

Gender Impacts of Fish Vending in the Context of Changing Production and Market Relations

A. Suresh, S. Ashaletha and K. Rejula

ICAR- Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kochi

Fish vending and gender impacts

- **Vending is one of the most important activities in the value chain of fish**
- **Links consumers with producers**
- **Large participation of women, earning livelihood, smoothing household income variance**
- **Better impacts at household level**

Fish vending and gender

- A dynamic sector
- An intersection of fish resources at the seas with the anthropologic, economic, sociologic and business environment outside.
- Gender is a significant dimension in the analysis
- Literature suggests that the development efforts have rarely applied a gender lens
- The experience in Kerala state is a case

Objective

The paper analyses, the access issues of fish vendors to inputs and services and the consequent gendered impacts, and relates it with the political economy of marine capture fishing and fish vending.

Hypotheses

- a. The access to inputs and services in fish vending has been systematically skewed against the interest of women fish vendors**
- a. Gender is one dimension in the access issue, but the analysis needs consideration of other related social and economic factors.**

Methodology

- **Primary data from three districts of Kerala state, India**
- **Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Kozhikode districts**
- **Snowball sampling method was used**
- **237 Sample fish vendors were interviewed**
- **Face to face interview using structured pre-tested instrument**
- **Survey year: 2019-20**
- **Women as a sub-sample of the whole sample set**

Gendered profession, participation and cultural norms

Particulars	Kozhikode	Ernakulam	Trivandrum	Overall
Number of respondents	70	87	80	237
Men (No.)	70	59	55	184
Men (%)	100	68	69	77
Women (No.)	0	28	25	53
Women (%)	0	32	31	23
Experience in fish vending (years)	25	21	21	22
Family size (mean)	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.6

- Cultural norms and geographical variations
- Traditionally, fishing and fish vending is a gendered profession, with clear division of labour.

Gendered division of labour and competition

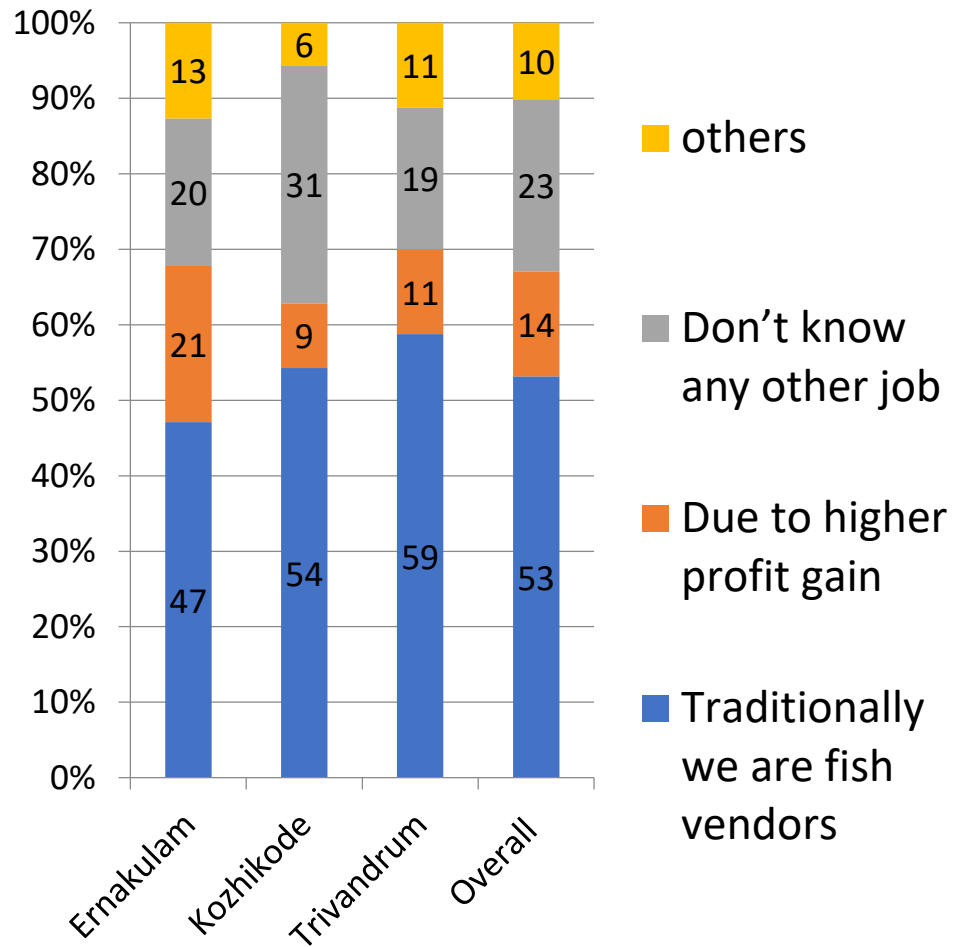
- Traditionally, men engage in fishing- capital-intensive vessels.
- Women's access - primary or secondary access
- The relationship changed with capitalization. Trawling, ring seining, and flow of fish from other states
- Now vendors are disconnected from fishing activity, and new entrants are mainly men.
- The average age of men fish vendors is lower than women
- With low capital base, women fish vendors are at disadvantage

