

GENDER ROLES IN INLAND FISHERIES OF INDIA: A CROSS COUNTRY STUDY

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Livelihoods improvements through technological dissemination can become successful only when the prevailing gender roles in society and access to different livelihood opportunities are fully understood. Inland fisheries in India comprise water resources like Rivers, reservoirs, floodplain wetlands, lakes, derelict water bodies and tanks. The level of fish production is dependent on the nature of the resources and production technology followed. India is second largest producer of Inland fisheries resources after China. This article analyses roles played by Gender (male and women) in inland fisheries following the history of traditional management and lessee based management approaches and the role of women especially fisherwomen in prevalent management regimes like Cooperative and individual regime are almost to the minimal and shows the de facto dominance of fishermen in fishing operations. This cross country study covers gender role in fisheries management of different inland open water resources like riverine fisheries of West Bengal and Assam, floodplain wetland fisheries of Bihar and Assam, reservoir fisheries in Madhya Pradesh, fisheries in Chilka Lagoon of Odisha, Hilsha fisheries in Narmada Estuary, Gujarat from 2006-2013 period. This study was conducted using qualitative methods through participatory rural appraisal and other techniques. The role played by the fisherwomen were diverse in inland fisheries ranging from bringing fish catch from *ghat* (river bank), selling of fish, grading and segregation of fish, fish drying, prawn and fish seed collection, repairing of nets and carrying food to the river banks. In reservoirs of Madhya Pradesh, 33% of the cooperative society members were women and contribute significantly in the catching of fishes and household income. In Hilsa fisheries of Narmada estuary, Gujarat, male domination ends at the riverbank in terms of fishing activity. Fish catch is collected at the *ghat* by the fisherwomen and the marketing and selling of the Hilsa fish to the wholesale merchants is done by them. All marketing contracts were made only by the fisherwomen and important decisions of selling the catch depends on them.

This study signifies the important role played by fisherwomen of inland open water resources in the fishing operation in general and household economy in particular. It also provides insight of livelihood system where the household economy is contributed by the both male and female member.