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CONQUERING THE MALE STRONGHOLD IN DOMESTIC FISH TRADE: A SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN AUCTIONEERS FROM NORTH COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH



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Introduction

1.6 million active women workforce of Indian fisheries sector

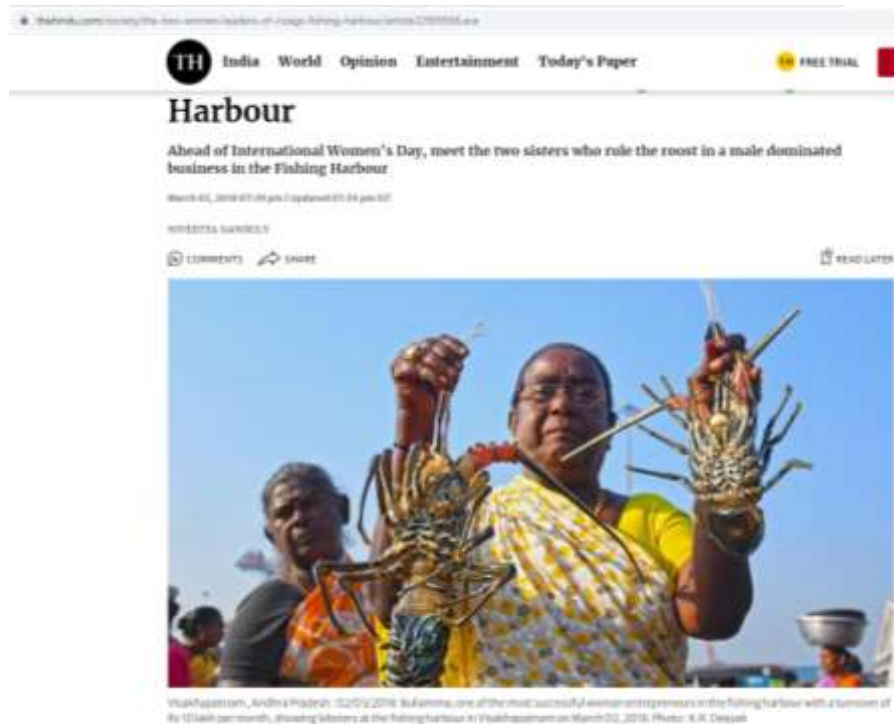
Marketing, fish vendors,
retail, processing,
Vulnerable, invisible,
unorganized...



Strong,
Collective, SHGs,
empowered,
equity, equality

Women fish auctioneers

- ▶ The women fish auctioneers in north Coastal Andhra Pradesh
- ▶ First step in the marketing chain once the fish is landed
- ▶ Major influence on domestic fish trade in the region



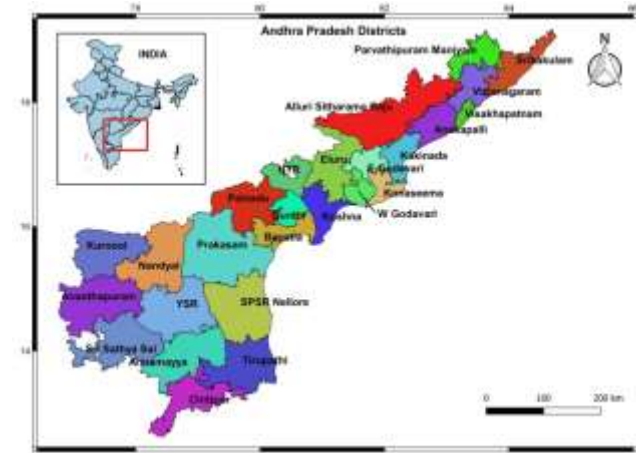
Objectives

- ▶ To study the operational model of women auctioneers at Visakhapatnam
- ▶ To enlist the challenges faced by the women auctioneers
- ▶ To explore measures for improvement



