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Unmasking the silent role fisherwomen play in the small-scale fisheries local value chain in India

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

AFS	Asian Fisheries Society
CAA	Costal Aquaculture Authority
CIFE	Central Institute of Fisheries Education
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DV	Domestic Violence
FHH	Female Headed Household
GAF	Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries
GPN	Gender Practical Needs
GSN	Gender Strategic Need
ICFS	International Collective in Support of Fisher workers
INGO	International Non-Profit organisations
LVC	Local value chain
MBKMMVS	Marol Bazar Koli Mahila Mase Vikreta Sanstha
NFDB	National Fisheries Development Board
NGO	Non-Profit organisations
SHG	Self-Help Groups
SSF	Small-Scale fisheries
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
VC	Value chain
VGSSSF	Voluntary Guidelines on Small Scale Fisheries

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My mum, miles apart in India, for your prayers and finally,

The fisherwomen, to whom I dedicate this paper, whose lives I've understood better, whose hard work and labour, society has failed to recognize.

Abstract

This paper seeks to ‘unmask’ and make known the roles played and activities performed by fisherwomen in the small-scale fisheries local value chain across the East and West Coast of India. The paper has made use of a gendered value chain approach to locate fisherwomen working in the ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive sector’. It also seeks to highlight the barrier and challenges fisherwomen incur, which act as hindrances while performing those activities.

Further, the supportive role provided by the formation of SHGs, Federations, Cooperatives and the advocacy from Networks capture the changes brought about in the lives of these fisherwomen. Finally, Policies and Schemes, conceptualized, rolled out and implemented at the international, national and state-level have been assessed to understand their gender neutrality and inclusiveness of these fisherwomen and their needs.

The study is based entirely on secondary literature and has made use of numerous videos and documentaries to bring these aspects to light.

Finally, the paper concludes by highlighting the gaps in policies and schemes that are geared towards economic growth while excluding these fisherwomen and their needs. Thus, providing recommendations for implementation of more gender-sensitive, gender-inclusive and gender transformative policies and schemes.

Keywords

Fisherwomen, Value Chain, Small Scale Fisheries, Productive sector, Reproductive Sector, Support groups, Policies, Schemes

Chapter 1

Voyage into the world of fisheries

My journey began in the year 2017, when I worked as a Development Consultant in the Social Sector team at a consultancy firm in Mumbai, India. My first assignment involved monitoring and evaluating the *Neel Kranti Mission* also known as the *Blue Revolution* scheme across 11 states of India. This scheme was launched under the autonomous body, National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) under the administrative control of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India. For the study, I rigorously travelled across numerous states interviewing beneficiaries that benefitted from the financial assistance provided by the scheme. The assistance was in the form of motorization of traditional craft including fishing gear, construction of new aquaculture ponds, renovation of existing ponds, construction of feed mills, construction of hatcheries, etc. To better understand the implementation of the scheme, semi-structured interviews were held with government officials at the state, district and block level. Post completion of this study, I worked on a subsequent assignment for NFDB which involved understanding the export of fish and fishery products from India with special focus on the east coast states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and the western coast of Kerala and Maharashtra. Here, I interviewed officials from the Marine Product Export Department Authority (MPEDA), Coastal Aquaculture Authority (CAA), NFDB as well as fish exporters.

While conducting both these studies, it dawned on me that I seldomly encountered or interviewed women at the management or market level or as beneficiaries availing the scheme. Although these women were visible single-handedly procuring fish at beaches and fish landing centres, selling fish in the markets, mending nets, in pond harvesting and dominantly involved in the processing units where they cleaned, sorted, graded, dried shrimp and other fish products, etc. Yet they were scarcely visible, let alone acknowledged in the numerous reports, journal articles, research studies I penned myself. This intrigued my curiosity to further comprehend as to *who these women were? Why weren't they give any acknowledgement for their work? Were there any policies/ schemes geared towards including them in the sector?*

These thoughts further sparked my interest in building my research to examine the silent role fisherwomen play in the small-scale fisheries (SSF) local value chain (LVC) across the east and west coast of India. This paper is a compilation of the dispersed data gathered through various sources, i.e. research paper, journal articles, periodicals, short videos, documentaries, etc. to provide the reader with a holistic view of fisherwomen's participation in the small-scale fisheries local value chain in India.

1.1 The fisheries sector in India

a. Fisheries: An Evolving Sector

The Fisheries sector in India has come a long way from the use of non-mechanized crafts and gears such as canoes, planks, gill nets in the early 1950s to the use of motorized boats in 1960s, introduced by the signing of the **Indo Norwegian project** that was first initiated in the south-west state of Kerala. This project transformed the fisheries sector leading to an increase in the catch benefitting fishers that made use of mechanized boats versus those that still practised traditional/ artisanal fishing. This paved the way for the formation of 'fishing communities' as well as the need for regulations and policies. It was the first project of its kind that led to an increase in women's participation in the sector.

Moreover, in the 1990s, India opened its market to international players which led to a boom in the country's economy (Programme for Social Action, 2017).

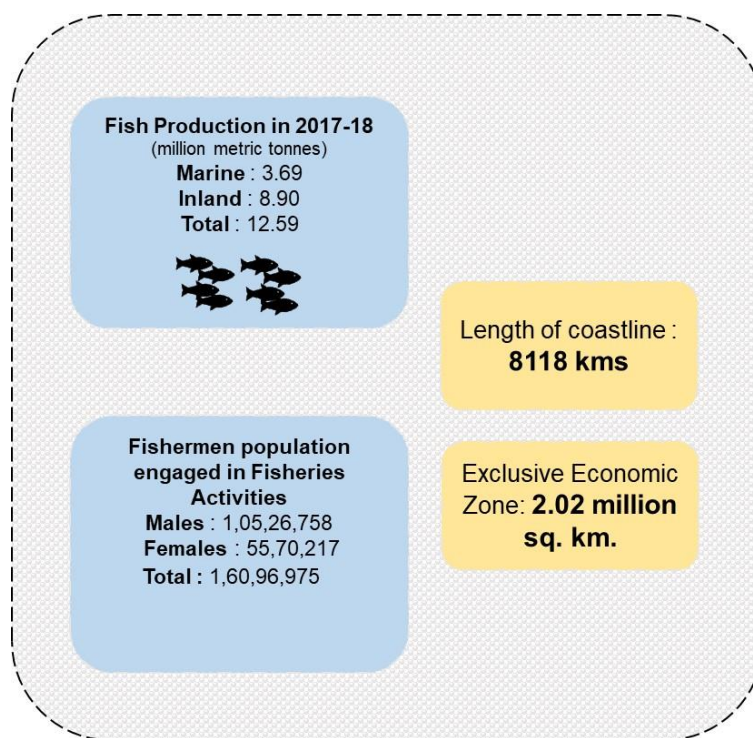


Figure 1: Indian Fisheries Sector at a glance

Source: (Ministry of Fisheries, 2019)

Sadly, today, amid this development, the fishers practising small-scale fisheries are the most marginalized, further ostracizing women involved in the sector, contradicting the slogan of Sustainable Development Goal – *leave no one behind*.

b. The small-scale fisheries sector in India

About half of the global fish catch from developing countries, including India, could be attributed to the SSF sector. It is one of the largest sectors in the world, providing employment as well as livelihood opportunities to millions. 90 per cent of this workforce is employed in capture fisheries, of which women comprise approximately half (ICSF, Small-scale fisheries, 2020).

Below stated are the characteristics this community-based activity, carried out in coastal marine areas, brackish or/and freshwater rivers/ lakes, etc. across India, making it difficult defining the sector (Jadhav, 2017).

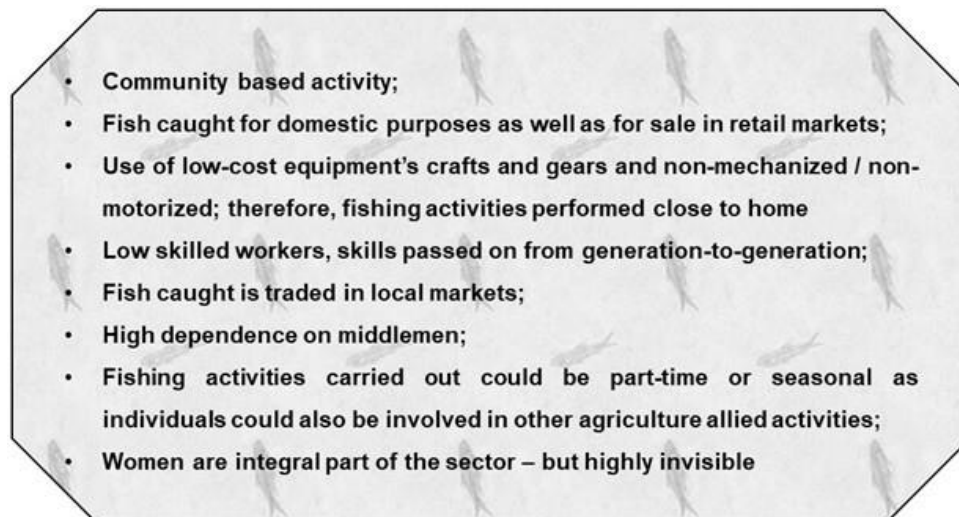


Figure 2: Characteristics of small-scale fishing communities

Source: (Salagrama, 2015)

1.2 Why focus on fisherwomen in SSF?

To quote Maria Damanaki, **“Behind each boat, there is a woman, a family and a community”** summing up the vital role women play in the fishery sector (ICSF, Gender and SSF, 2020). However, across the world, women’s presence in the sector is not only underestimated but also unnumbered. For instance, when one speaks of the fisheries sector, one usually addresses the workers as ‘fishermen’, right away, excluding the women.

Like any other civilization, the fishing society is guided by certain traditions, cultures and beliefs which both men and women adhere, defining the roles they play. This can be seen in the division of labour, where men are seen fishing at sea, while the women work on the land. In the case of SSF, women are present in the pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest performing activities such as mending nets, gleaning, cleaning, sorting, selling, drying, etc. of the fish. Moreover, they take on accompanying roles which include care and reproductive work. In general, it is estimated that women spend more hours working (combining productive work and care work) in comparison to men. For example, a pair of bullocks in the Himalayas spend an average of 1,064 hours working on a one-hectare land, while a man spends 1,212 hours and a women 3,485 hours. Though work done entails different activities, the difference in the hours of work (of each) reflects the contribution of women in the agriculture sector (Shiva FAO, 1991 as cited in Kashyap et al., 2019:30). Sadly, the contribution of women working across agriculture and allied activities in India often go unrecognized. The reasons for this invisibility, as stated by Nadel-Klein and Davis their book ‘To work and to weep: Women in Fishing economies’ (1988) are:

- Lack of women’s direct participation in the fisheries sector,
- Their role is seen as lesser important as compared to men

The above misconceptions can be attributed to the androcentric and capitalist view of what is considered as **‘work’**. In a capitalist society, work is where there are market exchange and payment for goods and services (Alonso-Población & Siar, 2018); consequently, disregarding the work performed by women within the household.

Moreover, as SSF is a non-formal sector there are no stringent rules, regulations or social protection policies owing to which women get paid lesser in comparison to men (Nishchith, 2001; Silva and Yamao, 2006; Okali and Holvoet, 2007 cited in Weeratunge et al., 2010). Additionally, the policies and schemes are often blind towards the requirements of these fisherwomen, marginalizing them further, especially those from female-headed households (FHH).

Furthermore, cross-cutting issues tend to act as obstacles in women's performance in the small-scale fisheries local value chain. For instance, as SSF is a **family-based occupation**, as it involves the participation of an entire fishing family as a single unit in which the women's work is not accounted for, signifying a gap in the data (Joshi, et al., 2018). Additionally, there is also a strong link between household poverty and women's work. Poor women, especially those from **female-headed households**, are paid even lesser than poor men which act as hindrances in pulling the family out of poverty (Kabeer, Gender, Poverty and Development Policy, 2003). **Culture, religious beliefs, customs and traditions** which vary across geographies at times restrict women's access in the sector (FAO 2006; Porter 2006; Okali and Holvoet 2007 cited in Weerantunge et al., 2010). Further, data collected during census captures only the occupation of the head of the household - men - thereby failing to recognize the contribution made by the women which could be on a part-time or subsistence basis (Kleiber, Harris, & Vincent, 2015). Finally, at times when research studies involve amateur or untrained professionals and data collectors as data gatherers on gender aspect or gender inclusion, the data received could have a lot of gaps as they may miss out key issues or could be unfamiliar with 'gender research methods' (Gammage 2004 cited in Kleiber et al., 2015) leading to **gender evaporation**. These issues will be further explored and elaborated upon in the following chapters.

