



GOVERNMENT AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF FISHERFOLK IN PUDUKKOTTAI DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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Abstract

The standard of living of fisherfolk in India is poor and backward. There are a number of initiations by all the Layers of Government to increase the standard of living of the fishermen especially marine fishermen. The author of this paper has made an attempt to review the initiations of government in improving the standard of living of the fishermen in Tamilnadu with special reference to Pudukkottai District. This revealed a number schemes and policies emphasised by the Government to improve and protect the life of fisherfolk in Pudukkottai District.

Keywords: Fisherfolk, Government, Pudukkottai District.

Introduction

Fisheries constitute an important source of livelihood for millions of people. Nearly 35 million fishers are directly engaged in fishing and fish farming as a full-time (i.e. where fishers receive 90 percent or more of their livelihood from fishing) or part-time occupation (FAO, 2002). Fishers are particularly concentrated in developing countries, where about 95 percent of the world's fishers live, and in Asia as a whole, where approximately 85 percent reside. Fishery policies that erode the economic foundations of fishers' communities will be more consequential in remote and rural areas of developing countries, where vastly more people rely on fisheries and many fewer alternative sources of livelihood exist.

Fish and fisheries products are considered superior to red meat in many parts of the world. As a result consumption of fishery products is on the increase among the health conscious world population. The fishery industries has generated enormous employment and export potentiality in fish production constitute an important source of high quality protein, vitamins, iodine, etc., Health conscious is now a days growing awareness in earth. Thus the consumption of fish attracted all persons owing to its health potentialities and mineral limits which instigate the importance of high consumption.

The fishery industry provides employment to large number of people who export fish items, earn huge amount of foreign exchange for the country. The role of fisherman in this vital sector of the economy has received more attention over the year. Fish and sea oriented business is now a chief source of export.

Fishing also provides a lot of indirect employment through connected activities like boat carving, fish processing, fish sales, fish transportation, basket making, ice manufacturing, salt making etc., The Growth of the fishing sector is now-a-days so spectacular, which eminently suited to assist a mass in the economically weaker and backward section of the society.

Fishing is one of the oldest means of subsistence to mankind. It has acquired such importance in the modern world that the survival of the human race demands attention to it. Many nations now completely exploit the virgin areas of the oceans with modern fishing fleets.

Profile of the Pudukkottai District

Pudukkottai District is well endowed with natural resources of land and sea, bounded by the marine hedge of Bay of Bengal in the east conjoined by the southern districts viz, Trichy, Sivaganga, Ramanathapuram and Thanjavur. It admeasures an area of 4663.29 sq.kms witha coastal length of 42.8kms. The district lies between 78.25' and 79.15' of the Eastern Longitude and between 9.50' and 10.40' of the Northern attitude. The District is composed by 3 Revenue Divisions, 11 Taluks, 44 Firkas and 763 Revenue Villages. At the developmental front, it has 13 Blocks, 497 Village Panchayats, 2 Municipalities and 8 Town Panchayats.

Total population in Pudukkottai district as of 2014 was 1618345 (male: 803188, female: 815157) and total household was 387679. The average family size in Pudukkottai district was 4.2. The density of population was 347 per square kilo meter. The sex ratio in Pudukkottai district was special as for 1000 males there were 1015 females. Literacy rate of male is 54.82 percent and female is 45.18 percent (illiterates: 507800). By religion 88 percent people belong to Hindu, 6.7 percent are Islam and remaining 5.5 percent Christian. 1115 persons were belongs to no religion. Agriculture is one of the primary occupations of the people of Pudukkottai district and paddy was the main crop cultivated.



Government Initiatives and Livelihood of FisherFolks In Pudukkottai District

Pudukkottai district has a total coastal length of 42.8 km serving 32 coastal villages and towns. Fishermen population of Pudukkottai district is 25027 (male 7880, female 6746 and children 10401). Among eleven taluks of Pudukkottai two taluks i.e. Manamelkudi and Avudaiyarkovil comprise all the 32 fishing villages. The coastal length starts from Kattumavadi and ends with Enathi. Entire coastal length is utilized by the fisher folk for fishing. The sea stretch is situated in Palk Bay entirely in continental shelf with a shallow region, muddy bottom having with various species of sea-weeds. Inland fishery, largely a seasonal activity, is concentrated in tanks and ponds in Alangudi, Thirumayam and Kulathurtaluks. The major fish varieties caught are ray fish, sharks, prawns, belonids, silver bellies, octopus and crabs¹.

Government has initiated a number of measures to improve the fisherfolk around the country, no exception in Tamilnadu and Pudukkottai District. In Pudukkottai District, the National Fishermen / Women Savingscum Relief Scheme envisages and supportsthe fishermen / fisherwomen financiallyduring fishing off season i.e.) October toDecember. Members of fishermen /fisherwomen Co-operative Society and who are below poverty line, engaged in fulltime fishing and aged between 18 and 60 arebenefiting from this scheme. Government protects the fishermen through Registration and licensing of fishing boatsas per the Tamil Nadu MarineFisheries Regulation Act, 1983.The Coast guard and Police department issues identity cards to fishermen to monitor and regulate the fishermen during fishing. As of 2014 about 14, 962 ID cards were issued in Pudukkottai District to fishermen. Theprotection of fisheries resources during fish breeding is done routinely every year throughban of fishing from April 15 to May 29 in Pudukkottai District. During this ban periodgovernment supports the livelihood of fisherfolk through relief assistance.

In order to protect the fisherfolk, the cooperative society has initiated FishermenAccident Group Insurance Schemethrough which the members can get a relief uptoRs. 1 Lakh in case of exigency while fishing.Another important scheme for protecting the livelihood of fishermen in Pudukkottai District is “Fishermen Accident IndividualInsurance Scheme” which is offered by fishermen cooperativesocieties.

In Pudukkottai District, sales tax exempted diesel is suppliedto fishing boats through Tamil NaduFisheries development Corporation Bunksand selected private bunks. Requiredquantity of diesel for fishing boats isreleased daily ascertaining the hours ofvoyage and hours of fishing. 560mechanizedfishing boats and 336 traditional fishingboats with outboard engine getthe benefit inPudukkottai district. Training to fisherfolk is offered through SGSY (SwaranjayantiGramaSwarozgarYojana) Scheme in Pudukkottai district. Through this scheme the fisherfolk get subsidies for sea weeding. Further, to strengthen the security, regular meetings with the fishermenof the fishing villages are convened by theAssistant Director of Fisheries which enlightens theimportance of security issues, advising themabout Iron Mouth Battle League prohibition,serious issues of illegal fishing, etc.On the job training to fisher youth on Modern fishing methods have been given to the students with a stipend of Rs. 400 in Pudukkottai District. Maritime education is provided to the students with financial assistance of Rs.50,000/-for the entire course to a candidate in twostages. This is done through the fishermen Co-operativeSociety member. Efforts have been taken by the District administration to build confidence among the fishermen to avert from tragedy as Tsunami has made panic among the fishermen.

Conclusion

The above discussion shows the initiations of Government to protect the fisheries and fisherfolks in Pudukkottai district. In spite of all these initiations, the standard of living of the people engaged in fisheries are backward and poor. Further they suffer from border problems with Sri Lanka.

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