Visakhapatnam Fisheries Harbour

- ▶ Divided into two areas:
 - ▶ Mechanized boat area - auctioning is totally male dominated
 - ▶ Motorized and non-motorized boat area - majority are women auctioneers
- ▶ Over 500 mechanized crafts and equal number of motorized crafts
- ▶ Approximately 100 t of fish and shellfish is landed at Visakhapatnam fisheries harbour
- ▶ Approximately 1.0-5.0 % contributed by the motorized sector



Materials and Methods

- ▶ Over 150 women work at Visakhapatnam fisheries harbour
- ▶ Of these 30 women are auctioneers in the motorized landing area; 5 auctioneers are men
- ▶ Other women are fish vendors (in and away from harbour), fish cutting and dressing, fish drying
- ▶ Survey of women fish auctioneers:
 - ▶ Socio-economic profile
 - ▶ Role as fish auctioneers
 - ▶ Challenges faced
 - ▶ Gender issues
 - ▶ Way forward
- ▶ Basic data analysis



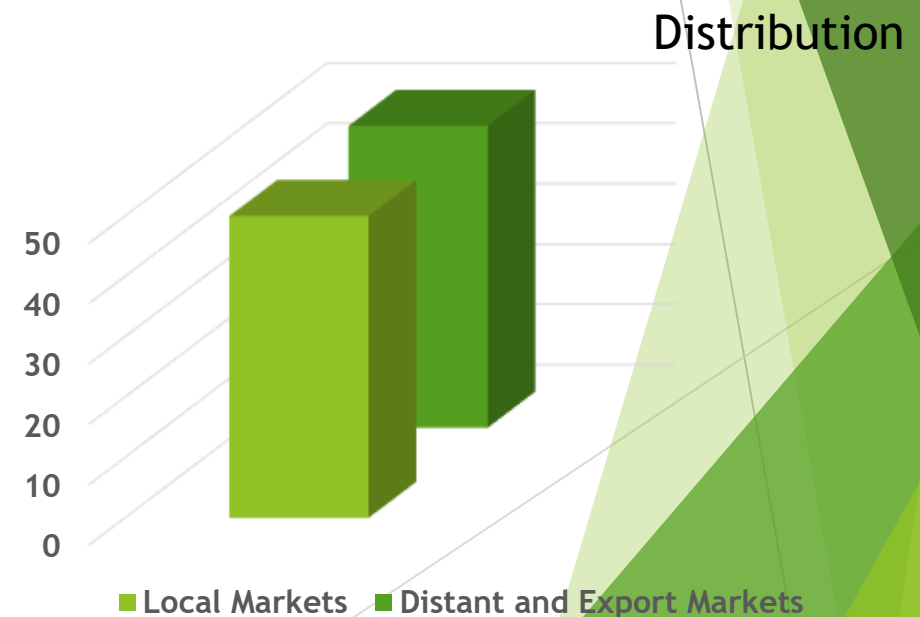
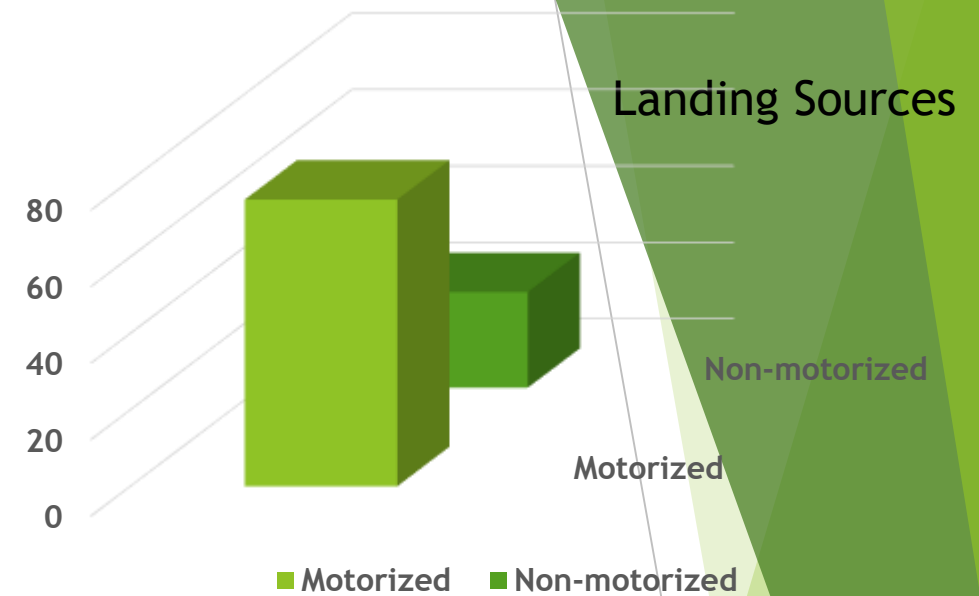
Daily Routine and Socio-economic Profile