Therefore, this study will examine the issue of fisherwomen's silent and invisible role at **3 levels**:

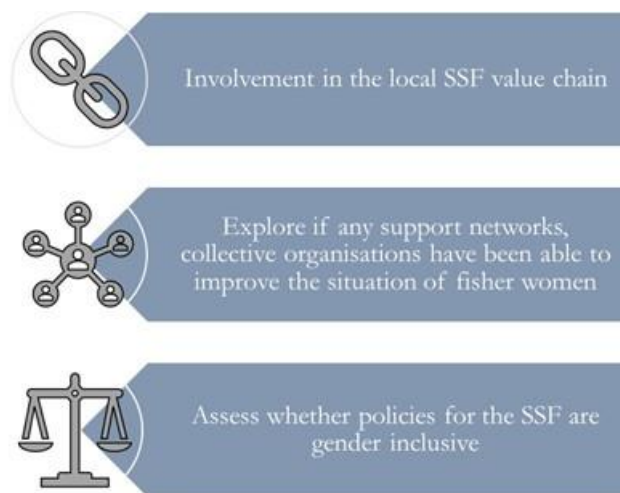


Figure 3: Levels of investigation

Source: Author

1.3 Research Question

Main Question: How do fisherwomen contribute to the SSF local value chain through their productive and reproductive activities, and why is this contribution not recognized in policies?

Sub questions:

- What activities do women engage in the local value chain?
- What are the various barriers women face while working in the local value chain?
- What are the support systems (collective organisations) available for women in the SSF sector and how effective are they?
- How gender-inclusive are the existing policies (both national and international) in the SSF sector?

1.4 Conceptual Framework

To analyse the challenges identified above, this paper has made use of the **Value Chain (VC)** framework by drawing on the gender analysis of the value chain. It has been further extended to incorporate the reproductive sector while assessing the power dynamics within the household concerning financial and educational decision making between the husband and wife, as well as assessing the consumption patterns within the household.

The chain will be studied at the local level across the **East and West coast** of India seeking to identify the presence of the fisherwomen in each segment while highlighting the roles performed and activities carried. It will also capture their lived experiences, challenges and barriers hinder their performance in the chain. Presented below is the map of India highlighting the states that have mentioned (examples) in Chapter 2, 3 and 4.

Map 1:
Map of India highlighting the analyzed states



Source (<https://www.freepptpresentations.com/download-free-india-map-powerpoint/>)

The gendered value chain approach, along with a host of concepts, has been used to review and synthesize secondary literature on women in the SSF sector in India.

▪ What is the Value chain Framework?

A value chain is “full range of activities required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers and final disposal after use” (Rosales et al., 2017:11-21). For one, a VC analysis could provide an understanding into the challenges and bottlenecks experienced by the sector which could be due to weak governance, lack of access to fish landing centres or fish markets, transportation, competitiveness in the market, etc. Additionally, it can be applied to comprehend social and traditional norms and other factors that impact the participation of the underprivileged. Furthermore, it also assists in examining the roles of the actors involved in the chain, i.e. the relation between them, information shared, power dynamics, etc. This can especially be seen in SSF sector due to the wide range of networks in the supply and trades which brings together producers, employers and the consumers (Rosales, et al., 2017).

▪ Gender value chain approach

A general economic analysis looks at the economy as ‘gender natural’ as it only partly examines the economic activities performed by an individual while the ‘gender economy approach’ argue that any market-oriented activity should be looked at separately, i.e. as reproductive work (household work, looking after children etc. which is largely carried out by women) and productive work (Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003). The GLOBEFISH Research Programme, 2015 reports, **“On average and based on international scale women are known to spend twice the time on household work than men – this could vary from country to country”**. Chapter 2 provides data, which reflects this triple burden - across the east and west coast of India, therefore placing them in a more disadvantaged position with additional responsibilities in comparison to their male counterparts.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, “Labor market is constructed by the **gender division of labour** and situated at the intersection between **productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) work**” (Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003). Hence, we can see that the gender economy perspective recognizes reproductive work or the **care economy** as a contributing factor to the ‘productive’ economy. (Razavi, 2013). This has also been highlighted in the feminist analysis of the iceberg economy by Kabeer (2003), who states that care activities are vital, gendered, invisible and unpaid.

As stated above, the VC for this paper has been further extended into the household to assess the power dynamics and the bargaining power that exists within the four walls concerning financial decision making, food, nutrition, etc. These shall be explained through Sen’s (1990) and Agarwal’s (1997) model of **intra household bargaining**.

According to Agarwal (1997), the household is an arena of ‘cooperative conflict’ where a decision is taken by the one who has greater bargaining power or fall-back position. India, being a patriarchal country, men tend to have greater bargaining power than women. Thereby undervaluing women’s *perceived contribution* into the household as it is considered ‘less’ (Sen, 1990 cited in Agarwal, 1997:16). Moreover, while discussing *bargaining power for subsistence within the family*, Sen, (1981)says that it is determined by two factors (i) person’s ability/ ownership to command goods and services (ii) exchange of entitlements through production and trade (Sen 1981 cited in Agarwal, 1997: 11). Examples displaying these have been captured in Chapter 2, which attribute to women having lower bargaining power within the household. But on the other hand, Chapter 3 - women part of support groups, depicts instances of the

shift in decisions making, which could be owed to women being contributing members into the household. (Agarwal, 1997)

Further, Chapter 4 assesses the role of networks that have been creating awareness as well as advocating for the rights of these women, while at the same time highlighting the issues incurred by them. The formation of SHGs and Cooperatives have bridged these gaps by addressing the **Gender Practical and Gender Strategic needs** (Moser, 1989). Finally, the paper assesses policies and schemes (international, national and state-level) to see if (i) the Gender Practical and Strategic needs (Moser, 1989) have been addressed; (ii) assess their (gender) **blindness, neutrality and sensitivity** towards incorporating the needs of these fisherwomen.

Finally, an **intersectional lens** has been made use off to look at the interwoven issues that affect fisherwomen in the chain which could equally strengthen or weaken each other (Crenshaw, 1989 cited in Winker and Degele 2011:51). There are numerous definitions of intersectionality, Collin and Chepp state, that, intersectionality consists of a set of values and practices that establish certain phenomena such as gender, race, sexuality, class etc. which cannot be analysed in isolation from each other (Collins & Chepp, 2013). This inequality is not only in terms of income but also opportunity. For instance, in India, women belonging to the lower caste are usually the ones involved in working agriculture allied activities as women from the higher caste are restricted to do so.

Presented below is a pictorial representation of the Conceptual Framework

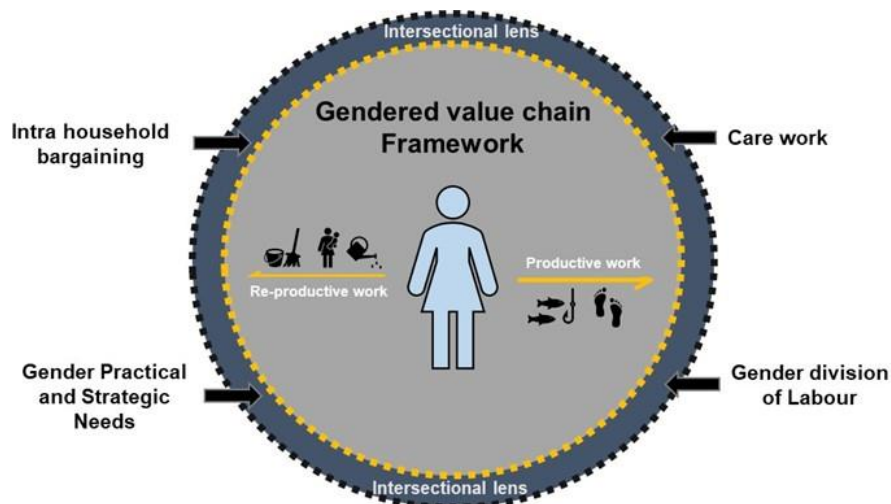


Figure 4: Visual representation of the Conceptual Framework

Source: Author

1.5 Methodology

Based on secondary studies, especially the use of videos and documentaries, this paper sheds light on the activities carried out by the fisherwomen working in the local value chain in India. O'Leary (2017) in her book *'The essential guide to doing your own Research Project'* states that the most important aspect in secondary data analysis is to have clear questions and knowing the kind of available data.

In this case, the research has made use of secondary sources which is one of the extensively used data collection methods in social sciences and re-analyzes previously collected

data from other researchers (Punch, 2005 cited in Chivaka, 2018). It has also made use of numerous sociological and ethnographical journal articles, research studies, newspaper article, videos (YouTube), documentaries by Action Aid, Researchers, etc. Due to the limited availability of literature studies, the research has made extensive use of visual and audio sources, especially in Chapter 2 and 3, which have been listed below for reference.

Table 1: Citations

Sr. no	Sources
1	Research studies, Journal articles, Newspaper articles (Hindu) & Reports, Books
Videos	
2	Television networks: Vikanta TV, My Nation, Prudent Media Goa
3	Websites: Desert Story (FB page), Magik India
4	Company: Wild Films India
5	YouTube channel: Tamil Meenavan- Fishing
Documentaries	
6	Non-profits: Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries (GAF), International Collective in Support of Fisher workers (ICFS/ GAF), World Bank
7	Academic: Dr. Kuntala Lahiri- Dutt

Source: Author

Presented below is the Coordination Matrix between Research Questions and Methodology.

Table 2: Coordination Matrix

Sr. no	Research Questions	Information Set	Data Gathering Method
1	How do fisherwomen contribute to the SSF local value chain through their productive and reproductive activities and why is this contribution not recognized in policies?	Literature review on the roles played and activity carried out by fisherwomen in the LVC i.e Productive work – pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest sector; activities performed in each segment of the chain (cleaning, sorting, marketing, transporting, etc.) as well as Reproductive work (cooking, cleaning), care work and finally, consumption, bargaining power within the household, etc.	Ethnographic and anthropological studies, FAO report, research papers, journal articles, govt reports, newspaper articles, website, domestic and international NGO donor reports, documentaries, videos, etc.
a	What activities do women engage in the local value chain?		
b	What are the various barriers women face while working in the local value chain?	Barriers in the 'productive' and 'reproductive' sector have been cited	
c	What are the support systems (collective organisations) available for women in the SSF sector and how effective are they?	Analyzing the supporting roles of Networks; formation of SHG's, Co-operatives	Research papers, Journal articles, NGO and Cooperative websites, Domestic and International donor reports, NGO websites, Video documentaries
d	How gender-inclusive are the existing policies (both national and international) in the SSF sector?	Review of policies at the International, National and State level to analyse if they are gender-sensitive, gender blind towards fisherwomen 's needs	FAO website, Ministry and Government websites, etc.

Source: Author

- Chapter Overview

The paper is structured in a way that, *Chapter 1*, provides the reader with a brief understanding of the SSF sector in India, i.e. its contribution to global production, number of people involved, kind of boats, gears and equipment's used, etc. while providing the rationale for the study. Moreover, it sheds light on the use of the gendered value chain framework to assess the productive, reproductive and care work performed by fisherwomen which are often undervalued and hence goes unpaid. Concepts such as gender divisions of labour, inter household bargaining model and intersectionality have been used to understand the interconnected and interlinkages of barriers. The role of networks and SHG's have been assessed as a means that advocate and address the gender practical and strategic needs of these women. Finally, policies have been analyzed for their gender neutrality and sensitivity to fisherwomen's requirements.