Dynamics in fish vending by entrance of new fish vendors

Gender	Experience (year)	t	p
Men	20.6	-3.13	0.002
Women	27.0		

- The mean age of men was lower and statistically significant.
- Proportionately more younger men are entering into the business

Reasons for selecting fish vending as a business



Pearson Chi-square was not significant ($\chi^2 = 26.77$, Fisher's exact = 0.015).

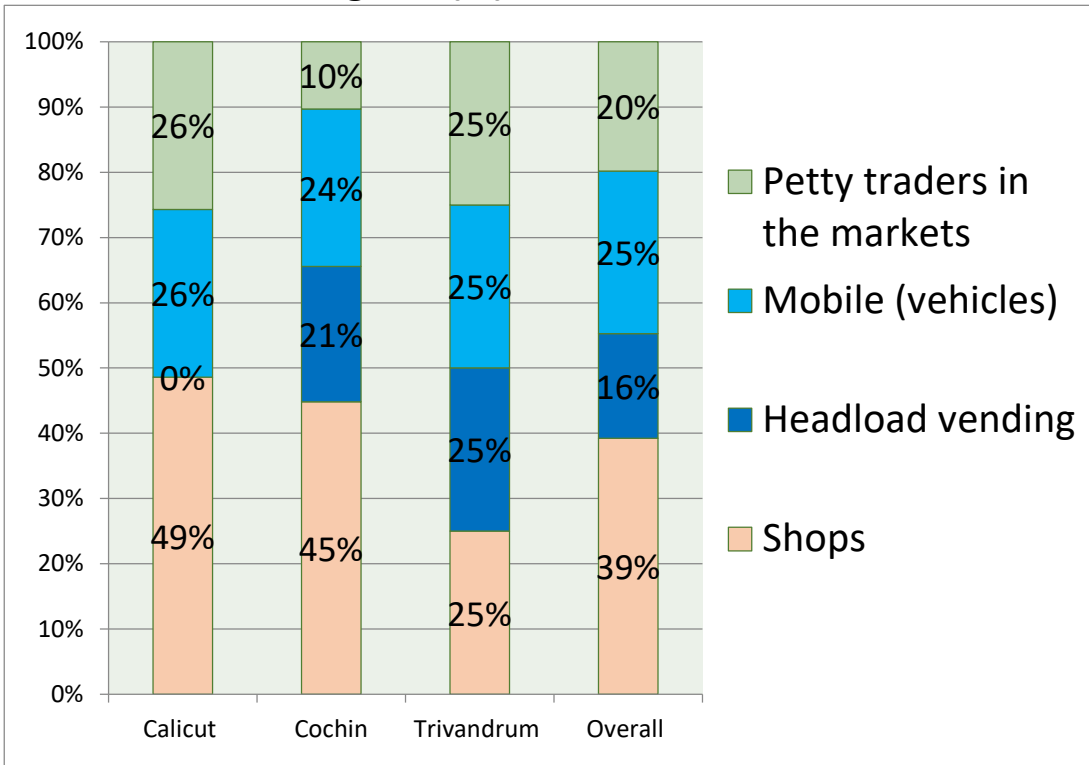
- **Fish business is a traditionally practiced occupation (53%). Varied widely- 47% in Ernakulam, 54% in Kozhikode and 59% in TVM.**
- **14% of people entering into it due to higher profits- 21% in Ernakulam**
- **Also fish business is an easy to start one, with low capital base.**

