

**Aspects of Traditional Knowledge on Women's
Participation in fish and fisheries: A case study from Manipuri
Women of North East India**

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INTRODUCTION

□ Gender is not only a part of the social and political fabric, but also a **culture and traditional symphony of a society**. Role of **women in fisheries sector has not much acknowledged and valued** on an equal par with that of men.

□ Women's efforts in fisheries may vary across **time, places, regions** and **communities**.

□ “ Ignoring women’s role *means* Lessening their potential to strengthen the sector” .

INTRODUCTION

□ Various factors promoting gender **disparities** are:

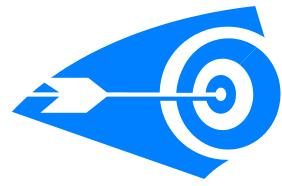
- Customary laws, social stigma, power positions etc. played a crucial role.
- The activities of the women are considered to be less profitable and assumed to be access poorer quality of fish.
- Time and mobility constraints weaken women's participation in fisheries and allied activities.
- **Lack of operational skilled of gears and crafts.**

INTRODUCTION

□ Some principle **driving forces** for joining women in fisheries sector are:

- Need of incomes,
- Increase of workload when men migrate to the cities in search of labour,
- Family heritage,
- Profitability of the enterprise,
- Low initial capital requirements,
- Improved transport costs
- *Traditional knowledge & Techniques*

OBJECTIVES



Most of the policies, programmes and initiatives that rely on mainstreaming gender were often failed. This is due to **invisible of tradition and customs space occupy by them.**

- ✓ The purpose of this study is to *assess traditional knowledge* and *benchmark* them with regard to **women's participation in fisheries and aquatic resource management**, and to make recommendations on *how it might be made more equitable.*