Chapter 2, provides an in-depth illustration of the placement of fisherwomen in the LVC, unearthing their roles and activities in the 'productive' and 'reproductive' sector while also unveiling the barriers and challenges incurred by them. Further, *Chapter 3*, brings forth the role of Networks advocating against the 'gender blindness' in the sector, through various publications, documentaries and being part of various panel discussions. At the same time, it showcases the supportive role of SHG's and Cooperatives in bringing fisherwomen together. *Chapter 4* briefly investigates policies and schemes implemented at the International, National and State level to assess the perspective of gender while also examining if they are/are not gender-aware, gender-neutral or gender blind towards the needs of these fisherwomen. Finally, *Chapter 5* provides a summary of findings while providing recommendations to make visible the role of fisherwomen.

Chapter 2

Capturing the role of women in the small-scale fisheries local value chain

“In places like Tamil Nadu, the sea is worshipped as mother, but the sea is seen as unaccepting of women in its domain.”

- Aarthi Sridhar, Trustee Founder of Dakshin Foundation

This chapter provides a brief description of the women's presence in each segment of the local value chain (LVC) focusing on both the eastern and western coast of India while bringing to light their invisible roles and activities in the productive sector i.e. pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest. The chain, in this case, has been further extended into the household i.e. incorporating the reproductive and care work done by women as well as the consumption that happens within the household. Further, it also highlights the barriers and challenges encountered while performing these roles and activities.

The details of the chain have been elaborated upon based on sources, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Table 1.

2.1 Context: Brief description of the LVC

Presented below is a snapshot of the local value chain showcasing the presence of fishers in every segment. In the **'productive'** sector, women mainly work in the pre-harvest while in the post-harvest they are involved in cleaning, processing and marketing. Their presence is also seen in harvest activities which are carried for domestic purposes. Lastly, the **'reproductive'** sector once again shows women's domination of work. These, along with examples, have been further elaborated upon below.

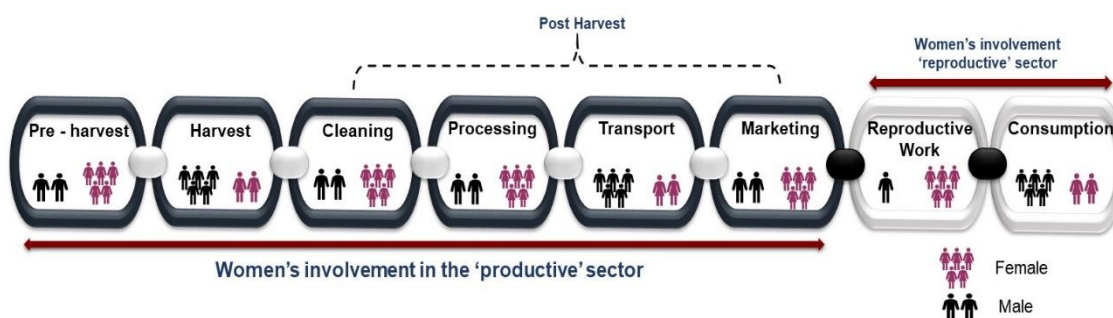


Figure 5: Small Scale Fisheries Local Value Chain

Source: Author

2.2 Women's Involvement in the visible "Productive" Sector

1. Pre-harvest and harvest

a. Pre-harvest activities:

Research studies conducted across the east and west coast of India have highlighted the leading role women play in the pre-harvest sector. They are involved in activities such as mending and repairing of nets, collecting bait, prepare hooks and buoys i.e. the groundwork process before men go to the sea.

Nonetheless, a study conducted in West Bengal – east coast- captures men’s involvement in net making and mending which is relatively higher than any other state in the eastern coast of India (Biswas and Rao, 2014: 299).

b. Harvest activities:

- Women involved in gleaning and other fishing activities

While on one hand men are dominantly involved in the act of fishing, women work offshore and are involved in activities such harvesting seaweed, collecting shellfish and oysters, etc. as well as processing and marketing it (Joshi et al., 2018 and ICSF, 2010) taking their numbers higher than that of men. Therefore, the saying, **“Shells are for women, fish are for men”** (Siar, 2003 cited in Klieber et al., 2015:552). In the context of India, this statement does hold some truth, as gleaning as an activity is performed by women closer to home and at times in the presence of children. It also includes low investment (with regards to usage of fishing gears) which makes women’s involvement higher (Tekanene, 2006 cited in Klieber et al., 2015).

For instance, women from fishing households in Tamil Nadu are known to be involved in gathering seaweed. A video by MyNation captures a group of middle-aged married women in Rameswaram harvesting seaweed making use of negligible safety gears. The catch is then sold more a mere INR 100. To earn an additional income, these women also catch crabs and a few big fish close to the shore which is sold in the local market (MyNation, Rameswaram fisher women battle mighty sea for few hundred rupees everyday, 2019). Similarly, in the village of Ramanathapuram, Gulf of Munnar, women – most of whom are married - are seen performing similar activities – handpicking seaweed with no proper safety gears and minimal equipment’s. This activity has been passed down through generations while confronting similar challenges (Tanuku, 2013).

But there are exceptions where women are involved in fishing-related activities. These have been explained below.

- Women involved in fish harvesting and making use of boats

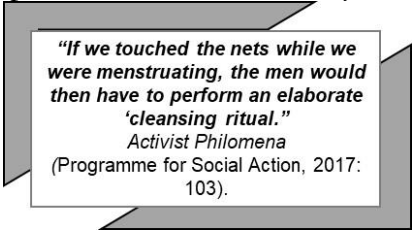
Across the east and west coastline of India, women’s involvement in carrying out fishing activities near the seashore, in lakes and rivers is prominent. For example, on the east coast of India, a video shot by MyNation showcases a group of middle-aged women catching shrimp with their bare hands in muddy waters in Tamil Nadu. The activity is performed close to their homes, and the catch is used for domestic purpose rather than sale (MyNation, Tamil Nadu fisherwomen risk their lives; use traditional method to catch shrimps, 2010). Likewise, another video by Tamil Meenavan- Fishing, captures an elderly woman catching catfish along with men in the shallow waters near the seashore in Tamil Nadu. She is seen making use of low-cost gears to catch the fish, such as a plastic rope tied to a piece of wood (Tamil Meenavan-Fishing, 2019).

Consequently, states across the west coast of India document fisherwomen performing similar activities. For instance, a video by Desert Story captures a group of middle-aged tribal women from Vedar community, Kerala catching fish in the river, making use of their sarees or cloth (Desert Story, 2017). While the video by Magik India, captures tribal women from Dangs tribe, sub-tribe of Bhils community catching fish making use of a cloth in the muddy river water (Magik India, 2018). In both cases, the fish caught is used for domestic purposes.

As mention in Chapter 1, there are numerous cultures, beliefs and stereotypes that work against fisherwomen in the sector. For instance, women have been considered back luck for numerous reasons. Philomena, activist and fisherwoman, states, **“If anyone met with danger out at sea, it was believed to be because the women at home had been unfaithful”** (Programme for Social Action, 2017: 103) or **“If we went and stood at the shore with our hair untied, it was said to bring bad luck to those who went out to sea”** (Programme

for Social Action, 2017: 103). Beliefs such as these restrain women's participation in the sector.

Moreover, women making use of boats or canoes is not a common sight across either coast of India. This could be attributed to the fact that in certain South Asian countries women are considered bad luck if taken aboard on a boat (Hitomi, 2009 cited in De Sliva 2011: 10) and in some cases responsible for an inadequate harvest (Monfort, 2015). In the case of India, studies have reflected how in certain culture or caste, it is unacceptable for women to fish (Kleiber, Harris, & Vincent, 2015). However, these stereotypes have been refuted by instances which have captured not only women's presence on boats but also as support to their husbands. For instance, a video by Asianetnews shows a pair of elderly women in Kuttanad, Kerala making use of a boat to go deep into the river to collect oysters and clams - an activity that is generally performed by men (asianetnews, 2014). Similarly, the documentary by Dr Kuntala Lahiri- Dutt captures a fisherman with his wife on board fishing in the Sundarbans. The fisherman shares that having his wife onboard is helpful as she provides a helping hand in sorting the fish (Kuntala Lahiri- Dutt, 2017: 6:14 –6:39).



"If we touched the nets while we were menstruating, the men would then have to perform an elaborate 'cleansing ritual.'"
Activist Philomena
(Programme for Social Action, 2017: 103).

Moreover, an article published by the Hindu in 2018 captures a woman from Thrissur district of Kerala who joined her husband on the boat as he did not have the financial capacity to hire a crew. **She is the only woman to have a deep-sea fishing license throughout India.** She is seen untangling nylon nets, fishing and selling the catch with her husband while negating the claim that women are *'bad luck'* on boats while at the same time proving that she can be as effective at fishing compared to her male counterparts (Mustafah, 2018).

All the above-presented examples refute the notion that there is a fixed 'gender division of labour'. It can be more fluid and flexible, and women's participation in non-gleaning activities could be a result of (i) economic strategy within the household, i.e. instead of paying daily wage labourers, the profit is shared in the family itself (Klieber et al., 2015: 554) or (ii) to help bring in additional income into the family or (iii) if the households are female-headed.

The following section will focus on the role and activities of women in the Post-harvest sector.

2. Post-Harvest

Post-harvest activities are initiated from the time the fish is harvested or lands at the shore till it reaches the end of the chain i.e. consumers. In India, women play a vital role in this process of the chain, where there is an unstated division of labour among men and women. As soon as the boats are docked onto shore, women are involved in every activity till the fish reaches its destination. For instance, the *Koli*¹ fisherwomen in Mumbai, Maharashtra are not involved in the harvesting of the fish (by boats), but they are visible in fish landing centres, beaches, wholesale markets, sorting, cleaning, packing and selling of fish (Peke, 2013).

As fish is one of the most perishable commodities, the process involves a high level of preservation. In the case of small-scale fisheries, usually performed by artisanal fishers due to lack of hygienic fish landing centres, storage houses, transportation and market facilities huge amount of wastage occurs. In this case, post-harvest activities performed by women become even more important.

¹ *Kolis* (ethnic group) are known to be the original inhabitants of Mumbai (Peke, 2013:7)

Presented below are the activities women are involved in.

a. Cleaning of Fish

▪ Prawn Peeling

The involvement of young girls and women working as fish vendors and prawn peelers in the state of Kerala has been captured by Klein and Davis in their edited book *'To work and to Weep: Women in Fishing Economies'*. These women, most of whom are married, share their hardship of procuring fish from fishermen or at fish auctions where they must compete with men. About 10 per cent of women were known to participate in these auctions (Gulati, 1984).

The activist, Philomena, shared that women faced numerous health issues while working in prawn peeling as they have to squat for hours on ice which led to dermatological, muscular and gynaecological issues (Programme for Social Action, 2017).

In auctions where women participate, depending on the financial capacity, the peeling could be done either at home or carried out by young teenage girls at a shed located close to the auction house. The peeled prawns are then sold to shrimp firms. Women involved in peeling prawns close to the auction house are paid weekly, but those involved in purchasing fish at auctions incur issues with regards to the initial credit (Gulati, 1984).

The book also captures positive stories, where women that started as prawn peelers have slowly taken on vending businesses or trawler businesses from their husbands, which has led **men to take over household chores or to look after the children**. This reflects the change in the gender division of labour which shows that there is no biological basis for this division of labour.

b. Processing

Generation of fisherwomen living along the coastal areas of India are known to be involved in the traditional process of processing and preserving fish. The fish preserved/ processed could be harvested by their family or could be purchased from other fish vendors.

In the north-eastern state of Manipur, fish (fresh or processed) is an integral part of their diet and is always in high demand, especially in ethnic markets due to traditional taste and flavours (De Silva Dr, 2011). Hence, women preserve the fish by drying, smoking, fermenting, etc. (Inaotombi and Mahanta 2016: 181 – 190).

Moreover, one of the most common methods of preserving fish is by salting and sun-drying them on cemented floors, bamboo poles or roped cots – usually near the seashore or a place close to home. In a brief video in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh by Wild Films India showcases women sun-drying fish close to the shore where the boats are parked (WildFilmsIndia, 2016). In the same way, a video taken near the coast of Murud, in Raigad district of Maharashtra shows a woman sun-drying fish on a cemented platform (Munj, 2013).