Shedding of traditional hues in fish vending

Reason	Male	Female	Overall
Traditionally fish vendors	48%	72%	53%
Due to higher profit gain	16%	6%	14%
Don't know any other job	26%	11%	23%
Others	7%	4%	6%

- Caste and other systematic factors are diminishing in importance
- Profit is the motive

Method of selling fish (%)

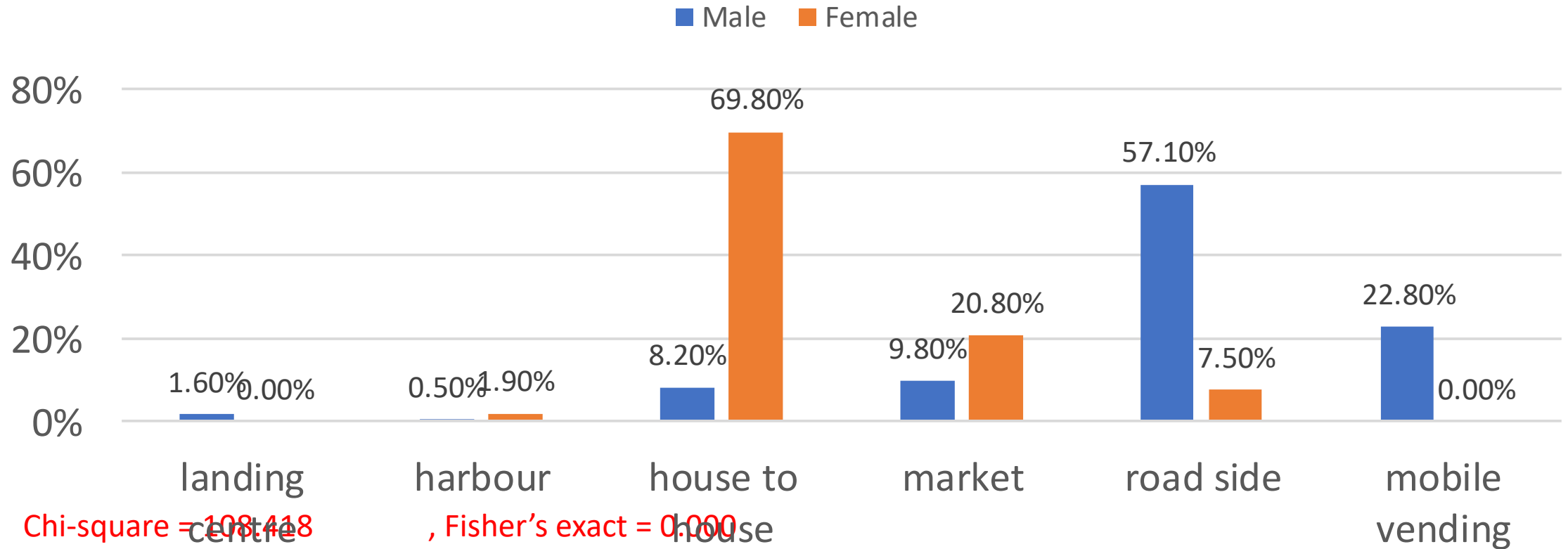


- ✓ They include shops (39%), head load vending (16%), mobile vending (25%) and petty traders (20%) in the markets.
- ✓ The technology options needed to uplift fish vending need to consider different typologies/ segments.

