

# Awareness and Utilization of Federal & State Government Fisherwomen Empowerment Schemes - A Study in Coastal Villages of Andhra Pradesh, India

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## Abstract

There is an increasing recognition of women's role in fisheries, but this has not translated into equal representation of women in management and policy. Fisherwomen remain under-studied and under-recognized in marine resource management. Conservation and fisheries management programmes are biased because of a lack of understanding of women's role in fisheries policy-making. The purpose of this study is to examine the various policies, programmes, and schemes that have been implemented by both the Central and State governments of Andhra Pradesh in support of empowerment of fisherwomen. The study evaluated existing policies and schemes and their utilization by fisherwomen to determine whether they helped to empower fisherwomen. Finally, the paper concludes by highlighting policy gaps in favor of economic growth but without considering the needs of fisherwomen. Thus, providing suggestions and recommendations for forming and implementing policies and schemes for fisherwomen.

**Keywords:** Empowerment Policies, Fisherwomen Empowerment, Fisherwomen in India, Central and State Government Empowerment Schemes

## 1. Introduction

India has an excellent maritime position. There are 9 coastal states along its 7517 km long coastline, and 1382 islands. 95% of India's trade by volume transits by sea, as the country has 12 major ports and 187 non-major ports. About 1400 million tons of cargo is handled annually by India's ports. In India's Exclusive Economic Zone, which stretches over two million square kilometers, there are many living and non-living resources, including recoverable crude oil and natural gas. There are also over 4 million fishermen and other coastal communities in the Exclusive Economic Zone. Considering these vast maritime interests, the Blue Economy in India is integral to the nation's economic growth.

Women are key players in the rapid growth of the fisheries sector in addition to their roles as sole household managers in nearly all fisher families. Women no longer sit at home to raise their children and take care of the household. All over the world, women have played a vital role in the rapid development of families and societies. To earn additional income for the family, they need to work alongside men. Generally, women still remain unrecognized for their invaluable contributions. Women have been involved in fisheries for many years. Contributing to fish processing and marketing, women earn supportive income for their families. It is only through social and economic development that one can achieve economic progress. Fisherwomen have

traditionally been engaged in marketing, and their social position has been poor. Modern technological facilities also benefit men who can easily access and utilize them.

The fishing industry started as a purely traditional activity but is now a decidedly commercial one, with traditional marine fisherfolk increasingly dependent on marine capture-fisheries as a means of livelihood. The fact remains is that India fares very poorly in terms of empowering its women, especially those with inherent socio-economic and political disadvantages. Fisherwomen in India face relatively harsh economic conditions and lack the opportunities and access to build economically sustainable livelihoods.

Fisherwomen often occupy marginal roles and live and work on the margins of economic, social, and political power, making them particularly vulnerable. It is important that women are treated as equal partners and that they are productive and self-reliant participants in the process of improving their own and their families' nutritional and living standards. Women should also be enabled to realize their full potential as human beings in their own right as family members and community members. The opportunity should be given to women to acquire appropriate knowledge, develop appropriate skills, and use appropriate technologies so that they can contribute economically and socially the most.

Women empowerment in India is largely dependent on many different variables including geographical setting, social status, and educational status and age factors. Action on women empowerment exists at the state, local and national level. However, women face discrimination in most areas such as education, economic opportunity, health and medical aid, and political participation, indicating that there is a substantial gap between strategy progress and actual practice at the community level. In addition to several studies on fisherwomen empowerment, no specific study was undertaken on fisherwomen awareness and utilisation of state and national Government policies.

## 2. Objectives of the Study:

- To study the policies, schemes and programmes formulated and implemented by Central and State Governments for Fisheries Sector in India.
- To measure the fisherwomen awareness levels of various schemes and programmes from selected villages of Andhra Pradesh State.
- To provide recommendations and suggestions to the fisherwomen for utilizing the schemes, and recommendations to the Governments in policy making.