While in the states of Manipur and Maharashtra dried fish is in huge demand, fisherwomen in Goa had seen a fall in demand. Reasons cited by the fisherwomen were 'customers find the fish expensive' (Prudent Media Goa, 2018: 0:30 – 0:32) or due to recently religious feast celebrated (Prudent Media Goa, 2018: 1:37 – 38). These events had an unfortunate effect on women as they yet had to pay the rent cost of using the fish stalls in the market.

c. Transportation

Transportation of fish – fresh or dried – is a huge challenge incurred by fishers across the country. This is mainly due to the odour and the water that drips from the baskets which makes commute by public transport problematic. This is also due to the lack of cold chain logistics across the country. Unfortunately, women bear the burden further. For instance, a documentary shot by ActionAid India, 2015, showcases a widowed woman's woes as she must travel long distances to sell fish, and, due to lack of public transport has to depend on other means - lorries or truck. In most cases, she has had to face sexual abuse or harassment and, in some cases, overpriced tickets for the journey. Similarly, women involved in prawn peeling in Kerala, shared, that at times due to bumper catch women must work longer hours and fall prey to various kinds of abuse due to lack of proper transportation and storage facilities.

In another scenario, the rise in diesel cost in the city of Mumbai, Maharashtra had led to the rise in transportation cost, which brought down the demand for fish among customers. This once again has affected the income of fishers (Dr Kuntala Lahiri- Dutt, 2019: 5:43 – 5:47).

Issues such as these have been raised by Arpita Sharma, Principal Scientist at the Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE) during the National Workshop on Capacity Building for the implementation of VGSSSF acknowledging the limitations and pushing for improvement to address the lack of proper market facilities, infrastructure, transportation in the state of Maharashtra.

d. Marketing

Fish retail is carried out both in structured and unstructured markets.

▪ Structured Market

Retail market

Across the country, retail fish markets are dominated by fisherwomen who sell fish caught by their husbands or fish that is purchased from other fish vendors. Several women participating in fish retailing are from the female-headed household. In both cases, the fresh fish is sorted, frozen and brought to the adjacent market to be sold. With regards to dried fish, it is either sun-dried post sorting or purchased from wholesalers and re-sold (Peke, 2013).

The documentary by Dr Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt shot across retail fish markets in Mumbai, Maharashtra, has captured women in fish retailing belonging to FHH, most of whom have to take on additional responsibilities therefore as they earn a mere sum of INR 50 – 100 per day on a purchase of fish worth INR 3,000 – 5,000. For instance, one of the fisherwomen in Mumbai doubles as a domestic worker, to make ends meet. (Dr. Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, 2019: 8:30 -8:38).

Wholesalers

Women involved in wholesale, in most cases sell the catch (that has been dried) brought by their husbands or that which has been purchased from other boat owners. In this case, fish is sold in bulk to traders in the market (Peke, 2013). There is significant involvement of women cooperatives in this segment of the chain. For instance, women cooperatives from other districts of Maharashtra are known to sell fish (not available in other districts) to traders from Gujarat (Peke, 2013).

- Unstructured Markets

Door-to-door fish vendors and Street vendors are a common phenomenon across the country. In this section, I shall highlight their role in the city of Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Door to door vendors

Door-to-door fisherwomen purchase their fish either in groups or by themselves at fish auctions. Those that purchase from auction houses share the cost of the fish as well as the transportation involved. To avoid conflicts, these women have pre-decided selling zones passed on through generations and loyal customer to whom they sell their fish. However, these women face new competition from ‘*bhayias*²’ who do not adhere to the ‘unsaid rule’ which hampers their business. Moreover, due to lack of identification cards, women face additional hurdles (i) restrictive entry of these women into buildings (ii) bribery of officials.

“There are approximately 15,000 women engaged in door-to-door vending activities in Mumbai city and suburbs” – Shaila Keni, Fish vendor (Peke, 2013)

Furthermore, due to labour intensive work (carry fish baskets on their heads, walk long distances) women also suffer from health issues. For instance, one of the fisherwomen who used to be a door-to-door vendor for 15 years had switched to a street vendor which requires her to be seated in one place (Peke, 2013).

Street Market Vendors

Most of these fisherwomen are seen seated outside market areas or on the streets under umbrellas in the scorching sun or rain, selling fish from morning to evening. They make use of wooden planks or thermocol to set their fish for sale. They face similar issues as door-to-door vendors with regards to lack of identification cards and hence are always at the risk of being evicted by the local authorities at any given point of time (Peke, 2013).

Thus, I argue that though women have significant roles and are seen carrying out several activities in the local value chain, they are ‘invisible’ in policies and schemes - elaborated in Chapter 4. This invisibility is further reflected in them being unaccounted for in government data which makes them unseen to policymakers.

2.3 Challenges encountered while working in the ‘productive’ sector

To provide a clear analysis of the challenges incurred in each segment of the chain, they have been divided into Gender Practical Needs (GPN) and Gender Strategic Need (GSN) (Moser, 1989). An intersectional lens has also been used to assess the nuances in the chain.

a. Gender Practical Needs

- Lack of basic needs

While section 2.2 provides a detailed description of the activities carried out by women in the chain, it also points out the lack of basic facilities that hinder the women’s performance. For instance, women working in retail markets, door-to-door, street vendors, as well as those working as auctioneers, have limited and in some cases no access to safe drinking water or sanitation amenities. These issues are worsened especially when women are menstruating. These are not in adherence to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 which states, access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities for all.

² Vendors from Indian states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are locally known as ‘*bhaiya*’ (Peke, 2013:13)

Moreover, amenities such as access to the restroom (for breakfast), lighting facilities, especially for retail and street vendors as well as water to clean fish are not availed (Peke, 2013). There are instances in which fisherwomen in Mumbai are seen struggling to access clean water, which over time brought down the number of women performing the activity (Peke, 2013).

- Transportation

While some women do sell fish near the harbours or fish landing centres, the other has to transport the fish to the markets (ICSF, Women Fish Vendors in India: An Information Booklet, 2010). Many fisherwomen across the east and west coast of India incur numerous challenges in this segment of the chain, which have been described in Section 2.2. As fisherwomen face rejection from the public transport system (buses and autorickshaws), they tend to depend on other private means of transport, which makes them vulnerable to bullying and harassment (ICSF, Women Fish Vendors in India: An Information Booklet, 2010).

b. Gender Strategic Needs

- Lack of Credit

The Global Symposium ‘Women in Fisheries’ states that cultural issues and access to credit as the two binary challenges that hinder women’s participation in the sector. (Williams, 2002). Once again, Section 2.2 provides numerous examples throughout the chain addressing the latter. Whether it be in auction houses, retail markets, street or door-to-door vendors, the requirement of initial credit or capital to purchase the fish is a challenge. As a result, women must take a loan from money lenders, traders, boat owner, etc.

- Absence of Licences and identification cards

The absences of license and identification cards have been stated as a significant hindrance in fisherwomen’s participation across the east and west coast of India. As mentioned in Section 2.2 – the structure and unstructured markets- as women are not registered, they are unable to avail government benefits/ aids and in most cases get evicted by the local authorities (Peke, 2013). This directly impacts their income as well as their organization as a group. The reasons and implications of these have been further discussed in Chapter 4.

- Labour-intensive work:

Whether it be pre-harvest, harvest or post-harvest, women fish vendors across the local value chain in India are seen performing rigorous labour activities which directly affects their health. For instance, in Section 2.2 harvest segment, women involved in gleaning are seen physically collecting shells, oysters or harvesting seaweed in harsh weather conditions. Similarly, in harvesting, women are seen physically wading through water, making use of their hands to catch shrimps, while in other instances, they are seen making use of plastic ropes, hooks, etc. while fishing. In the post-harvest, women are seen working from dawn to dusk, cleaning, sorting fish without the usage of any safety gear. This also holds for women involved in drying fish. In the case of women working in retail markets, door-to-door vendors, and street vendors they work long hours, paid low wages and must walk long distances, etc. to sell the fish.

All the above-mentioned activities, showcase women across the country making use of traditional methods and gear or in most cases no gear which leads them to be bruised, affecting their health (*intersectionality*). The lack of usage of safety gear and traditional methods of fishing reflect that these women belong to lower strata of the society, are in most cases are women from FHH. These activities, along with the challenges faced, are based on a clear gender stereotyping of work done by men and women.

Furthermore, this stereotyping can also be seen in the shrimp industry in India, where almost 90 per cent of women are involved in cleaning and peeling. It is a well-known fact that men dominate the fisheries industry and hold powerful positions in relation to hierarchy, power, and authoritative roles, etc. While women are not only found to be working in lower positions but also paid low wages in comparison to their male counterparts. Moreover, they also fail to receive social and welfare security (Monfort, 2015).

- Gender differences in the catch/product

From the data collected above, it can be stated that women's catch – especially in gleaning and fishing goes towards domestic consumption. This contributes to make 'productive work' invisible while, on the other hand, there is a clear division of labour where in most cases, men's catch is not only used for the sole purpose of the household but also of sale.

- Technology and Globalization

Globalization and technological advancement, over the years, has impacted the livelihood status of fisherwomen across the country. E-commerce platforms such as Big Bazar and Nature Fresh provide fish now at people's doorstep (Peke, 2013). While on the other hand, fishing communities in the state of Kerala have seen a setback due to the projects by World Bank and Asian Development Bank that have impacted the fish catch as well as harmed the environment (Hemaraj, 2020).

- Marital Status:

Due to cultural and social issues, married women's involvement in the chain is more restricted than those fisherwomen from FHH. The reasons cited for these are (i) married women cannot own fishing gears (ii) they cannot work as traders or wholesalers – as they must encounter men. Therefore, due to societal pressure men prevent their wives from working outside of the household but encourage them in home-based work (Hapke, 2001; Hapke & Ayyankaril, 2004 cited in Nikita Gopal et al., 2020). However, on the other hand, literature studies and data presented above does reflect married women's involvement in the sector, which indicates their low-income family economic status. However, women from FHH are forced to work as they have limited options and are usually looked down upon by society. This echoes the high involvement of women from FHH in the harvest and post-harvest sector. Therefore, (Williams, 2002) states that FHH tends to be very poor, leaving women with fewer options to run their households, consequently taking on additional income-generating activities (Peke, 2013).

Presented below is a snapshot of the similarities in the issues faced by fisherwomen across the productive sector of the chain.

Table 3: Summary of challenges faced in the productive sector

Issues	Pre-harvest	Harvest	Post-harvest
Usage of poor safety Gears	√	√	√
Fishing for domestic consumption		√	√ (and sale)
Labour intensive work	√	√	√
Lack of Credit facilities		√	√
Health issues due to lack of basic infrastructure		√	√
Abuse and harassment due to lack of proper transportation			√
Identification cards			√

Source: Author

While the above section covered the roles, activities, and challenges faced by women in the 'productive' sector, the following section will elaborate on the 'reproductive sector'.

2.4 Women's Involvement in Invisible 'Reproductive' Sector – Inside the household

3. Reproductive work

Other than working in the productive sector, women across the chain are intricately involved in the reproductive sector while also performing care work. Presented below are various examples of this triple burden incurred by women in the chain.

For instance, the documentary filmed by Action Aid India, in Tamil Nadu, captures the daily lives of two fisherwomen - a widow and a married woman – both performing similar roles and activities, i.e. fish vendors, while also carrying out reproductive and care work. They rise early, cook, clean, prepare children to go to school, perform fishing activities, retail the fish, purchase household essentials, etc. with no assistance from any family member, which directly affects their health (ActionAid India, 2015).