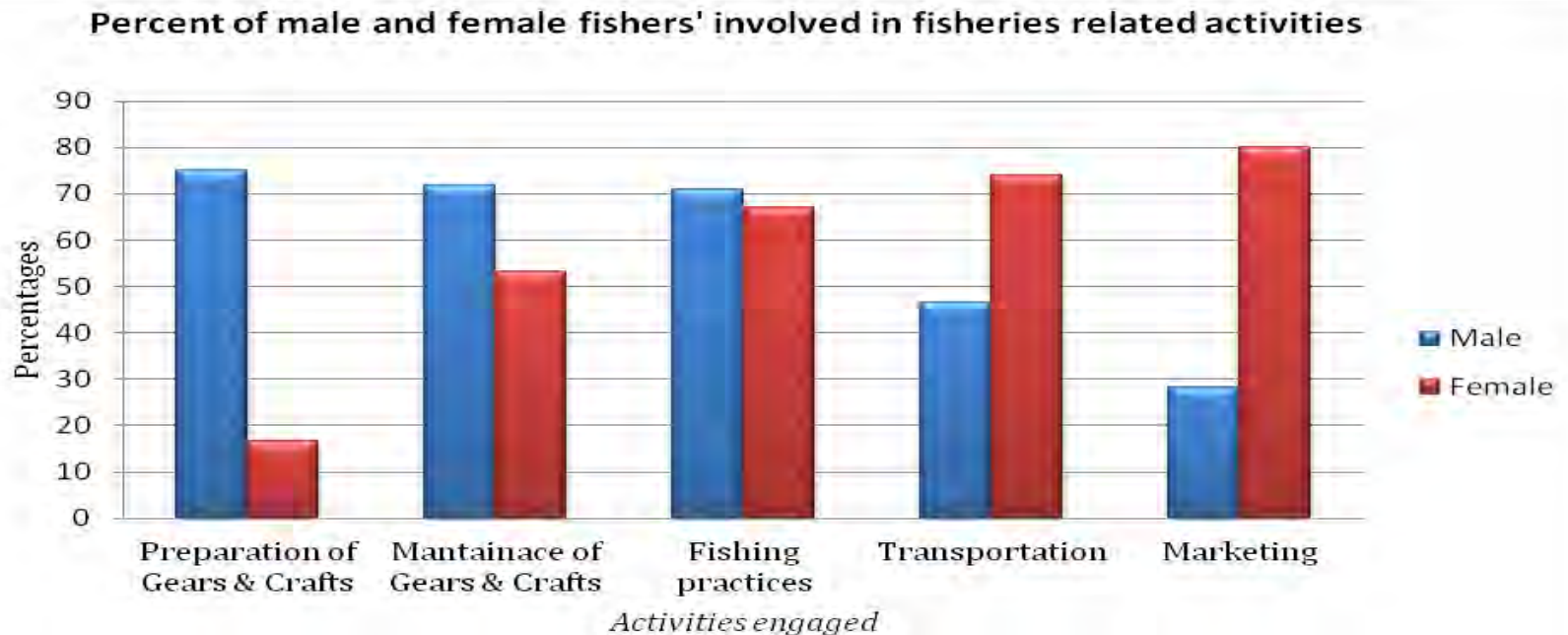


➤ Study was conducted in the state **Manipur of North East India**. Four districts viz, Thoubal, Imphal East, Imphal west and Bishenpur were selected and 11 villages were chosen for conducting the investigation.

➤ **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)** tools were applied by sheering dialogue and conversation with the local communities in the form of semi structure interviews.

➤ Questionnaires and discussion, were made on Traditional knowledge on fish & Fisheries with **fishers, farmers, traditional healers, villages headman, local priest and other aboriginal community's member**.

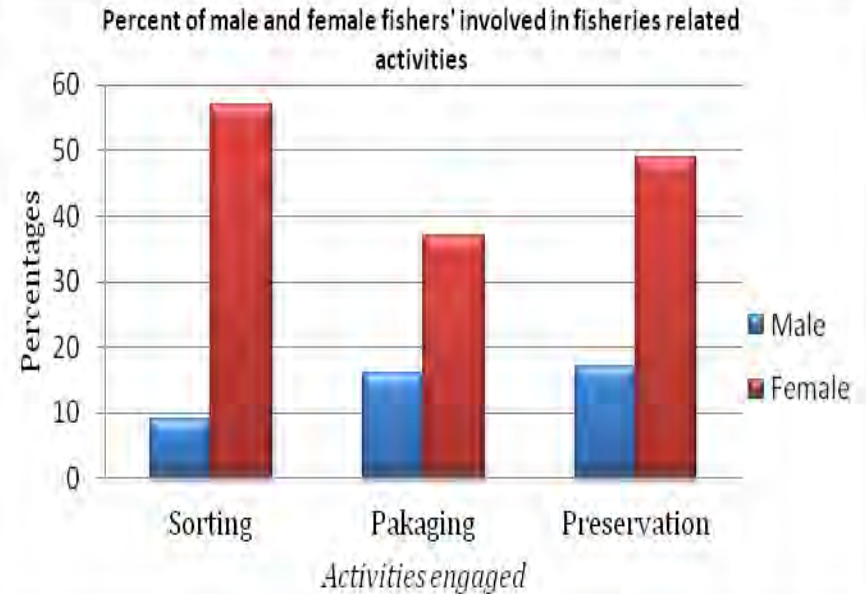
- ❑ Women performed fishing as much as men in the region.
- ❑ Women undertake enormously in transportation & marketing sector while males dominate in the preparation of gears and crafts.



RESULTS

& DISCUSSION

□ Comparatively high percent participation in **post harvest activities** such as Sorting, Packing and Preservation of fishes.



□ Very much **low percent women fishers uses modern gears** as compare to men.

According to THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)



“ Traditional Knowledge refer to the knowledge, innovation and practice of indigenous and local communities around the world ”



Traditional knowledge is a practical nature, particularly in such field as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture and forestry.



It can make a significant contribution to sustainable development and useful model of biodiversity policies

- Traditional Knowledge on fisheries are the **local skills, techniques, wisdoms, beliefs, costumes and folklore** in relation to fishes held by the aboriginal people of a community over successive generation.

The traditional activities related with fish and a fishery **does not require much of muscles power** and are **efficient to do by women**.

- The major factors are **community fishing practices, traditional gears and crafts, food habits, custom, medicine and beliefs.**

Community fisheries...

□ *Long Khonba:*

❖ Group of women move together to waterlogged swampy areas.

❖ Elliptical enmesh gear ‘*Long*’ use for fishing and a bamboo basket called ‘*Tongol*’ in their waist for easy to move and save time for holding fishes while moving.



