Women have been displaced out of several activities they have been involved in.....
 - In the ring seine sector, traditional post harvest activities no longer exclusive to women - drudgery has increased as they have to travel longer distances to reach harbours (*even fishermen have to travel long distances to begin the fishing trips*), wait for the catch to be landed, jostle to get a share and in general spend longer hours in procuring and marketing the catch.
 - Social, economic and legal issues affecting the stake net fishery; women still active in post harvest sorting (again drudgery high).
 - In clam fishery, women are no longer involved in harvesting; continue to process the harvested clam and are also involved in marketing.

Thank you



“Fishing is a... discipline in the equality of men -----for all men are equal before fish”

- *Herbert Hoover*