For example, the married fisherwoman shared that even if she is unwell, her husband refuses to help her in any of the household chores, therefore feeling neglected. She quotes him saying, **“it is his duty to work and hers to look after him and the household”** (ActionAid India, 2015: 7:20-32). Further, she quotes him saying, **“that he had got married to her to look after him and his children and not to be paid for the services”** (ActionAid India, 2015: 7:47-56). These statements reflect the stereotypical gender division of labour ingrained in society, where men believe that they are expected to work outside the house while women work within. Moreover, it reflects a complete disregard for the household work performed by women as it is not considered to be **‘real work’**. This belief is further strengthened, when she narrates, how men in her community refuse to carry their plates to the kitchen after meals as they consider it to be the ‘duty of the women’. Further on, she is compelled to take on income-generating activities due to her husband's ill health which has confined him to household, making her the ‘breadwinner’ as well as the ‘caregiver’. Moreover, her refusal to have more children owing to the family's low economic status was refuted by her husband who has not only lead to the children being undernourished but also forced them to drop out of school. These are instance of human right violation and that of SDG 4 and 5 as well as reflection of lack of bargaining power within the household.

The documentary by Dr Lahiri-Dutt in Sundarbans, West Bengal, records the lives of women that have been uprooted due to the climate changes which has not only affected their economic status but their daily lives (Lahiri-Dutt , 2017). For instance, the rising water levels have rendered their land infertile due to the high salinity level. Moreover, women must now walk long distances to gather water (almost 10 -20 buckets per day) for household purposes as the nearby sources have been contaminated rendering it unfit for drinking purposes, further increasing their labour time – *‘time poverty’*. These women are not only providing labour services but also carrying out domestic work which leaves them no time for leisure. In the cases cited, it has also impacted their daily interactions with the other village female folk.

As cited in the examples above, fisherwomen in Mumbai, Maharashtra share similar daily lives and chores as those from the state of Tamil Nadu. Irrespective of their age, marital status (*intersectionality*)– majority belonging to FHH – fisherwomen are seen purchasing fish from the beaches, auction houses, sorting and selling in local markets. Thus, single-handedly providing for their families.

Citing an example of the lives of fisherwomen in Kerala, we see power dynamics playing a vital role within the household that translate into decision making. For instance, Lalitha and Revamma belong to the same fishing community along with the Vembanad Estuarine System and are seen assisting their husbands in carrying out fishing activities. While Lalitha's husband acknowledges her as a productive earning member, and she is seen taking financial

decisions within the households. Revamma, on the other hand, does not enjoy the same, as all decisions are taken by her husband (P , Jayalal, & Gopal , 2016). Here the women's '*perceived contribution*' (Sen, 1990 cited in Agarwal, 1997) is not acknowledged.

4. Consumption within the household

In the SSF sector, fish caught by women is usually used for domestic consumption whereas that which is caught by men is not only sold in the local markets but is also used for household consumption. However, it is rather uncertain of how much food intake is consumed by the women within the household. The concept of '**intrahousehold bargaining**' by Agarwal's (1997) and Sen (1990) comes into play here. In general, women are known to have weaker bargaining power, hence they must make compromises. Factors such as culture, norms, patriarchy further influence this. To illustrate, a fisherwoman from Uran, Maharashtra, narrates that she often forgoes her breakfast due to her busy morning and only has a full meal at the end of the day (Peke, 2013). Similarly, one of the female fish vendors in the documentary '*Fished! Fishervomen of Mumbai*', shares that due to the fast-paced life she often has had to skip meals. Additionally, the video produced by ActionAid India, 2015 captures a widowed fisherwoman, who due to sheer poverty, is forced to eat chicken rice feed for survival. Moreover, across families in India, women are known to serve their husbands and children, after which the leftover food is eaten by them.

Although I have not come across any specific statistical data that showcases the detailed health status of fisherwomen across India, the figures presented below represent the overall health status of all women across the urban and rural areas of India. Therefore, it can be concluded that fisherwomen with poor health status coupled with labour intensive work and low intake of nutritious food suffer from overall poor health status.

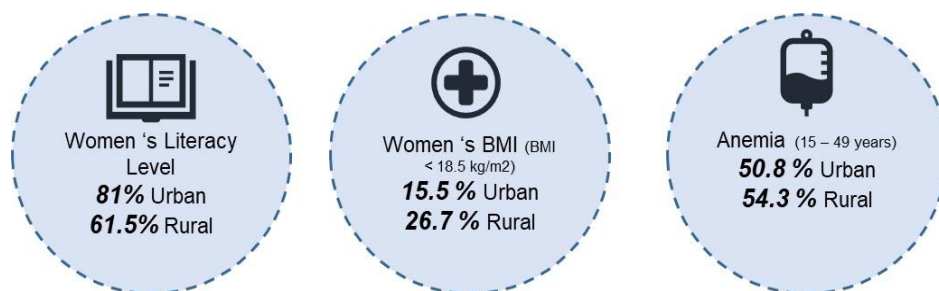


Figure 6: Women's literacy and health status in India

Source: (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Family Health Survey (NFHS -4), India, 2015 - 2016)

Presented below is a summary of the similar challenges faced by fisherwomen in the reproductive sector.

Table 4: Challenges incurred in the reproductive sector

Issues	Pre-harvest	Harvest	Post-harvest
Triple Burden	√	√	√
Unpaid care work	√	√	√
Low bargaining power	√	√	√
Low consumption	√	√	√
Domestic Violence	√	√	√

Source: Author

All the above examples demonstrate women to be on the lower bargaining end of the chain.

2.5 Challenges encountered while working in the ‘reproductive’ sector

a. Triple burden

In contrast to men, women across the chain are seen carrying out productive and reproductive, which increases their burden. Though they are contributing members, they are yet seen playing a subordinate role within the family and in most cases, economically dependent on their husbands. Moreover, they are also expected to work closer to home so that they can fulfil the care needs of the family (Monfort, 2015). These unpaid services are not measured in financial terms and unfortunately not acknowledged among the fishing communities (De Silva Dr, 2011). It is estimated that on an average and based on international scale women are known to spend twice the time on household work than men – which varies from country to country (Monfort, 2015). At times women are also involved in the formation of groups, organizations at the community level, which is an extension of their domestic responsibilities (Moser, 1989). Moreover, the data gathered showcases the lives of women from FHH who get further marginalized, but the same is experienced by women from married households (*intersectionality*).

b. Unpaid Care work

Across the numerous segments of the local value chain women are seen carrying out direct care work (looking after children, ill husbands, dependent family members) and indirect care work (cooking, cleaning, preparing children to go to school, collecting water, etc.) which often goes unrecognised, therefore unpaid. On the one hand, the System of National Accounts (SNA) which recognizes the collection of water within its production boundary fails to recognize the other interconnected factors.

c. Alcoholism and Domestic Violence (DV)

The use of alcohol is widespread among fishermen in India as well as across the globe. It is used as a way of bonding among the crew members, and, at times, a show of masculinity (Coulthard, et al., 2019). While on the one hand, it can be an enhancing factor; on the other, it leads to social issue one of them being – domestic violence. Busby (1999) showcases the prevalence and internalization of DV in the Christian fishing community in the southwestern state of Kerala, where one of the women who is constantly beaten by her drunk husband yet chooses to overlook the same as he also assists her in the household chores. In other cases,

even when women see/ hear their neighbours being beaten, tend to blame the women rather than condemn the act (Busby, 1999). Moreover, in numerous cases, women are unwilling to leave their husbands due to societal and cultural stigma attached to it (Coulthard, et al., 2019). All these examples indicate the normalization of DV within the community which is conceptually known as Bourdieu's idea of '*Doxa*' – those aspects of traditions and culture that have become normalized (Kabeer, Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment, 1999).

Furthermore, NFHS 2015 – 2016 presents all India status report which showcases the occurrence of violence within the household and its normalization in the Indian society. Though I have not been able to access specific statistical data of this violence in the fishing community, the all India data reflects this recurrent behaviour. For instance, **25.3 per cent** of married women in urban areas and **34.1 per cent** in rural areas in India have faced spousal violence (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Family Health Survey (NFHS -4), India, 2015 - 2016). Moreover, the table below showcases the percentage of women who under certain circumstance, justify this behaviour.

Table 5: Normalization of Violence

State	Physical and sexual violence	Justify the violence (under certain circumstances)
East Coast		
Andhra Pradesh	44 %	82 %
Odisha	35 %	59 %
West Coast		
Maharashtra	21 %	49 %
Goa	13 %	21 %

Source: NFHS 2015 – 2016 reports of AP, Odisha, Maharashtra and Goa

Therefore, based on the above descriptive yet detailed analysis of the LVC it can be inferred, by making use of Crenshaw's concept of '*intersectionality*' that women across the east and west coast of India irrespective of the age, marital status, cultural background are seen working long hours, paid low wages, incur sexual harassment, their catch is used for domestic purposes, are triple burdened, have low bargaining power, etc. When seen closely, these barriers are interconnected and interlinked to each other, which have been overlooked by policies. Some of these gaps have been addressed by support groups and organizations that have been elaborated upon in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Networks, Support groups and organizations

This chapter focuses on the role Networks play in creating awareness while advocating gender rights of fisherwomen in the sector. These have been brought to light through discussions on numerous platforms as well as in publications, research studies, documentaries, websites, etc. Furthermore, it also highlights the positive role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Cooperatives and Federations formed with support from International and National NGOs that have played a crucial role in organizing and training fisherwomen.

3.1 Networking organisations

1. Asian Fisheries Society (AFS)

AFS, a non-profit organization was founded with the intention to network between professionals (scientist, technicians, etc.) involved in production, development and research of fisheries (marine and aquaculture) across Asian countries. The society publishes journals, articles, newsletter and events related to sharing information on fisheries and aquaculture, while also providing a platform for discussion as well as opportunities among stakeholders to hold meetings, symposiums, conferences, etc. (Asian Fisheries Society, 2020).

In 2010, AFS became the first society to establish an entire website, Genderaquafish.org, (Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries, 2020) as a platform to:

- create awareness while also discussing issues related to fisherwomen in the marine and aquaculture sector in Asia and the world over;
- advocating and lobbying for the importance of including gender and women in the fisheries and aquaculture interventions within international organisations and programmes;
- establishing and bringing together local networks and organizations that work on similar issues

The society aims to achieve the above goals and objectives through conducting regular symposium, publishing newsletters, articles, documentaries, etc. An example of creating awareness as well as the need for collaboration between government and Nonprofits can be seen in the published ‘Global Symposium on Women in Fisheries’, 2001. It documents a study conducted by the Department for International Development which highlights the constraints faced by fisherwomen in accessing public transport in the state of Tamil Nadu, south-east coast of India. These constraints were faced due to cultural issues where fisherwomen were considered ‘unclean’, hence not allowed on public buses. Secondly, the lack of existing transport between the fish landing centres and markets lead to women losing out on good quality fish and customers. Issues such as these, have been highlighted in Chapter 2 – section on transport- of the productive sector of the value chains. Further, it shows the intervention by NGOs that not only provided bus services but encouraged women to come together and voice out their rights, i.e. to be provided with state-run public transport thereby pushing for a collaboration between the two.

2. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Established in 1984, Bangalore, Karnataka, DAWN is a feminist network organization consisting of scholars, researchers and activist advocating for global issues -political, social, economic, cultural- affecting women across the regions of the South – Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean and the Pacific.

Through their work on gender and development, they seek to support and mobilize women organizations/ movements to fight for equal rights at the national, regional and global level (DAWN, 2020). Some of their activities include:

- Participation in regional and global platforms of inter-governmental and non-governmental mediums, to question and advocate the policies and practices that neglect the needs of women from the global south;
- Conceptualizing and disseminating studies related to economic, social, political and cultural structures that cause and sustain inequalities – gender, class, race, etc.;
- Providing research and activism training to young feminist working on similar issues such as DAWN (DAWN, 2020).

In a panel discussion on ‘Blue Economy’ held in collaboration with Pacific Network on Globalization in March 2019, DAWN’s General Co-coordinator, Gita Sen put forth the work of Blue Economy as an area of work that cuts across two of DAWN’s themes of focus - Political Economy of Globalization and Political Ecology and Sustainability. She states that both the oceans and climate are unpredictable but common to everyone, hence concerned and in disagreement of the suggested Public, Private Partnership (PPP). Hence, calls forth for action from civil society, academics and research to discuss a more an integrated approach that will not impact the livelihood of the most vulnerable - small scale community in the Global South (DAWN, 2019).