- ▶ Live in nearby fishing hamlets
- ▶ Working hours: approx. 5 hours from 5 am to 10 am in the fishing harbour for auctioning the landings
- ▶ All of them are non-literate
- ▶ All belong to the fisher folk community *Jalari*; family members are also into fishing
- ▶ Most of them belong to nuclear families with an average family size of 5
- ▶ Almost 90 per cent of them own a concrete house



Source and Disposal

- ▶ Nearly 75% of the landings are from motorized crafts and 25% from non-motorized crafts at Visakhapatnam fisheries harbour.
- ▶ The prospective takers of the marine landings include commission agents and wholesalers who are male, and retailers and vendors who are female.
- ▶ From the landings, 50% goes to the local markets and the rest 50% to distant and export markets



Fish auctioning process

- ▶ The major resources traded are seerfish, barracudas, snappers, groupers, ribbonfish, silverbellies, polynemids and mackerel
- ▶ The mean volume of business traded by a woman auctioneer is on average 70 kg per day
- ▶ From the value of landings, they charge approx. 10% as the commission for auctioning
- ▶ For fish sold for Rs.500, auctioneer gets Rs.50; for Rs. 1000 profit is Rs.100; Rs. 5000 ranges between Rs. 200-500 and for Rs. 10,000 ranges between Rs. 500-1000
- ▶ Their daily earning from auctioning ranges from 500 to 3000 Rs.
- ▶ Bigger the size of the fish, better is their profit
- ▶ Mobile advisories and peer group are their major source of information on fisheries



