

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN COASTAL VILLAGES – A STRATEGIC MODEL

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The small state of Kerala, at the southwest corner of the Indian subcontinent, received attention from the outside world when the so-called ‘Kerala Model of development’ became a matter of global debate. The Human Development Indices (HDIs) of Kerala, which are on a par with those of the developed nations, indicate that it is the only state in India which can claim a direct relationship between economic growth and the quality of life of its people.

Kerala is often referred to as the “land of women”, as historically the state is well known for its indicators of women’s development. Kerala’s achievements in human development are the result of the better status of women, as shown by the Gender Equality Index (GEI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).

In the case of fisheries wealth, the State also is rich, with 10% of India’s total coastline and endowed with extensive inland water bodies. The state contributes 19 % by volume and 18 % by value to Indian marine fisheries exports. Eleven lakhs (1 lakh=100,000) people dwell in the 222 marine and 113 inland fishing villages. But the HDIs in the fisher villages contrast to the state averages. Some critical development indicators show lower values for women in the sector.

Table. Comparison of some major HDIs at the national, state & coastal village level

Indicators	India	Kerala	Fisherfolk in Kerala
Sex Ratio	927	1058	936
Literacy	54% (women) 74% ( men)	88% (women) 94% ( men)	84% (women) 87% (men)

Women are involved as the majority of workers in the post-harvest sector. Though women workers dominate the export earning fishery sector (almost 80 % of the workforce in processing industries are women), the efforts of development agencies have not proven very effective in improving the status of women, compared to men in coastal villages. Hence an analysis was done on the major development efforts taken so far by the state, non governmental agencies and research organisations. An analysis was done to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the present efforts.

Integrating many crucial factors like unfelt need conviction, participatory planning, micro grouping, family resource development, decentralised implementation and balanced research prioritisation, a new strategic model is proposed to strengthen women’s roles in the fisheries sector and thus improve the lives of those in fishing communities. The proposed model is expected to be applicable in other regions, especially in developing countries.