3. International Collective in Support of Fish workers (ICSF)

ICFS is an international governmental organization with a similar agenda and focuses in line with AFS and DAWN. The network works towards influencing policymakers at national, regional and international level for due recognition of issues relating to small-scale fishers, especially the marginalized. ICSF has a designated platform where issues related to fisherwoman are discussed, namely, ‘Women in Fisheries’. The platform creates awareness on the multiple roles women play in the sector i.e. productive and reproductive (ICSF, Women in Fisheries, 2020), which have been stated and analyzed in Chapter 2. The programmes implemented by ICSF address these cross-cutting themes of gender and women in fisheries, advocating acknowledgement of their roles, involvement in decision making while also promoting their equitable access to resources (International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, 2020).

3.2 Self Help Groups

The SHG movement was initiated with the main purpose of empowering women from the grassroots level for income-generating activities by providing training and capacity building. The women participating in these SHGs organize themselves, identify their strengths, analyse their issues and work towards a common goal. SHGs across India are supported by Non-Profits (national and international) and government bodies that could be linked to banks that provide credit (Jose & Nair, 2019).

Over the years, with support in the form of various project initiations, SHGs have been formed; and with the provision of initial credit as well as training, women have been able to open bank and saving accounts, become entrepreneurs, started investing in additional income-generating activities, etc. The section below presents two examples of how SHGs have enhanced fisherwomen's lives in India.

Table 6: Role of SHGs

East Coast of India		
Details of the SHG	Inputs provided	Impact
<p>Name: Seaweed Squad State: Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu Funders: World Bank and Government of Tamil Nadu</p> <p>The SHG – 6 women- was created post-2006 tsunami due to loss of livelihood of fishermen</p> <p>Started as a project under 'coastal disaster risk reduction' (World Bank, India's Seaweed Squads)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women trained in modern seaweed production and provided knowledge of the end-to-end operation of the value chain harvesting, transplanting, drying and selling ▪ SHG's provided with rafts and seeds, post-training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in labour-intensive work – as they do not have to search for seaweed as it is now farmed by them along the coastline ▪ Able to perform both productive, reproductive and care work without being overwhelmed – the majority are women from FHH ▪ Sense of independence (i) as they are involved in the entire value chain; (ii) contributing members within the household, therefore, use their income towards their own needs well as education of children ▪ Role models in the community inspiring other women ▪ Training provided has brought about awareness of the effects on the environment and a better way of cultivating seaweed

Boost Women's Incomes and Confidence, 2018)		
<p>State: Tamil Nadu</p> <p>Funders: World Bank and Government of Tamil Nadu</p> <p>The SHG consist of 4 widowed women that lost their husbands due to natural disasters (World Bank , A Fish Kiosk Offers Indian Fishermen's Widows a Way Out of Poverty, 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provided with kiosk ▪ Soft skill training in handling fresh fish and preparing value-added products, sales, marketing, sale and accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Turned into entrepreneurs, earning a sum of INR. 5,000 per month ▪ Able to pay off debts taken for children education and marriages ▪ More confident in the community
West Coast of India		
Details of the SHG	Inputs provided	Impact
<p>State: Wadatar, Maharashtra</p> <p>Training: United National Development Programme (UNDP) (Matis Iceland , 2019)</p> <p>Initiated in 2013 to train 6 women in innovative methods of farming oysters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women made the initial investment of purchasing the materials – bamboo, ropes and setting up of oyster shells ▪ Training provided by UNDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First all-women oyster farmers in the state ▪ Reduction in labour-intensive work- as they farm the oyster themselves, hence don't have to collect from seashore or rock ▪ The project has been replicated across 8 other regions with the formation of over 12 SHGs ▪ They sell a bountiful and the profits are shared among themselves at the end of the year. Some of the profits are used towards other income-generating activities such as preparing ladoos (sweets) that are sold in the community itself

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of achievement and empowerment as they are contributing members of the family and not dependent on their spouses ▪ Inspiration and encouragement to other fisherwomen to not be liabilities on their husbands but to stand on their own feet
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3.3 Cooperatives and Federations

Membership into any formal organizations such as fisheries cooperatives or associations provides a sense of belongingness to its members. These are predominant among male members than female, but at times men from poorer families also get excluded (Overa 1993; Walker 2002 in Weeratunge et al., 2010: 407). Provided below are examples of women cooperatives that started as SHGs with help from local/ international organizations and have transformed into federations or associations.

Table 7: Role of Cooperatives and Federations

East Coast of India		
Details of Cooperative/ Federation	Inputs provides	Impact
<p>State: Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh</p> <p>Funders: Government of Andhra Pradesh, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (C.F.T), Fisheries Department</p> <p>Award-winning documentary of WSI Film festival showcases fisherwomen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grant provided for products such as icebox, van, place to set up van for sale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each earning INR 8,000 per month ▪ Requested government for an additional grant to set up one more van

<p>collective initiated a mobile van in 2017 under the name of 'Fish Nutri Cart' through which they sell value-added products (Pandey & Pandey, 2019)</p>		
<p>Name of Cooperative: Samudram Trading Fisherwomen Collective Producer Company Limited (Misra, 2016)</p> <p>State: Odisha, India</p> <p>Funders: With support from Oxfam it has transformed into a cooperative and in 2012 further into a producer company</p> <p>Current membership: 3,889 members on board working across 21 coastal blocks across six districts namely, Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak and Balasore</p> <p>Samudram as an SHG was started by fisherwomen vendors to fight against the social evils of alcoholism and gambling as they constantly faced domestic violence as well as lived in indebtedness</p>	<p>Setting up of procurement centres, equipping them with deep freezers, ice boxes, ice grinding machines, weighing scale and bamboo mats to dry the fish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are shareholders in the company ▪ Involved in end-to-end of the value chain as well as production and sale of value-added products ▪ Empowerment of women both within and out of the household as they are earning and contributing members, hence take decisions with regards to the health and education of their children. Also, involved in purchasing and selling property which was earlier done by men ▪ Challenge the stereotypical roles as they are managing the business, present in markets handling the accounts and finances ▪ Also, paying off debts taken by husbands which in turn has brought about a change in the mentality of men (Misra, 2016)

West Coast of India		
Details of Cooperative/ Federation	Inputs provided	Impact
<p>Name of Cooperative: Marol Bazar Koli Mahila Mase Vikreta Sanstha (MBKMMVS) (Peke, 2013)</p> <p>State: Mumbai, Maharashtra</p> <p>Started in 2005, as women faced inconveniences and had to work in filthy conditions in fish markets as local authorities in the name of redevelopment took down the market</p> <p>Current membership: 3,500 members</p>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market reconstructed after numerous protests and constant pressure by women on local authorities With the membership fee, the fisherwomen have hired security guards as well as have access to lighting facility, washrooms, clean water, a restroom for both men and women

A pictorial representation has been provided below that showcases the benefits of training and credit provided to fisherwomen part of SHGs, cooperatives and federations

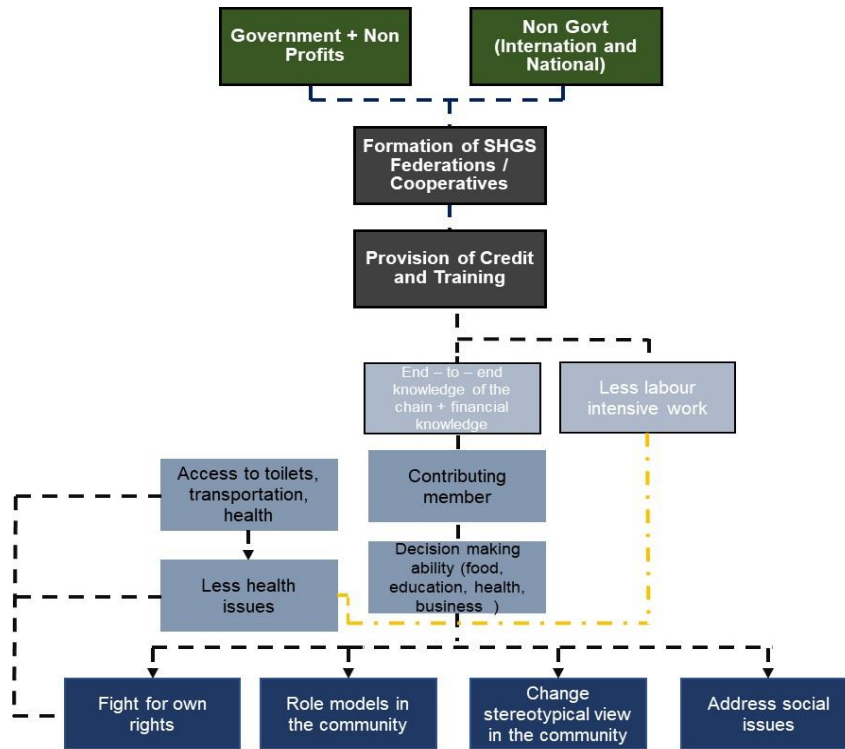


Figure 7: Impact of being part of Support groups

Source: Author

3.4 Summary of findings

a. Fisherwomen are not docile women

From the above examples, it can be concluded that fisherwomen once provided with a platform, organized and trained are not passive but fighters. Being part of these support groups brings a sense of belongingness where women have demonstrated more power rather than as alone retailers. For instance, fisherwomen part of the ‘Samudram Trading Fisherwomen Collective Producer Company Limited’ in Odisha, are seen fighting against social causes of alcoholism that have disrupted their lives as well as made them victims of DV; hence seen shutting down liquors shops in their localities. This reflects the strength of SHGS, unlike in Chapter 2 – section 2.5 (c) wherein, women in Kerala, have normalized this behaviour.

Similarly, fisherwomen part of the MBKMMVS cooperative in Mumbai while protesting are seen demanding for the redevelopment of the market. On the other hand, traditional fisherwomen in Vasco, Goa who have set up their fish markets are seen protesting against kiosks that were illegally selling fish in their space, which directly affected their business. For instance, Caridade Fernandes, President of the Vasco Fish Market Vendors stated, **“If the authorities don’t do anything women will take the law in their hands”** (Goa365, 2018: 1:23 – 1:25).

b. Transformative effects of access to credit and training

SHGs and Cooperatives cited above that have received initial credit or other forms of support through capacity building, and training either solely from International organizations (INGOs) or through collaboration between INGO's and government bodies as in the case of seaweed squad or the widowed fisherwomen group in Tamil Nadu that were provided with kiosk are seen prospering. Therefore, addressing gender-specific needs (Moser, 1989). Moreover, women part of the oyster farming group in Wadatar, Maharashtra has not only invested further into other income-generating activities but are also seen role models in the community, which earlier rejected supporting them.

Moreover, we also see a shift in the 'gender division of roles' and the 'power dynamic' within the household (Sen, 1990 and Agarwal, 1997). For instance, women part of the seaweed squad, Tamil Nadu; the oyster farmers from Maharashtra and women part of Samudra, Odisha are not only as contributing members within the household but also seen taking financial decision for themselves, their children as well as those made in the market, therefore acknowledging their 'perceived contribution'. Furthermore, the World Bank-supported project in Tamil Nadu which provided kiosks for widowed women challenges the patriarchal views of the communities in Tamil Nadu that looked down upon them.

c. Transformative effects of access to basic facilities

The members of the Cooperative MBKMMVS through their membership fee are seen addressing gender basic needs (Moser, 1989) of lighting, toilets, resting area that provides retail fisherwomen security. These challenges have been cited by fisherwomen across the productive sector of the value chain, especially those working in structured and unstructured markets.

Similarly, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala female fish workers part of the National Fish Workers Forum are seen on strike outside State Secretariats demanding for a special bus for the women fish vendors which was earlier terminated. As a strategy, the protest was also attended by men (ANI News Official, 2019).

To summarize this chapter, there seems to be a common thread/ relation between the role of networks and support groups. Where the latter showcases the importance and influence of support groups, the prior advocates for it. Based on the above initiatives, it can be said that projects supported and implemented by international organizations across both the east and west coast of India, involving women have been successful. The ripple effects of it can be seen in the demand for the replication of the projects in other districts and regions along the coastline. The fisherwomen-married and those from FHH- part of these projects state to be more independent, have more self-confidence and are role models to other women in the community. Both networks and support groups are seen advocating for gender practical and strategic needs (Moser, 1989), while NGOs in collaboration with government bodies are seen addressing those gaps. Therefore, suggesting a joint effort from the government, NGOs, academicians and civil society to come together. Nonetheless, one is also aware of the flip side of this support (not each of them is successful), especially those that have 'mixed membership'. Activist Philomena in her interview with the Hindu shares that organizations at times involve women to show diversity and inclusion, but in most cases, they are seen holding lower positions (Programme for Social Action, 2017).