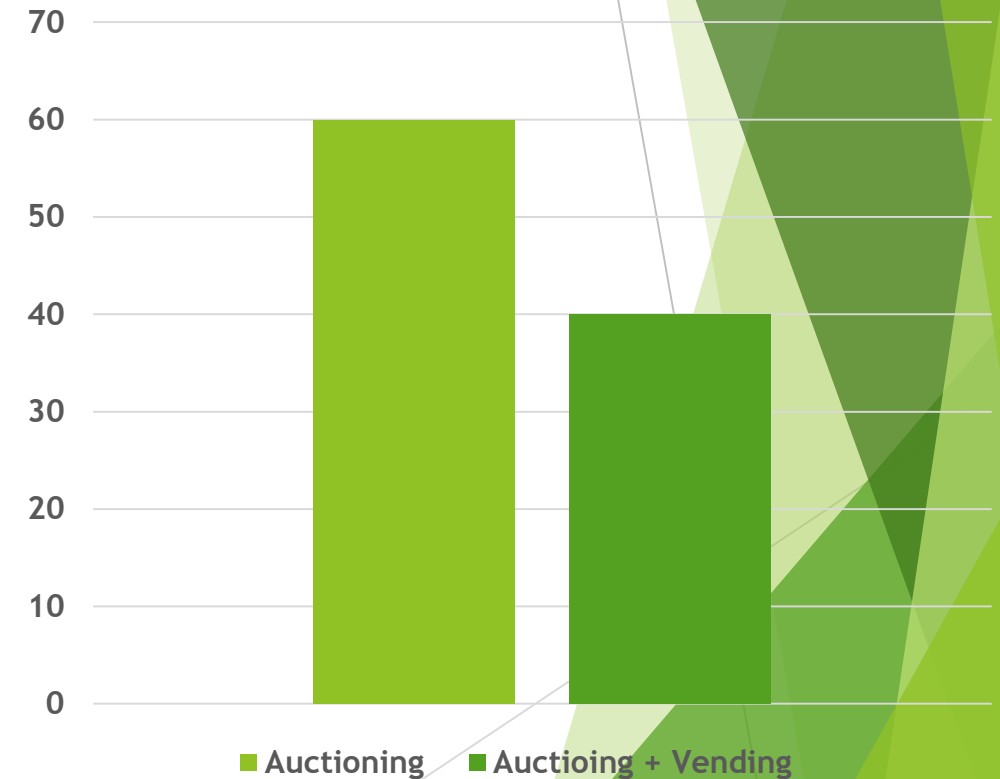
Operational aspects

- ▶ Each auctioneer “books” fishing crafts; number ranges from 10 to 70 fishing crafts per auctioneer
- ▶ They provide financial assistance for operational expenses ranging from Rs. 5000 per craft to Rs. 30,000 per craft
- ▶ Also provide up to Rs. 20,000 as festival advance to the fishermen
- ▶ Individual fishermen will dispose off their catch only through their respective auctioneer
- ▶ The source of finance for auctioneer is their own savings and private money lenders
- ▶ The level of activity is individual, and not as a group



Alternate livelihood avenues

- ▶ About 40 per cent of them also involved in fish vending after their auctioning, from 10 am to 1 pm, from which they earn an income of Rs. 200 to 800 per day.
- ▶ Their social mobility span over a radius of 15 km, as they are also involved in auctioning in other beach landing centres in addition to Visakhapatnam fishing harbour.