Pearson Chi-square was significant ($\chi^2 = 29.077$, $p = 0.000$)

- **Women faces several disadvantages in fish vending**
- **They include place of selling, source of fish, quantity of fish purchased, usage of ice, etc.**

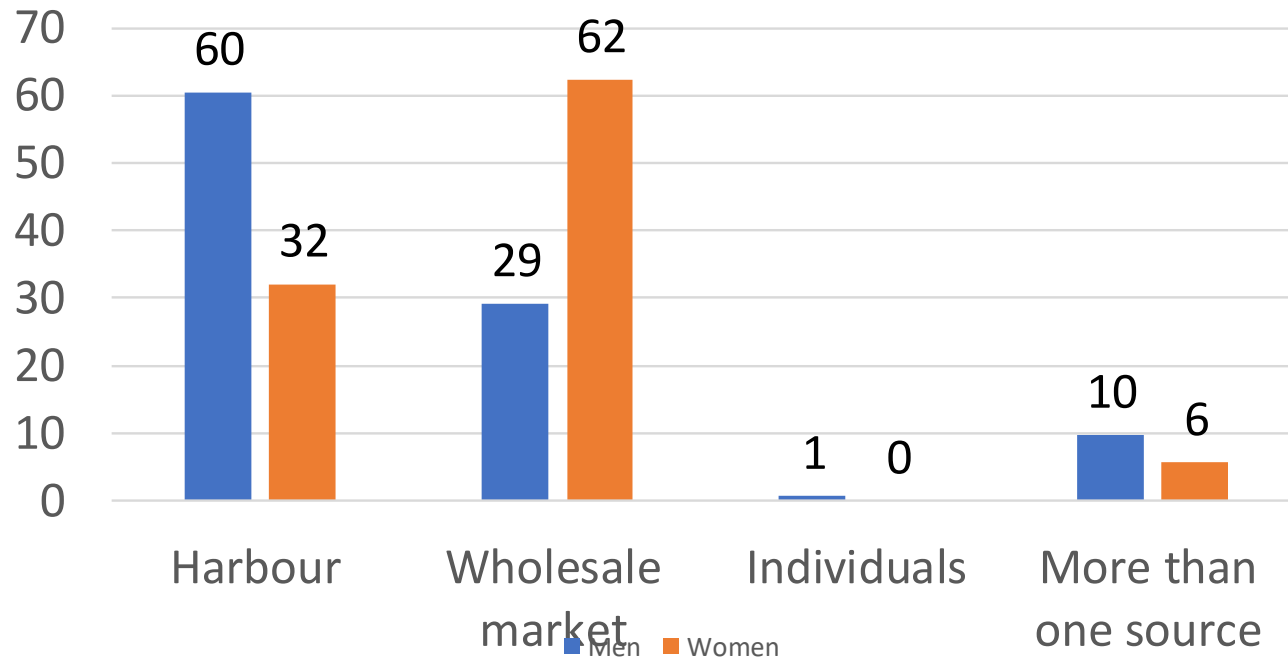
Type/ place of vending



- Among women, 70% practiced headload vending, and 21% in shops.
- Among men, 45% shops, 31% mobile vending and 23% petty trade.