Exclusively by Women

Community fisheries...

□ *Ishitpa:*

- ❖ Group of person or members of family including male, female and children bail water from one site to other by using a scoop type water bailer called 'Istop'.



- ❖ Women and children actively participate.

Community fisheries...

❑ *Loo thumba*:

- ❖ ‘Loo’ a trap made by smashing of a large bamboo thread with cane is fixed in rivers or paddy fields that channelized fishes due to current of water



- ❑ ‘Loo’ are lifted every 2-3 hours. Loo is light weight gears, both women and men performed ‘Loo Thumba’.

Community fisheries...

❑ *Kommenba:*

- ❖ Rice straws are covered to whole surface water body except a little space at the margin. The spaces are fixed with traditional traps called 'Taichep' and kept for one night.



- ❖ Fish move toward the uncovered space where traps fixed due to low availability of oxygen in other area and fish trapped inside the gears.

Community fisheries...

❑ *Nupi ngami marup:*

- ❖ Women fisher's folk congregate and established women's associations of '**Women Fish Culture Group**'.
- ❖ Undertake fisheries related activity by participating directly in *decision making, sharing the benefits on an equitable basis*, **help the members to start a new fisheries establishment.**
- ❖ The Ngami Marups (fishing cooperatives) are the best vehicles for empowerment of fisher's women in Manipur.



Community fisheries...



❑ *Nupi Keithel:*

- ❖ The women's market which run entirely by women is the most important place for business.
- ❖ Here women from far away districts bring and sold their fishes and other items of daily uses.

- ❖ More than 200 years old tradition of 'Nupi Keithel' is a pure sign of women's independence in marketing sector. *Not a single man is found selling anything here.*

Community fisheries



❑ *Phum Namba:*

❖ **Perennial circular floating mats** called 'phum' (Abode/Shelters for fish). made up of weeds, macrophytes and other organic matter were constructed by villagers including women in wetlands

❖ All these Phums will be harvested during the lean season, called it as Phum Namba. There are hundreds of floating Phum in the Loktak Lake.

- Community fisheries are **unique and a part of cultural heritage** and played a significant role in the **livelihood, environmental stewardship, economic stability, social improvements and food security for the villagers.**
- It enhances **women's participation in sectors of fish and fisheries as well as women empowerment.**
- It **does not require much of muscles power** and are **efficient to do** by women.
- In most section of the society, *these practises are appeared to be a custom and traditional festival.*

IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL GEARS AND CRAFTS



(a) Long



(b) Tongol

Exclusively for women

IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL GEARS AND CRAFTS...



(a) Longthrai



(b) Longoop

Both for men and women

IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL GEARS AND CRAFTS...



(a) Taichep



(b) Loo

Both for men and women

IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL GEARS AND CRAFTS...



(a) Kabo Loo



(b) Nupee een

Kabo Loo for both for men and women & Nupee een exclusively for women

IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL GEARS AND CRAFTS...



(a) Ngarubak



(b) Kharai

Both exclusively for women

Traditional gears and crafts are characterised by:

- Made from **locally available materials** so can get them maximum return.
- **Light weight.**
- **Easy to operate.**
- Less costly materials that make substance of technological delight giving **maximum return.**
- **Made based on the gender, available fishing area and physiographic features.**

TRADITIONALLY PROCESSES FISH PRODUCTS



Sun drying



Fire drying



Dried fish

TRADITIONALLY PROCESSES FISH PRODUCTS



Smoking of fish



Smoked fish

TRADITIONALLY PROCESSES FISH PRODUCTS



Fermentation of fish



Fermented fish

TRADITIONALLY PROCESSES FISH PRODUCTS



Pasting of fish

Exclusively done by women



Fish pastes

TRADITIONALLY PROCESSES FISH PRODUCTS



Marinating of fish



Marinated fish

Traditional methods of fish processing & consumption

- ❑ Processed or cured fish is an important dietary food in the region.
- ❑ Means of livelihood for the fishers.
- ❑ Help in generation of income, employment and women empowerment in the region.
- ❑ It also *connected with customs and tradition*
- ❑ **Communities have developed the taste** of traditionally processed fish products.
- ❑ These activities do not require much of muscles power and are efficient to do. Thus, it **opens a venture for women empowerment and enhances level of participation** in fisheries activities.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs



Species of Channa

Ushilcinba:

- ❖ Release of *Channa* sp. (Ngammu) in a water body when a person is sick or in trouble; beliefs to be curing ailments of sick person.
- ❖ Released of *Channa* were usually done by women priest etc. for good omen of the person.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs...