Occupational Profile

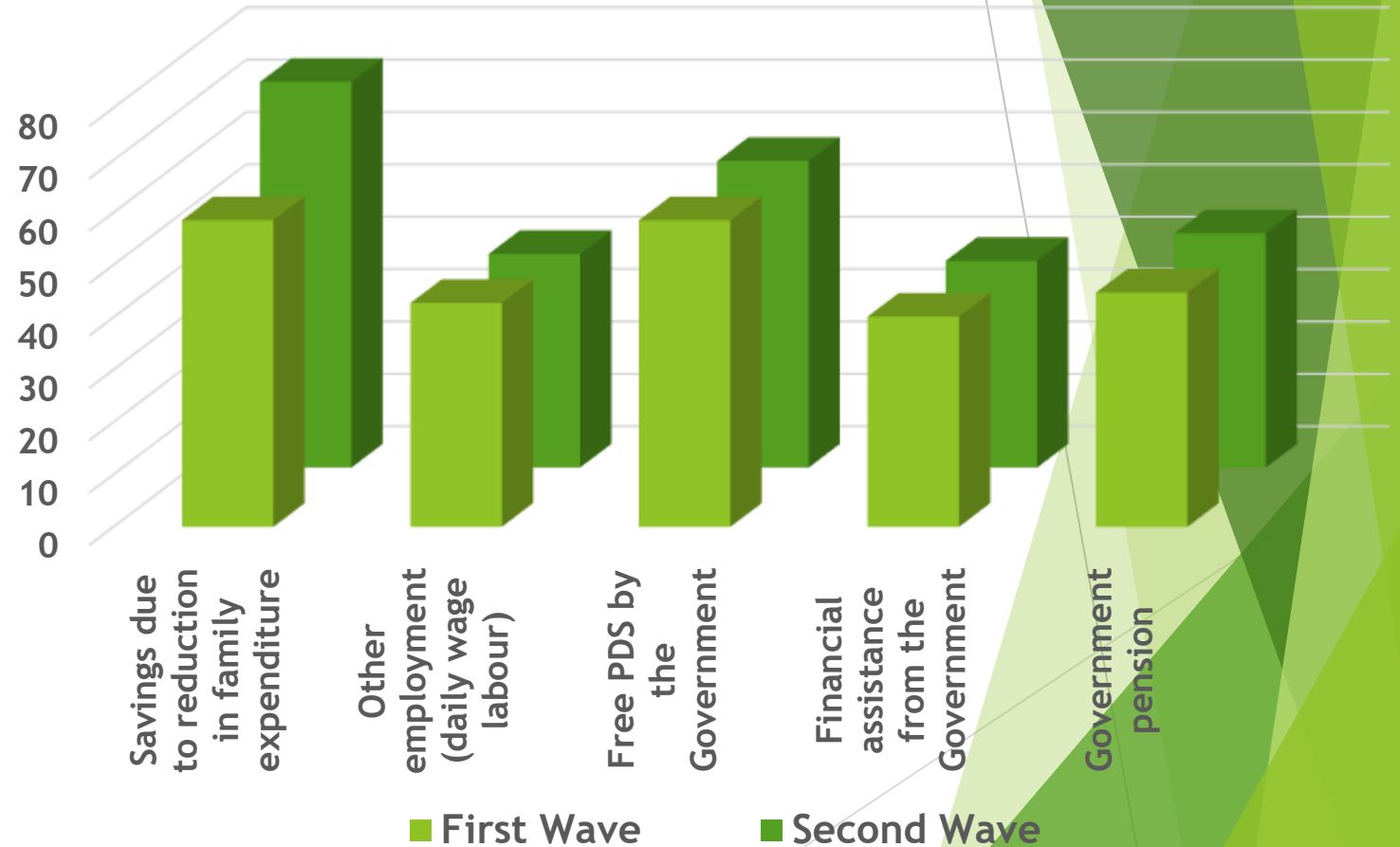
Challenges

- ▶ The socio-cultural and economic constraints reported were:
 - ▶ Poor access to institutional finance
 - ▶ Tedious field operations
 - ▶ Lack of access to dynamic market information
- ▶ Poor infrastructural facilities at the harbour such as shelter, washrooms and source of potable water
- ▶ Lack of a cooperative/society for women fish auctioneers; the one existing is not functioning well
- ▶ Savings mainly as gold; no other formal saving schemes reported



Resilience during the pandemic

- ▶ During the pandemic, there was nil business
- ▶ Resilience was facilitated from:
 - ▶ Savings due to reduction in family expenditure,
 - ▶ Free public distribution system by the government
 - ▶ Government pension
 - ▶ Other employment such as daily wage labour
- ▶ Non-institutional finance through private money lenders and gold loans also supported household expenditure to an extent



Gender issues

- ▶ The major issues related to gender included
 - ▶ Less appreciation for their work and economic contributions
 - ▶ More household responsibilities
 - ▶ Lack of supportive services like child care
- ▶ No other gender issues such as gender disparity in benefit sharing, exploitation and conflicts were observed
- ▶ They expressed that they are fully satisfied with their present occupation but none had the next generation in their families working with them



Way forward

- ▶ Formation of an association for strengthening their activities and cooperative societies of their own will add impetus to their business
- ▶ Better infrastructure in the harbour including washroom facilities, shelters, ice boxes, etc.
- ▶ Better access to government schemes e.g. for ice boxes, etc.
- ▶ Improved formal saving mechanisms
- ▶ Highlight their contributions to fish trade in the region



Role models

- ▶ These women auctioneers:
 - ▶ Earn a guaranteed income to run their family
 - ▶ Have educated their wards,
 - ▶ Perform the wedding of their daughters
 - ▶ Establish assets from their auction income
- ▶ These accomplishments have been **DESPITE**:
 - ▶ Social handicaps e.g. illiteracy
 - ▶ Lack of facilities and government support
- ▶ The women auctioneers of north coastal Andhra Pradesh are role models for women everywhere



Thank you