Place of access of fish and quantity of fish

Men and women significantly differs in terms of access to fish



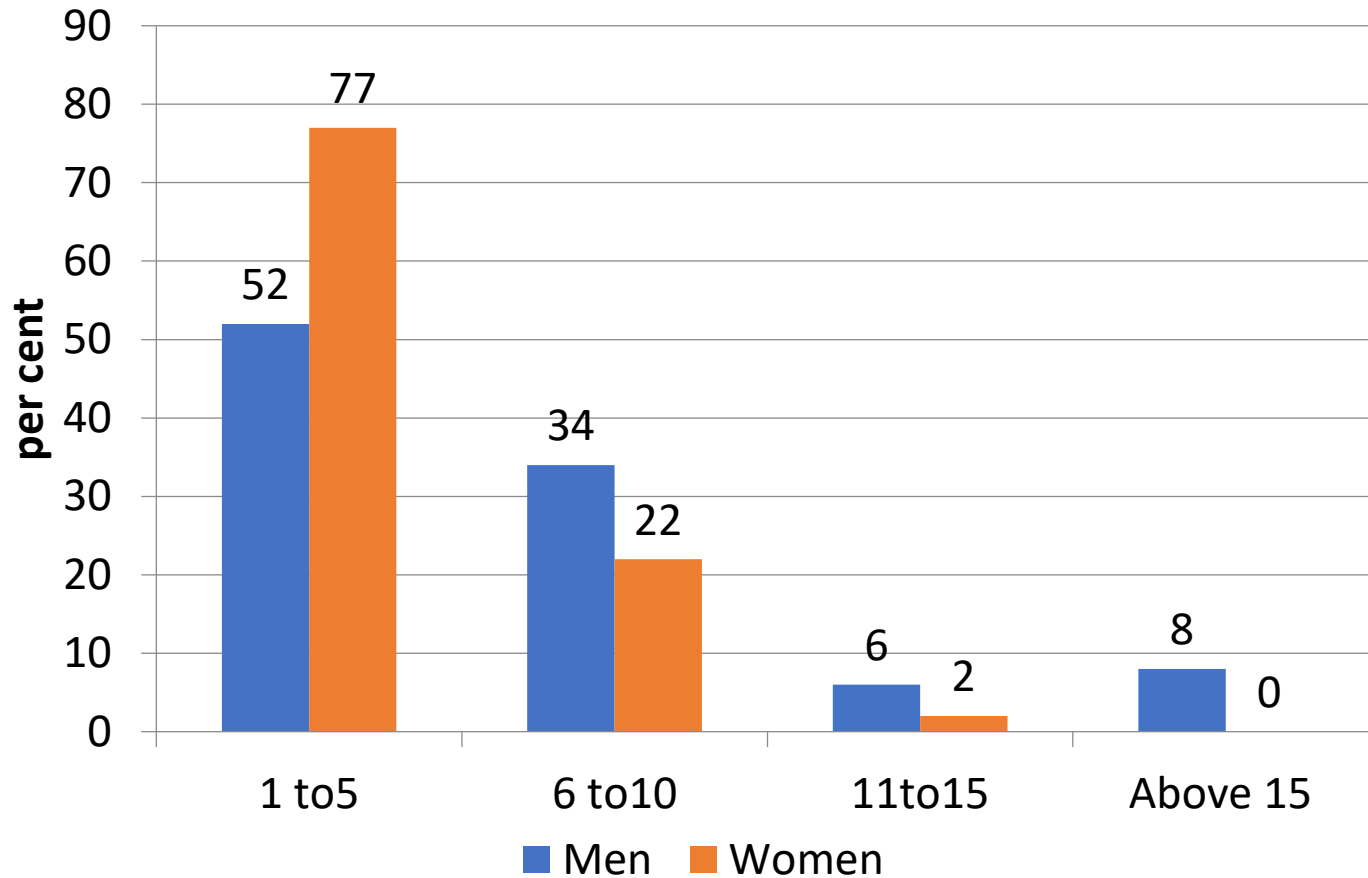
Fish quantity	Quantity (kg)	t
Men	177	6.2***
Women	23	

Significant gender difference was observed with respect to access to transportation facility among fish vendors ($\chi^2 = 91.533$, $p=0.000$). While men had higher rate of ownership of vehicle (68.1%) only negligible per cent of women possessed (3.8%) own vehicle for fish transportation.