## 3. Literature Review:

**Ji Cheng, Haimeng Liu, Shaobin Wang, Xuegang Cui, Qirui Li (2021)** in their exploratory study reveals that the progress and policies related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the post-pandemic era across countries worldwide and finds that research on sustainable policies has rapidly increased since the SDGs were issued in 2015, with particular emphasis on eco-environment, sustainable policies, green economy, sanitation, and health. It was found that most countries are in the midst of nationalizing, institutionalizing, universalizing the SDGs by integrating them into national development frameworks, enabling extensive participation and negotiation mechanisms, and promoting national publicity for the SDGs.

**Samantha D'Souza (2020)**, her study aimed to describe the role played by small-scale fishers and their activities throughout the value chain along both the Eastern and Western coasts of India. The study focused on several stakeholders like SHGs, Federations, Cooperatives, Networks etc., contribution in the changes of fisherwomen lives. Additionally, policies and schemes conceptualized, rolled out, and implemented at the international, national, and state-level were assessed for gender neutrality and inclusion of fisherwomen. In conclusion, the paper highlights the gaps in policies and schemes that are geared towards economic growth while disregarding these fisherwomen and their needs. Consequently, providing recommendations for gender-sensitive, gender-inclusive and gender-transformative policies and schemes.

**R. Asha, K. Umadevi, S. Shrine (2018)** has undertaken a study on Trade in Marine Fisheries in India, which indicated that the production of fish from the marine sector increased sixfold in the past 50 years. The study found few issues related to sea food trade, including tariff barriers or subsidies, national policies, labeling, infrastructure issues, marketing issues, and product quality. The study recommends marine products can benefit from the introduction of exotic species, the implementation of a Catch Certificate System, and market promotion activities and publicity.

**V. Mahesh etc. (2016)** examined awareness and participation of fisherwomen in the State Fishery Department's beneficiary programmes, which are designed specifically to benefit them. Study findings reveal the constraints faced by women involved in fish marketing. Other major constraints faced by women fish retailers included high interest rates charged by money lenders, lack of space allocated for fish retailers in the market place, and lack of co-operation from fishery officials. Long working hours were also major constraints. It was found that fisherwomen are not well aware of the beneficiary programmes and should gain a better understanding of the available government schemes and programmes.

#### **4. Marine Fisheries Policies and Programmes:**

Many challenges face marine fisheries management, including open access fishery property rights systems, weak state and national legal and policy frameworks, low state government monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) capacity, and knowledge gaps concerning fish stocks' sustainability. It is challenging to reform Indian marine fisheries because of the large number of participants, boats, on-shore infrastructure, poor regulation and management, and a traditional focus on increasing fishing catches to promote poverty reduction. India's marine fisheries subsector will likely need major changes in policy and governance for stronger access and use rights, which could restrict and, in some cases, reduce access to certain inshore fisheries with excess fishing effort. In the long run, this may reduce overall fishing capacity.

As per the information given by Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India is implementing the umbrella Centrally Sponsored Scheme on "Blue Revolution: Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries" launched during 2015-16, with the following components:

- Development of Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture,
- Development of Marine Fisheries, Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Operations,
- National Scheme on Welfare of Fishermen
- Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and other need-based Interventions,

- Institutional Arrangement for Fisheries Sector,
- Strengthening of Database & Geographical Information System of the Fisheries Sector (SoDGIS),
- National Fisheries Development Board and its activities (NFDB)

In addition to National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017 (NPMF), Draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy (NIFAP) and Draft National Mariculture Policy (NMP), NFP has been drafted by merging existing policies. States and UTs can use the policy framework to develop location-specific legislation and policies. Through sustainable development of the fisheries sector, the document envisions export growth, enhanced fishers' incomes, and better choices for consumers.

Through sustainable and responsible fishing, the National Fisheries Policy, 2020 aims to develop an ecologically healthy, economically viable, and socially inclusive fisheries sector for nutrition and livelihood security. Moreover, better coordination between the center, States/UTs and other stakeholders is envisaged. According to international norms, an updated model bill by the center will enable coastal States/UTs to grant marine fishing licenses beyond 12 nautical miles.

It is known that policy formulation and implementation face serious problems when the policy framework is inclusive across the elements. Mismatches in prioritization often result in time and cost overruns. To maximize social welfare, the following management approaches may be considered to implement a more holistic fisheries policy.

