

GENDER NEEDS IN FISHERIES

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Gender inequality has become a cause for concern in development and is being addressed through appropriate policies, programmes and projects. The inequalities between men and women are observed in the social, cultural and economic lives of men and women and are being maintained in the society through various forms of bias. The economic pursuits available to men and women in agriculture and allied sectors, including fisheries, have the potential to address the gender inequalities. Gender experts must understand the needs of men and women in different enterprises through undertaking gender analysis and developing holistic approaches to integrate the needs of men and women.

In the recent past, the fisheries sector has attracted rural women for employment, income and nutrition. Women individually as well as in groups have shown an interest in pisciculture, ornamental fish production and fish nursery operations. Their involvement in the above activities, in addition to their normal productive and reproductive roles, has created a new set of needs. The needs of women in fisheries should be identified and classified, and analysed with respect to how men can complement these needs. Keeping the above objectives in view, a study was undertaken, involving 50 women who participated in the various fisheries research projects of the Centre. This paper will present the motives of women in fisheries, and the roles played by them, as determined from data gathered from the women, and also on their suggestions. There are two main reasons for taking up pisciculture. “It is relatively easy and can be performed during leisure hours, in contrast to other enterprises,” and “we can get cash from the sale of fishes in the village itself”, stated the women. Although women did a lot of work in pisciculture, they were found to be dependent on men, particularly for activities that are undertaken in flooded situations and for obtaining the resources for pond management. The sharing of benefits (sale proceeds) of fish between men and women has posed threats to healthy relationships between men and women, in the family and the community. The study has attempted to identify the needs of women in pisciculture. By using an appropriate checklist, the needs were classified into practical gender needs and strategic gender needs when preparing short term and long term interventions. A critical analysis was also done on the behaviour of men in terms of how they helped meet the practical needs of women in different activities. The paper draws useful implications for sensitization, extension and research.