Species of Channa

Luhongba Ushil:

❖ Three ladies two for the groom side and one for the bride side released a pair of *Channa spp.* (Ngamus) before starting of a marriage in nearby pond or river for bringing prosperity and long life of the young couple.

❖ Beliefs that, *Channa spp.* (Ngamu) will carry away all misfortunes, sins, shames, sorrow etc.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs...



Nganap pijaba:

Species of Acanthopthalmichthys

❖ *Acanthopthalmichthys pangia* (Nagnap) a sticky fish are feed to the newly wedded couple on the first night of marriages which keep tight them couple together.

❖ The species has a great demand, so people including women fisher's walk out in search of these valuable local fish species.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs...



Seven dry fishes

Ipan thaba:

- ❖ A ritual ceremony of Meitei community performed at the 7th day of a child birth.
- ❖ In this ceremony seven pieces of dried fishes particularly *Puntius* sp. were offered to God for good health of the child.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs...



Dry fishes

Meining kunba:

❖ Dry and smoked fishes of species *Notopterus notopterus* (Ngapai), *Channa orientalis* (Ngammu), *Colisa faciatus* (Ngapemma), *Clarias batracus* (Ngakra), *Anabas tesdudenius* (Samjet nga), *Mystus bleekeri* (Ngasep), etc. are fed on childbirth mother for their good health.

❖ They are considered to be a nutritious food for them.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs



Wallago species

Sareng makok pijaba:

❖ For safe delivery of pregnant women, mothers of married women feed a fish dish of *Wallago attu* during ninth month of their pregnancy.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs



Monopterus sp.

Ngapurum Irujaba:

❖ Slime of *Monopterus sp.* was used to take bath for children and offer food item involving fish to them are believed to be prevent from various skin ailments and other diseases.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs



Monopterus sp.

Ngapurum pijaba:

- ❖ *Monopterus guchia* locally called as Ngapurum is highly demand and used as a therapeutic and traditional medicine.
- ❖ Feeding of these species to the sick person will be strong. It is also used in cured of anemia, asthma, hemorrhage etc.

Community Ritual, Custom, Medicine and Beliefs

- ✓ High **exalt of fish regardless of sizes** for traditional ceremonies rituals, and beliefs.
- ❑ Various actions are seems to be indirectly **help in aquatic resources conservation.**
- ❑ Some fishes are high value for traditional medicine and beliefs to cure disease and ailment.
- ❑ **Highly demand of a particular specific fishes; so women drive to involve in fisheries activities.**

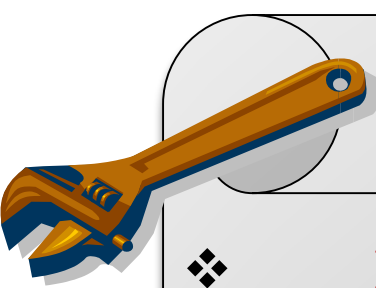
CONCLUSION



- In Manipur, women folk are traditionally engaged in different activities of capture and culture fisheries in addition to their household work.

- The degree of gender specificity attached to the ITK has not only create **a strong responsibilities but also on the degree of flexibility in women that carrying out.**

❖ Thus, **ITK act as one of the important driving factors for women's participations, and they also subsistence economy of the region**



- ❖ **However, there is doubt in permanently loss or fossilization of such traditional knowledge from the region.**
- ❖ **Modern tools ascendancy that cannot operate by women seems to be wariness about the obliteration of indigenous knowledge and challenging in women's participation in fish and fisheries in the region.**
- ❖ **Blending or obliteration of traditional technique** with modern scientific technologies may assist economic improvement of the local community.
- ❖ **Nevertheless, current scientific knowledge should allowed to tender technical solutions of the traditional knowledge that fit within, but not to defy the content, structure.**



THANK YOU