The discussion above shows that there is an urgency to critically look at the policies and schemes to assess if they are gender-sensitive, gender transformative and gender-neutral to address the above-mentioned issues and needs of the fisherwomen. These will be further assessed in the chapter below.

Chapter 4

Policies and Schemes

This chapter shall assess the role of policies and schemes implemented at the international, national and state level to see how sensitive and inclusive they are towards the needs of the fisherwomen.

4.1 International Policy, Guidelines, Initiatives adopted by India

a. **Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries**

Of the 170 countries, India has adopted the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries which aims at preserving, conserving and enhancing the sustainable use of the fishing resource. It is used as a framework at the international and national level while creating policies and other institutional frameworks (The Food and Agriculture Organization, 2020).

The code of conduct is so broad that it has excluded women, thereby gender blind to their needs.

b. **Blue Growth**

Launched in 2013, Blue Growth is a long-term initiative to promote the sustainable use of oceans resources for economic growth, social development, food security and decent work. Guided by the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, it works towards a common goal by looking at integrating economic, social and environmental issues (Policy Support and Governance Gateway, 2020).

Therefore, it can be summarized that the fisheries policies/ framework created across the globe adhere to the 1995 Code of conduct for responsible fisheries, which has been gender blind. It has not acknowledged the discrimination, exploitation and marginalization of fisherwomen in the sector (Qusit, 2016), which is reflected in the Blue Growth initiative geared towards pure economic growth.

c. **Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (VGSSSF)**

The VGSSSF was developed as an accompaniment to the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, through a collaborative, consultative and participatory effort between various stakeholders. It was created to bring about recognition as well as address the issues of SSF in this globalized and modernized world, especially addressing challenges of fishers that have been neglected and discriminated against.

This is the first guideline to address, incorporate and emphasize the inclusion of women and gender in the small-scale fisheries value chain. Section 8 (Food and Agriculture Organization of the Nations, 2015) in the guideline addresses the same – women’s equal participation in the decision-making process. Further, it also incorporates the principles of human rights and dignity; respect of cultures; non-discrimination; gender equality and equity and, equity and equality, etc. (Kurien, 2015).

Moreover, under the theme: **Social development, employment and decent work**, suggest:

- Section (6.2), address the issues of decent work and employment – suggesting that states endorse and invest in health, education, literacy as well as social security schemes for women as well as traditional fishers. Moreover, it states, that the state must also provide access to basic needs such as access to safe drinking for personal and household purposes and basic sanitation;
- Section (6.5), states the recognition of SSF work in pre- and post-harvest activities;
- Section (6.9), states the provision of a safe environment to work in the sector as well as addresses issues of violence faced within the community and household (Food and Agriculture Organization of the Nations, 2015) while also promoting investment in the post-harvest sector (Kurien, 2015).

It could be inferred that, after numerous years, the 2015 VGSSSF by FAO has brought in some respite while acknowledging the role of women in the pre- and the post-harvest sector as well as addressing gender and women’s issues. Moreover, it addresses some of the gender practical and gender-specific issues incurred by these fisherwomen in the ‘productive sector’ further addressing issues such as DV within the four walls of the household.

4.2 National Policy and Schemes

The governance structure of the Fisheries Sector has been provided below to help the reader understand the different layers under which policies and schemes are conceptualized, rolled out and implemented across India which at times could overlap each other. For instance, certain policies/ schemes are rolled out at the central level to all states. The sanctioned budget for the same is divided between the centre and the state government. Whereas, all states also have their own policies and schemes for which the budget allocation and monitoring is done the state themselves. The diagram below captures the hierarchy and structure of the Fisheries Sector in India.

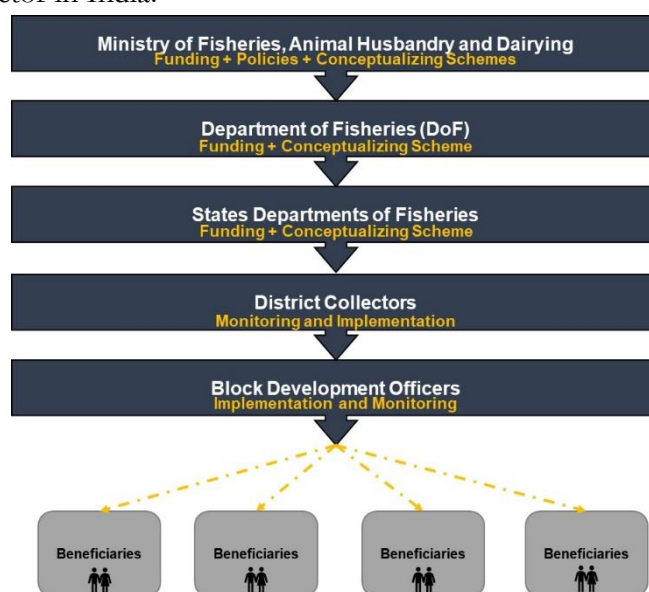


Figure 8: Hierarchy and structure of the Fisheries Sector in India

Source: Author

a. National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017

The strategy adopted by National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017 is based on numerous pillars, some of which entail the socio-economic upliftment of fishers, inter-generational equity and gender justice which act as a guide for stakeholders to take appropriate actions to improve the marine sector. The government through this Policy aims to support women part of SHGs and cooperatives by providing financial schemes, hygienic working conditions, and better transportation for retail vendors, etc. (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, 2017).

Though the strategy under **gender equality** recognizes women's involvement in fisheries activities, especially in post-harvest activities i.e. 66 per cent as well as in retail. Unfortunately, it fails to address/ acknowledge women's participation in reproductive work or their involvement in fishing or gleaning activities.

b. Draft National Fisheries Policy (NFP)

Draft National Fisheries Policy adopted in February 2020 has been prepared on the pillars of equity and equality while also adopting an integrated approach to mainstreaming gender and inter-generational equity. The section, **cross-cutting issues**, point (xxi) Welfare and Gender equity, mentions the integration and mainstreaming of fisherwomen working in the fisheries and aquaculture value chain. Similarly, one of the policy strategies is aimed towards supporting women part of SHGs and cooperatives by providing financial schemes (women specific), hygienic working conditions, etc. (Department of Fisheries, National Fisheries Policy, 2020, 2020).

NFP is largely geared towards the line of economic development supporting institutions that are export-oriented and production-driven, with limited focus on the small-scale fishers which could lead to the marginalization of these fishers (Vohra , 2020). Additionally, Jesu Renthinam from the National Fish Workers' Form shares that the policy is not 'women-friendly' acknowledging that women play a vital role in the sector (Take a fresh look at draft national fisheries policy, organisations urge Centre, 2020). Furthermore, the policy negates the prevalent caste and class system in India, as fishing communities are not homogenous (Vohra , 2020).

c. National Scheme of Welfare of fishermen

Provided below is the outlay of the Scheme (Department Of Animal Husbandry And Dairying, 2020)

Table 8 National Scheme of Welfare of Fishermen

Components	Details
Development of Model Fishermen Villages (MVS)	Eligibility: Only active fishermen, from below poverty line family/ land-less family or kutcha structure of a house Funding: Centre and State – 50:50 (varies based on geographical area, beneficiary background i.e. ST/ SC)
Group Accident Insurance Scheme (GAIS) for Active Fishermen	Eligibility: Fishers Funding: Premium taken by FISHCOPFED; Centre and State – 50:50 (varies on geographical area, beneficiary background i.e. ST/ SC and type of accident – death or partial disability)
Savings-cum-Relief (SCR) Programme	Eligibility: Fishermen part of Cooperative Society/Federation/Welfare Society, BPL family, no use of a mechanized boat, and below 60 years and if there are no employed members in the family Funding: Varies on geographical area, beneficiary background i.e. ST/ SC

The name of the scheme, ‘National Scheme of Welfare of Fishermen’ itself creates a distinction between fishermen and women in the sector. Furthermore, MVS mentions ‘active fishermen’ as one of the key criteria for eligibility of the scheme. Therefore, making the Scheme gender blind and insensitive, as they negate the presence of fisherwomen, while further marginalizing fishers from FHH. From the above three subcategories, only GAIS can be availed by fisherwomen that are part of cooperatives.

d. Blue Revolution (BR)

Initiated in 2015 to increase economic growth, the BR is an ‘umbrella schemes’ with multi-dimensional activities for the integrated development of fisheries production and productivity in India. The schemes are being implemented through NFDB for 5 years (India, 2020).

Table 9: Blue Revolution Schemes

Sr.No	Components	Details
A	Ornamental Fisheries	
1	Backyard Hatchery	40% subsidy for women Cooperatives and SHGs
2	Setting up of Aquarium Fabrication Units	
B	Seaweed Culture	
1	Seaweed Culture	40% subsidy on a unit for women SHG or an entrepreneur
C	Domestic Fish Marketing	
1	Development / Construction of Fish retail markets	30% subsidy for fisherwomen
2	Setting up of retail outlet	30% subsidy for fisherwomen
3	Fisherwomen involved in retailing	40% subsidy for fisherwomen/ fisherwomen cooperative
D	Fish Processing	
1	Setting up of Solar fish dryers	30% subsidy for fisherwomen/ fisherwomen SHG/ entrepreneur
2	Platform for sun drying	

Just as the NFP, the BR schemes were initiated to increase economic growth through an increase in productivity. Unlike other schemes, the BR scheme does have a few schemes allocated towards women, especially those working in the post-harvest sector. Nevertheless, women still face challenges, for instance, fisherwomen in Madh and Palghar districts of Mumbai making use of solar dryers to dry their fish find the maintenance cost expensive. Additionally, only one vendor can dry fish at a given point of time. Hence women prefer naturally sun-drying their fish as it is more feasible (Peke, 2013).

e. Allocation of resources: Gender Budgets

An approach that was encouraged internationally since 2001, was adopted by the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance since the year 2005 – 2006 to address gender inequalities. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance has been issuing ‘gender budgeting’ as part of the overall budget for the country, instructing all Ministries to initiate a Gender budgeting cell (Ministry of Women & Child Development - Budgeting For Gender Equity, 2020).

The table below reflects the total Gender budget of each state and the allocation towards fisherwomen. The State of Tamil Nadu and Kerala do have schemes allocated towards fisherwomen, i.e. for cooperatives, relief schemes. Unfortunately, the state of Odisha under the head of Fisheries & Agriculture Resource Development has proposed the scheme - Support

to Farmers for layer farming in Deep Litter System through WSHG Mode- excluding fisherwomen.

Table 10: Gender Budget

Sr. No	State Name	Head account	Outlay for fisher- women (INR) Lakhs / Crore	Total gender budget allo- cated (INR) 100 % Crore	%
East Coast					
1	Odisha (Finance Department G. o., 2020)	Fisheries & Agricul- ture Resource Development	11.99 lakhs	2,68,719.49	0
2	Tamil Nadu (Finance Department G. o., 2020)	Relief Scheme	63 crores	46,52, 55, 00	1.3
		Fisherwomen Co- operative Societies	79 lakhs		
West Coast					
3	Kerala (Finance Department G. o., 2020)	Support for liveli- hood activities	1700 lakhs	1,50,933	1.3
		Cooperatives	300 lakhs		

4.3 State Policy and Schemes

a. Market Redevelopment Policy Mumbai, Maharashtra

To register fishers across the city, the local authorities -Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai- sanctioned the **Market Redevelopment policy** in the year 2002 which provided licences to fishers to work in markets that were redeveloped. The failure of the policy could be owed to the faulty implementation, which since has been revised through years 2004 and 2005 but has had a severe effect on the fisherwomen community.