Peripatetic fish vending

- This is relatively a targeted marketing, in a limited area, selling generally by carrying fish as headloads
- Some times provides other services including cleaning
- Face competition with those having vehicles /transportation mode

Number of varieties of fish sold, by gender



- The access to fish is shaped by several factors, gender is a key one
- Social network and capital is a key factor.
- Women's mobility is restricted because of lack of ownership of a vehicle/ and driving skill

Distribution of number of varieties of fish sold, across men and women

Access to credit

Source	Number	Per cent
No credit availed	85	45.2
Co-operative society	26	13.8
Commercial bank	17	9.0
Self- help groups	12	6.4
Money lenders	10	5.3
Other govt agencies	5	2.7
Regional rural bank	4	2.1
Matsyafed	2	1.1
Fish traders in the market	1	0.5

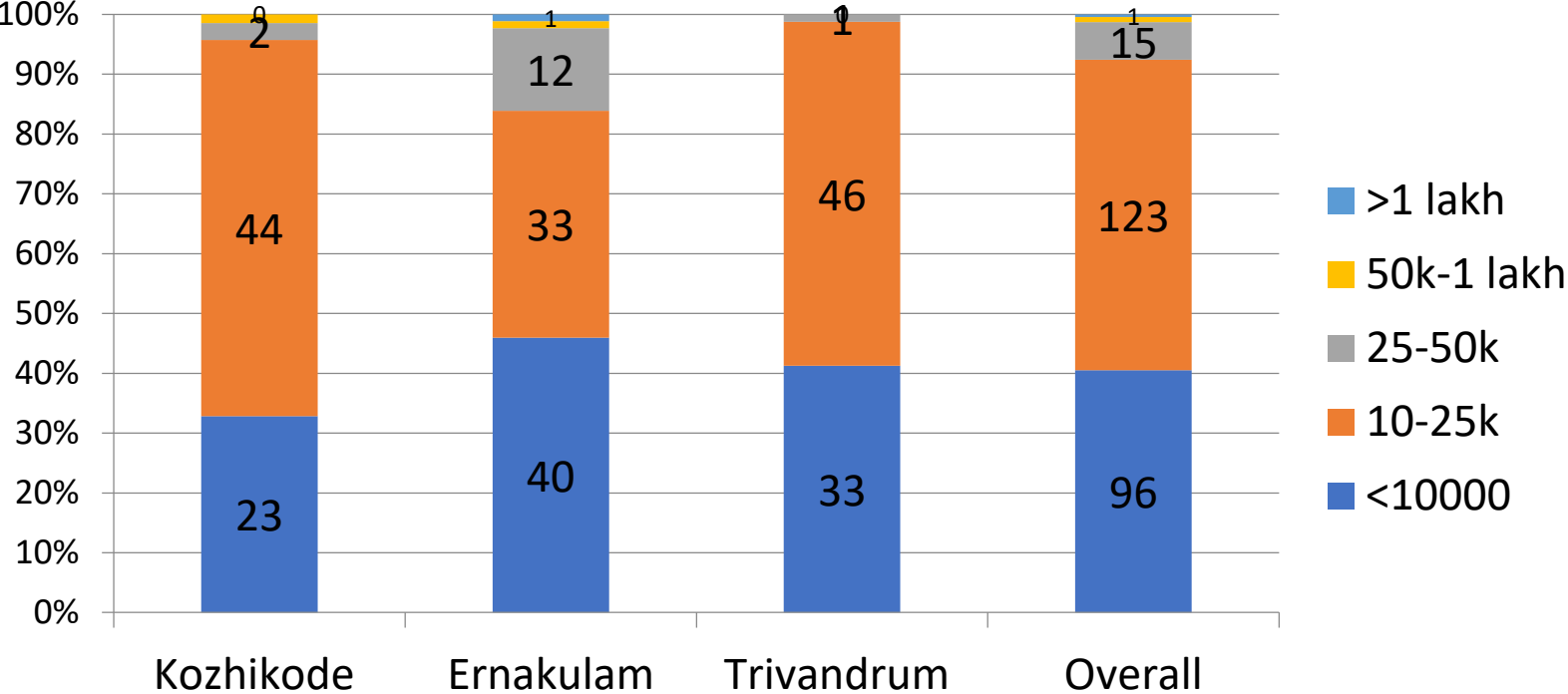
- **Fish business is capital intensive. However, 45% did not avail credit.**
- **18%: Rs.50000 to Rs.1 lakh**
- **60% : Rs.1 lakh and above.**
- **The data indicates the penetration of formal sector in fish vending**