- The formulation and implementation of the objectives require a proper policy gap analysis.
- By including short, medium, and long-term goals in vision statements, policy outcomes can be monitored and evaluated in a timely manner.
- Policy reforms must involve all stakeholders and key decision makers regardless of whether they are positively or negatively impacted.
- In order to plan and implement policies, it is necessary to identify and develop relevant institutions and organisations to provide a range of services for the management system.
- Prior to developing or reforming legal instruments, efficient policies and strategic directions must be established.
- A timeline and resources are provided to identified potential fisheries management units.
- In order to implement policy elements successfully, political will and support are required.
- To cope with the dynamic system's challenges and changes, the policy must be flexible.

##### **5. Schemes and Programmes by Central and State Government (AP):**

- (A) Prime Minister's Fisheries Scheme in Andhra Pradesh: "PMMSY"** - A scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India", approved by the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. PMMSY thrust will be given towards enhancement of fish production and productivity, quality, sustainability, technology infusion, post-harvest infrastructure, modernization and strengthening of value chain, standards and traceability in fisheries sector from 'catch to consumer', establishing a robust fisheries management framework, fishers' welfare, enhancement of fisheries export competitiveness. Government will register "Sagar Mitra" and encourage formation of Fish Farmers Producer Organizations (FFPOs) to help achieve

the PMMSY goals. Youth will be engaged in fisheries extension by creation of 3477 Sagar Mitras in coastal fisher villages. Large number of Fisheries Extension Services Centers will be set up in private space to create job opportunities to young professionals.

- (B) Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY):** The scheme is implemented with 60% share from Central Government and 40% State share for holistic development of Agriculture and Allied Sectors (Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Sericulture etc.). Govt of India has modified the name of RKVY as RKVY- RAFTAAR (Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana – Remunerative Approaches for The Agriculture and Allied Sectors Rejuvenation) from 2017-18 onwards. The programme aims to provide proper storage facility to the fishermen / tribes residing in the remote areas of the Islands to preserve their unsold catch in fresh conditions for better economic returns.
- (C) Registrar of Co-Operative Societies:** Integrated Cooperative Development Project (ICDP) is being implemented by the Department as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with the financial assistance of National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) with a core objective of improving infrastructure facilities of societies and to provide Margin Money assistance to societies including the functional societies like Fisheries, Dairies and Handloom etc. Under this scheme, assistance is provided for development of Agricultural production, supply of Agriculture inputs, Marketing, Storage and processing activity. Under ICDP, emphasis is given on infrastructure development by village level cooperatives, such as establishment of modern office & banking facilities, setting up of consumer shop, construction of scientific storage, godowns; facilities for food processing for value addition; marketing of agriculture and horticulture produce etc. Keeping in view, the importance of manpower development and training, the scheme provide subsidy for training, managerial assistance for project implementation and monitoring and preparation of project report and documentation etc. An amount of Rs.88.00 Lakhs is allocated during 2017-18.
- (D) The Scheme of Construction of Fish Landing Centres/Fishing Harbours:** Under the Scheme 14 of Blue Revolution – Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries are implemented under SCC.
- An amount of Rs.3980.48 lakhs is allocated under SCC in 2020-21 to Fisheries Department.

## 6. Andhra Pradesh State Government Schemes for Fisheries Sector:

### (A) YSR Matsyakara Bharosa:

#### Objectives:

- To pay compensation of Rs 10.00 Lakhs to victims/ victim families in the event of accidental death/ Permanent disability during fishing in Sea/fresh water bodies.
- To provide sustenance to victims/ victim families for their livelihood.
- To provide social security to victimized families.

**(B) YSR Matsyakara Nestham:** To improve the condition of fishing in Andhra Pradesh, which is among the important fishing hubs in South India, no welfare steps have been taken as of now. Bringing a change in the current scenario of the fishing hub, the current Chief Minister of

Andhra Pradesh has proposed for YSR Matsyakara Nestham scheme. The main target of the scheme is to help fishers of the state. With the promised financial assistance, the fishermen will be able to live a stable life even during the non-fishing seasons. The following article highlights some important information relating to the above-said scheme. The main focus of the scheme is to help fishermen of the state development. As it is becoming difficult for fishermen to make both ends meet with traditional fishing practices, the scheme will offer financial help for betterment and security of fishermen.