In 1956 when the local authorities took over the fish market in Mumbai to formalise it, they started issuing licences to bring in the market tax system that which would pay for any maintenances and renovation. The *Koli* women refused to apply for licences as they felt and believed themselves to be the original inhabitants and owners of the markets, due to which, no *Koli* women got a formal licence till 2006 (Peke, 2013) One hand this reflected their strong agency but on the other hand, the consequences were felt in 2005 when the local authorities once again started registering the women fish vendors. Due to lack of documentation (copy of the market pass that women worked before 2000 and 2005), women who sat in the market for generations got left out of the process (Peke, 2013). Likewise, fisherwomen with no licenses are now making use of stalls of licensed women as in most cases their economic status has improved. In the cases of door-to-door vendors, the *bhayias* due to their close political affiliation have been provided identity cards, which, these women vendors don't possess and hence always face issues with the authorities (Peke, 2013).

b. Insurance and welfare Schemes implemented across the east and west coast of the country

Table 11: Insurance and welfare Schemes implemented across the country

East Coast of India		
State name	Name of Scheme	Benefits
Odisha (Government of Odisha, 2012)	Matshyajibi Unnayana Yojana	Financial assistance of INR 10,000 for women SHGs –an INR 5,000 as a revolving fund
Tamil Nadu (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2020)	Welfare Scheme: Saving cum relief	For fisherwomen and fishermen
	Welfare Scheme: Issuing biometric cards	The sanction for the biometric card for fisherwomen
West Coast of India		
State name	Name of Scheme	Benefits
Kerala (Matsyafed, 2018)	Vanitha Bus by Matsyafed	Charing nominal rates, bus services for fisherwomen from fish landing centres to markets - Trivandrum & Ernakulam Districts
Goa (Fisheries, 2020)	Post-harvest: Fish Drying	Must be a traditional fisherwoman for more than 10 years

The table above presents a few state-led schemes for women, which showcases Tamil Nadu as the only state to provide the ‘saving cum relief’ benefit for women fishers, which in most cases is directed towards men during the non-fishing period. While the others provide schemes related to post-harvest activities. Moreover, it is also the only state to provide biometric cards for fisherwomen.

The state of Maharashtra has no schemes specifically tailored towards the needs of fisherwomen/ vendors or even social security schemes such as saving-cum-relief, widow or old age pension that could help in improving their conditions and capacity. This concern has been voiced by the fishermen and women in Mumbai who share that do not receive any assistance from the government, especially during the monsoon when they have no source of income. They share that the number of subsidies and schemes provided for agriculture is more than what is provided to them (Peke, 2013).

4.4 Summary

The table presented below provides a snapshot view that showcases some of the GPN and GSN that have and those that have not been addressed by policies and schemes rolled out at the international, national and state level.

Table 12: Summary of Policies and Schemes

Policies / Schemes / Guideline	Gender Practical Needs					Gender Strategic Needs		
	Transport	Health	Water & Toilet	Safety Gears	Decision making	ID/ Recognition	Credit	DV
International Level								
Code of conduct	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Blue Growth	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
VGSSSSF	x	√	√	x	√	√	√	√
National Level								
National Policy on Marine Fisheries	√	x	x	x	x	√	√	x
Draft National Fisheries Policy	x	x	x	x	x	x	√	x
National Scheme of Welfare of fishermen	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Blue Revolution	x	x	x	x	x	√	√	x
State Level								
Market Redevelopment Policy Mumbai, Maharashtra	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x
Matshyajibi Unnayana Yojana, Odhisa	x	x	x	x	x	x	√	x
Welfare Scheme: Saving cum relief, Tamil Nadu	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Welfare Scheme: Issuing biometric cards, Tamil Nadu	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x
Vanitha Bus by Matsyafed, Kerala	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Post-harvest: Fish Drying, Goa	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Source: Author

To sum it up, it can be said that VGSSSSF is the only guideline that acknowledges gender and fisherwomen's contribution and needs in SSF. Majority of the other policies and schemes do address a few needs, but unfortunately, most are geared towards economic growth. They are not gender-neutral but also gender blind and insensitive towards fisherwomen. These gaps have been voiced by Networks such as DAWN, AFS and ICSF to bring about awareness of how these fisherwomen's work is undervalued. The above-mentioned examples of SHGs and Cooperatives show how these gaps could be bridged if policies and schemes were more gender-neutral and sensitive to fisherwomen working in the sector.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This Research paper has been a learning experience, as, it has helped me understand the sector more comprehensively, have a deeper understanding of the vital role fisherwomen play in the small-scale fisheries local value chain. Through the use of various works of literature, research studies, journal articles, networking websites, Non-profit websites and most importantly the use of videos and documentaries, it was possible to gain a deeper insight into the lives of these women, which went beyond the productive sector and into the four walls of their households.

My argument that fisherwomen's work tends to be invisible to policymakers, markets, society, communities they reside in, their family members could be affirmed. Through this paper, I have tried to 'unmask' those notions not only for myself, but I also hope for the reader of this paper. This paper has not only helped me grow professionally but, also provided a more in-depth insight, where I have been able to explain nuances using the VC framework along with concepts to define phenomena's while assessing them. It has also helped me address the question I set out seeking answers too, which are as follows:

a. Locating fisherwomen's role and activities in the VC

Fisherwomen are seen working in both the 'productive' and 'reproductive' sector of the small-scale fisheries local value chain. The notion that these women work only in the post-harvest sector has been challenged, as this research study captures their labour in the pre-harvest and harvest sector defying gender stereotypes, cultures, tradition, etc. which in some cases act as barriers. It shows that the division of labour between men and women are not uniform, but fluid.

Moreover, the paper also highlights the paucity of gender practical needs (absence of safety gears, lack of basic water and sanitation facilities, transportation, etc.) and gender-specific needs (identification cards, credit facilities, etc.) (Moser, 1989) that hinder their performance in the chain, further marginalizing women from female-headed households.

Further, the chain which has been extended to assess the reproductive sector highlights fisherwomen's activities within the household. Regardless of their marital status, age or the segment of the (productive) value chain they work in, fisherwomen are seen cooking, cleaning, performing care activities, etc. leaving no time for themselves (*time poverty*). Despite all these efforts, women yet have weak bargaining (Agarwal, 1997) and decision-making power with regards to finances, health and education for themselves and their children. Finally, the paper captures fisherwomen's consumption pattern, where these women are seen either missing, forgoing or consuming less nutritious food which directly impacts their health.

b. Role of Networks and Support groups

Networks and Support groups are seen bridging the gaps that policies and schemes have ignored.

Networking organizations such as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, International Collective in Support of Fish worker and Asian Fisheries Society have been creating awareness about the issues fisherwomen face in the sector while also advocating for their rights.

While on the other hand, fisherwomen part of SHG's, cooperatives, federations formed with initial credit and training from governmental and non-governmental bodies (international and national) are seen fighting against social issues in their communities, for basic amenities in retail markets, transportation, etc. (gender practical needs). On the other hand, they are also seen as contributing members into their families, taking financial decisions,

repaying debts taken by their spouses as well as running businesses transforming them into role models for women in the community. These groups consist of women from married, divorced, separated and widowed families etc.

c. Policies and Schemes

To get a holistic view, the paper briefly assesses policies and schemes formulated and implemented at the international, national and state-level to gauge how gender-sensitive, gender-neutral or gender blind they are towards the needs of these fisherwomen.

At the international level, the VGSSSSF rolled out by FAO is the only guideline that addresses the gender practical (access to education, health, water and sanitation, decision making) and gender strategic needs (credit, identification cards) (Moser, 1989), while also addressing violence within the household.

Policies and schemes conceptualized at the national and state level are geared more towards economic growth and only have schemes for fisherwomen working in the post-harvest sector or those part of collectives/ cooperatives. Women who are working in other aspects of the chain have been excluded. Though some states such as Tamil Nadu have addressed women-specific needs, the others have overlooked them. Moreover, the sanctioning of gender budget is commendable, which showcases the rise in awareness level and the acknowledgement for working towards gender equality.

Overall, the policies and schemes implemented across India seem to be women unfriendly and gender blind to the granular needs of the fisherwomen.

1. Implications of the study for policy and advocacy

Fisheries as a thriving sector

In the Financial year 2018 – 2019, India exported **13, 92, 559 metric tonnes** of marine products earning a value of **INR 46, 589 crores**. The contribution to this export, from the marine sector from states such as Andhra Pradesh, was 604.95 metric tonnes, followed by Gujarat which accounted for 700.74 metric tonnes, Tamil Nadu 496.89 metric tonnes, Maharashtra 474.99 metric tonnes and finally Kerala and Karnataka accounting for 414.34 metric tonnes each (Government of India Ministry of Finance, 2020). Therefore, ranking India third in fisheries (India's Blue Economy net getting bigger! Country ranks third in fisheries and second in aquaculture, 2020).

Moreover, the adoption of the **Blue Revolution Scheme** (2015-2016), **Sagarmala programme** (2015 -2016) (Ministry of Shipping , 2020), that seeks to develop ports, and finally the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana** (2020 – 2024) (Department of Fisheries, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, 2020) are all geared towards pure economic growth which establishes the fact that India does see Fisheries as a booming industry, hence the investment into the sector. Yet, fisherwomen who are the backbone of this industry are 'invisible' and left out of most policies and schemes rolled out.

Another key reason for this 'invisibility' could be, the lack of accurate data. For instance, the Handbook on Fisheries Statistics, 2018 reflects 0 women engaged in full/ part/ or occasional fisheries activities in 2017 across the state of Goa. Based on literature studies, examples stated in the paper, as well as a personal observation, this does not hold true, as fisherwomen are seen selling dried fish in the local markets of Mapusa and Vasco. Similarly, the state of Kerala and Tamil Nadu reflects 0 women involved in part/ occasional fishing, which once again could be refuted based on the information presented in this paper (Ministry of Fisheries, 2019). Thus, making fisherwomen invisible to policymakers.

Therefore, there is a need for policies and schemes to be more gender-sensitive and gender transformative in their approach. Based on my findings and prior work in the sector, my recommendation would be:

a. Acknowledgement of Fisherwomen

Irrespective of caste, class or marital status, fisherwomen working in all nodes of the local value chain (pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest) must be given due recognition for the work they perform in the sector

b. Gender disaggregated data

There is a need to gather gender-segregated data, which would provide a clear picture of the number of fisherwomen working (full/part/occasionally) in the chain. This would further help in preparing tailor specific policies and schemes.

c. Sensitization Programmes

Sensitization programmes should be held for all stakeholders working in the sector. For instance, within the household spouses and extended family members should acknowledge and assist women in reproductive work and care work; the fishing communities that these women reside in could be supportive especially towards women from FHH.

Traders, auctioneers, hoteliers and those involved in the end-to-end of the chain to be more gender-sensitive towards fisherwomen's needs. For instance, if women miss a day of labour due to illness, their daily wage should not be deducted. Further, it is necessary to generate awareness and sensitization among customers, especially those who purchase fish from door-to-door vendors, street vendors and retail markets.

Finally, awareness among government officials and policymakers involved in the preparation and the implementation of schemes and policies to be more gender-aware, gender-inclusive and sensitive towards the granular needs of fisherwomen.

d. Preparing target specific policies and schemes

There is a need to prepare target specific policies and/or schemes for fisherwomen working in all aspects of the local value chain (pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest), which would address their granular needs. Due to the diversity of the country, these could be state-specific. For starters, policies and/or schemes could be initiated in certain parts of the value chain, after which, issues related in the entire chain could be addressed. These could be rolled out in collaboration with other Ministries to avoid duplication. For instance, the paper provides numerous examples of women in Tamil Nadu collecting seaweed, making use of poor safety gears. The State Fisheries Department could roll out specific schemes for providing safety gears for these women.

2. Directions for further research

Two areas need further research. First, there is a need to capture the silent voices of fisherwomen which have been highlighted in this paper through videos and documentaries. Unfortunately, academic studies, journals and other literature have neglected this. Here, photovoice represents an additional method that could enrich more traditional techniques of data gathering.

Secondly, there is a need to highlight the 'triple burden' that women encounter across the chain. Most of which are governed by customs, traditions, norms, society and in most cases, normalized. Therefore, there is a need to comprehend how these aspects can be acknowledged and incorporated into policies and schemes.

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