Multiple sources	Number	Per cent
Two sources	21	11.2
Three sources	3	1.6
Four sources	2	1.1

Access to credit to fish vendors, across gender

Source	Men	Women
No credit availed	51	38
Co-operative society bank	16	9
Commercial bank	9	6
Self- help groups	3	12
Money lenders	6	6
Other govt agencies	3	0
Regional rural bank	2	4
Matsyafed	0	4
Fish traders in the market	1	0
Multiple sources	Men	Women
Two sources	7	16
Three sources	1	4
Four sources	1	2

Monthly family income



- **About 41% have a monthly income less than Rs 10000**
- **About 52% of fish vendors have a monthly income of Rs 10-25000.**
- **Thus, about 93% had a monthly income less than Rs 25000**

Distribution of income (Rs/ m), by men and women (%)

Sl No	Income range (Rs/m)	Men	Women	Overall
1	less than or equal to 10000	37	53	41
2	10000 to 25000	54	43	52
3	25000 to 50000	7	4	6
4	50000 to 1 lakh	1	0	0.8
5	1 lakh and above	0.5	0	0.4

Fish Vending: Evolving

- Fish vending was closely linked with fishing activity
- Evolved over the years with the infusion of capital, credit, transportation facilities, technology in marketing.
- The unsustainability issues affect fish vending
- Risk averse nature- upward mobility and non-fishing employment
- Fish vending is gradually transforming, and is shedding its regional and caste hues.
- Those with better economic power and social capital stood to gain over the traditional persons, with low economic power and women engaged in fish vending.

Gender difference in fish vendors' access to inputs and services

- Women faces additional challenges in access to inputs and services
- The Average quantity of fish purchased by was 137 kg by men and 27 kg by women fish vendors.
- Still 58% continued in the profession as it was their traditional occupation.
- The vendors faced constraints in access to fish, storage of fish, access to ice, infrastructure, transportation facilities and capital.

Modernisation of fish vending

- The modernization in fish vending is challenging the ability to acquire and sell fish in desired quality, relatively badly.
- The new markets (digital) has a different type of contract, mostly direct
- Also, purchased fish from the market through agents at a higher price

Fixed supply- but intense competition

- The competition is for fixed, rather dwindling supply of marine fish
- The high prices of fish exclude small fish vendors, particularly the small women fishers
- This needs deliberate policy to mainstream weaker and women fish vendors.

Institutional agencies and access to fish

- Matsyafed is an institutional agencies that could provide fish to the fish vendors
- The role of these institutional agencies is significant, but is stagnating.

The double whammy for women

- First, the intrinsic value of the reproductive role of women is not accounted.
- Second, the women finds systematic challenges in access to inputs and services
- Highly reflected in the case of fish vending.

Need multiple lenses

- **Examining the issue through the gender lens provides new insights**
- **This rather remains as a necessary condition, but not sufficient to bring about policies.**
- **Different layers**
- **An element of intersectionality is needed**
- **Factors like class, caste, social capital etc also emerges significant.**
- **In such analysis, gender is an essential element.**

Thank you