### **Scheme Highlights:**

- Financial help given to fishermen: The scheme has promised yearly financial help to fishermen. As per the scheme rules, Rs.10,000 will be given during the non-fishing seasons. With this help, the fishermen can think of a better life away from poverty.
- Monetary help during non-fishing seasons: There has been a reduction in fish population and to make the situation stable, financial help will be given. This will help in better production of fish. Even for the growth of fish, all fishing activities are banned for 60 days by the state government. Again, the activities start from April and continue till June 14th. However, the beneficiaries will be given Rs.4000 during the conservation period as suggested by the State Government.
- Inclusion of Catamaran users: The fishermen who use catamarans are allowed to avail the benefits of the above-said scheme.
- Subsidies to be given on diesel price: There are some fishermen who use diesel for running boats that are used to catch fish. It has been found that needy fishermen are unable to arrange for the diesel. In such case, the scheme will give subsidy for diesel and it has been increased by 50% for the help of fishermen.

**(C) Fishermen Pension:** With the YSR Pension Kanuka Status, the beneficiary can receive a pension amount of Rs. 2250 every month.

- The applicant of this scheme will receive a pension amount of Rs. 2250.
- Single Women Pension: The applicant of this scheme will receive a pension amount of Rs. 2250.

**(D) YSR Rythu Bharosa Kendralu:** Dr. YSR Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBK) are established on 30th May 2020 at each Village secretariat with an Integration of Agri input shop and Farmer Knowledge Center. The RBK is a Game Changer in Agri & Allied sectors. The RBKs strengthen Agriculture Extension System in collaboration with all the line departments like Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Veterinary, Fisheries, Cooperation, and Irrigation etc. to deliver the services to all kinds of beneficiaries from a single platform.

For the first time in India, Government of Andhra Pradesh envisaged a new concept of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) in all the village secretariats to serve as a single point of contact / single window system to cater to all the day to day needs of the farming communities, RBK also provide land records at village level issue Rythu Bharosa cards to farmers and provide services of banking correspondence at village level. The newly set up RBKs have digital kiosks and an App to help the farmers to supply seeds, seeding, fertilizers and information on package of practices, latest

technologies and real time market prices to the Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Aquaculture farmers in the State.

The RBKs offer up to 13 different kinds of infrastructure services for farmers at the village level, depending on the local crop patterns and requirements. The services include godown facilities, drying platforms for drying agriculture produce, collection centers, cold storages, custom hiring centers, primary processing centers, assaying equipment (to determine the quality of produce), bulk milk colling units, procurement centers and e-marketing.

**(E) YSR Bima:** The main object of the scheme is to provide relief to the families of unorganized workers in case of death or disability of the unorganized worker leaving the families in great distress.

- The registered unorganised workers will be enrolled as members under State Accident Death and Disability Scheme and under Aam Admi Bima Yojana (AABY) and will also be covered under the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). They shall receive the following benefits:
- Rs.2 lakh for 18-50 years and Rs.30,000/- for 51-60 years towards natural death, Rs.5 lakh for accident death and total disability and Rs.2.50 lakh for partial disability for 18-70 years.
- Scholarship Rs.1,200/- for children (up to two children) studying 9th, 10th, Inter and ITI.
- Total online claim settlement process. Rs.5,000/- paid within (2) days towards funeral expenses and total balance amount paid on 11th day or 13th day death ceremony.

**(F) Diesel Subsidy to Fishermen Boats:** Diesel subsidy is hoped to reduce the financial burden on fisherman for their livelihood and protect them against market fluctuations. The owner of a mechanised boat can avail a subsidy up to 3,000 liters a month while the owner of a motorised boat can avail a subsidy up to 300 liter a month. The Government is offering a subsidy of diesel of Rs 9 per liter.

**(G) Scheme for Relief and Welfare of Fishermen belonging to Scheduled Castes:**

- Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Cycle with Nets and Ice boxes.
- Supply of two wheelers with ice box/ Freezer mounted Mopeds for fish vending/ two wheelers with ice box for shrimp seed transport.
- Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Three Wheelers with Ice boxes.
- Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Four Wheelers with Ice boxes.
- Assistance for Establishment of Fish retail Kiosk.
- Supply of Fish seed transport vans.

**7. Other Schemes and Programmes for women welfare (Andhra Pradesh):**

- A. YSR Asara Scheme:** YSR Asara has been launched for the DWCRA women. Under which the Government is going to clear the pending dues of DWCRA women with banks till April 11, 2019. On 7th October 2021, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan Mohan Reddy released the second tranche of YSR Aasara Scheme. The Government has credited nearly Rs.6440 crore into the accounts of 78.76 lakh women who belong to 7.97 lakh self-help groups. The Government is going to pay the outstanding loans of women self-help groups through this scheme which were of Rs.25,517 crores. This amount will be

credited into the account of beneficiaries in four phases. Under this Scheme, the Government will clear all the pending dues of DWCRA women with banks till April 11, 2019, in four instalments. The Government has sanctioned a total of Rs.27,169 crore for four years. Out of which Rs.6,792.21 crore has been sanctioned on 11th September, 2020 to DWCRA women in 2020-21 towards the first installment. This scheme is beneficial for 9,33,180 groups with around 90 lakh members. The scheme main objective is at empowering women and improving their financial stability. Under this scheme, the Government will provide financial help to DWCRA women.

- B. Pedalandarikillu Scheme:** The Government of Andhra Pradesh has come up with a new scheme known as the Pedalandarikillu Scheme which is part of the successful scheme of Andhra Pradesh known as the YSR Housing Scheme. Under this scheme, the free of cost houses will be provided to the beneficiaries who belong to economically weaker sections of society.
- C. YSR Sunna VaddiPathakam:** The scheme intends to provide zero interest loans for women in self-help groups. To reduce interest burden on poor SHG women, it is proposed to pay interest portion for the FY 2019-20 on SHG bank loan amount outstanding as on 11/04/2019 under YSR Sunna Vadi.
- D. Jagananna Amma Vodi:** The programme "Amma Vodi" for providing financial assistance to each mother or recognized guardian in the absence of mother, who is below poverty line household, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and region to enable her to educate her child/children from Class I to XII (Intermediate Education) in all recognized Government, Private Aided and Private Unaided schools/ Jr. Colleges including Residential Schools/Colleges in the State from the Academic year 2019-2020.

## 8. Materials and Methods:

The study examined 580 responses from 15 coastal villages in Andhra Pradesh. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire followed by a random sampling procedure. Fisherwomen's awareness and participation in fisheries policies and programmes were analyzed using means and standard deviations in addition to frequencies and percentages. Different statistical tests are applied to confirm the hypotheses during the analysis. Due to the complexity of the whole process, one way ANOVA tests have been used in order to identify whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of three or more independent (unrelated) groups.

## 9. Results and Discussions:

In terms of demographics, 51.2% of the 580 respondents were 36-50 years old and 31.7% were 21-35 years old. 60% of respondents were uneducated while 136 (23.4%) had only a primary education. Most respondents (85%) belong to nuclear families, 59.31 have four children, and 58.97% own their own homes.



**Determining the Awareness Levels of National and State Schemes:****Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of awareness of difference schemes by Central and State Governments**

Awareness on the National & State Level Schemes	Scale					Mean	Median	SD	Variance
	VH	H	M	L	VL				
PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)	0.17	4.48	20.86	53.79	20.69	3.903	4.000	0.776	0.602
Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)	0.34	2.93	16.72	67.93	12.07	3.884	4.000	0.651	0.424
YSR Matsyakara Nestham Policy	18.97	23.10	47.59	8.28	2.07	2.514	3.000	0.959	0.920
YYSR Matsyakara Bharosa Policy	33.45	45.69	16.72	4.14	0.00	1.916	2.000	0.813	0.661
Fishermen Pension Policy	45.69	47.76	6.21	0.34	0.00	1.612	2.000	0.619	0.383
YSR Rythu Bharosa Kendralu	16.72	33.62	47.59	2.07	0.00	2.350	2.000	0.777	0.604
YSR Bima Policy	8.45	16.90	56.03	18.62	0.00	2.848	3.000	0.819	0.671
Diesel Subsidy to Fishermen Boats	8.28	18.97	56.21	14.48	2.07	2.831	3.000	0.849	0.721
Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Cycle with Nets and Ice boxes	10.34	18.79	58.45	12.41	0.00	2.729	3.000	0.809	0.654
Supply of two wheelers with ice box/ Freezer mounted Mopeds for fish vending/ two wheelers with ice box for shrimp seed transport	4.31	8.79	20.86	64.14	1.90	3.007	3.000	0.846	0.715
Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Three Wheelers with Ice boxes	12.41	26.90	52.41	4.14	4.14	3.512	4.000	0.847	0.717

Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Four Wheelers with Ice boxes	0.00	35.17	29.14	35.52	0.17	1.860	2.000	1.001	1.001
Supply of Ice boxes to Fishers	45.52	32.21	19.14	0.00	4.14	3.186	3.000	0.949	0.901
Assistance for Establishment of Fish retail Kiosk	6.21	12.59	43.79	31.21	6.21	2.607	3.000	0.905	0.819
Supply of Fish seed transport vans	8.28	14.48	47.93	29.14	0.17	2.984	3.000	0.880	0.775

Scale: VH - Very High, H - High, M - Moderate, L - Low, VL - Very Low

#### Awareness & Utilization of the Central & State level Schemes:

**Table 2: Awareness and Utilization of Schemes**

Scheme	Awareness (%)	Utilization (%)
PM Matsya Sampada Yojana	25.51	26.90
PM Matsya Sampada Yojana	16.72	16.55
YSR Matsyakara Nestham	89.66	54.31
YSR Matsyakara Bharosa	95.86	39.83
Fishermen Pension	99.66	54.14
YSR Rythu Bharosa Kendralu	97.93	16.55
YSR Bima	81.38	25.00
Diesel Subsidy to Fishermen Boats	83.46	14.48
Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Cycle with Nets and Ice boxes	87.58	6.21
Supply of two wheelers with ice box/ Freezer mounted Mopeds for fish vending/ two wheelers with ice box for shrimp seed transport	33.96	5.52
Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Three Wheelers with Ice boxes	91.72	5.34
Assistance to Retail Fish marketing by supply of Four Wheelers with Ice boxes	64.31	100.00
Supply of Ice boxes to Fishers	96.87	8.28
Assistance for Establishment of Fish retail Kiosk	62.59	6.21
Supply of Fish seed transport vans	70.69	0.17

Table 2 shows respondents' awareness and utilization of the various schemes provided by the both Central and State Governments. Several factors, such as lack of knowledge, illiteracy, awareness programmes by Government officials, ignorance, can be attributed to the low utilization rate of the

fisherwomen for the majority of the schemes. Another major constraint found in the study is that very few schemes directly benefit fisherwomen, while the remaining schemes are male-centric. It seems that policies and schemes implemented across India are unfriendly to women and ignore the granular needs of fisherwomen. Few of the state-level programmes are women-friendly, and awareness and utilization are limited.

The adoption of the Blue Revolution Scheme (2015-2016) (Ministry of Shipping, 2020), that seeks to develop ports, as well as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (2020 - 2024). The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (Department of Fisheries, 2020) focuses on pure economic growth, indicating that India does perceive Fisheries to be a growing industry, hence the investment. Fisherwomen, who are the backbone of this industry, are virtually invisible and left out of most policies and programmes.

It is therefore, important to adopt a gender-sensitive and gender transformative approach to policies and schemes. It could be recommended that, regardless of caste and marital status, fisherwomen should be given due recognition for their work in the sector based on the current study findings. A policy or scheme must be developed that is specific to the needs of fisherwomen, including pre- and post-harvest activities.

## 10. Conclusion:

This research has been a learning experience as it sheds light on the sector more comprehensively and the vital role fisherwomen play in small-scale fisheries. Fisherwomen's work goes unnoticed by policymakers, markets, society, communities, and even their family members. To bridge the gap between exploitation and equitable distribution of gains and losses of the sector, fisheries policies must be jointly formulated and implemented in a timely manner. In addition, improved governance is also essential to the implementation of carefully drafted policy measures.

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