



Milestones

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Women's gains: Kerala, India

1979: The state government of Kerala abolishes market tax applicable to women fish vendors selling one head-load of fish a day.

1981: The Fishermen's Welfare Corporation of the Government of Kerala starts exclusive buses that transport women fish vendors from landing centres to different fish markets. Women need to buy a monthly travel pass. Later, these buses begin plying across the district; now, women from their home villages in Trivandrum District can purchase fish from the landing harbour in Quilon for sale in the local market. Later however, the Welfare Corporation is abolished, and in 1991, the bus services are handed over to Matsyafed, Kerala's apex fishermen's co-operative.

1981: The Government of Kerala promulgates the Fishermen's Welfare Societies Act, redefining the term 'fisherman' to include women engaged in fish vending and net making.

1984: The Government of Kerala forms the Matsya Board (Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board) and abolishes the Fishermen's Welfare Corporation. The Matsya Board's definition of the term 'fisherman' is adopted from the Fishermen's Welfare Societies Act. This allows fisherwomen also to become Matsya Board members.

1989: Fisherwomen benefit from famine-cum-relief schemes in a few states in India. In some states fisherwomen are initially included but later excluded because

the Central Government's contribution to the scheme covers only fishermen and not fisherwomen. States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala start separate famine-cum-relief scheme for fisherwomen without assistance from the central government. In Tamil Nadu, under the scheme, a woman beneficiary contributes a sum of Rs. 75/- per month for eight months, with the State Government matching this amount. A total of Rs.1,200/- is given back to her during four lean months. 1,02,993 fisherwomen benefit from the scheme in Tamil Nadu during 2006-07. In Kerala, a similar scheme is implemented through local bodies.

1990s: Several fish markets are constructed for women fish vendors in many of India's maritime states and subsidies provided by the State government to local bodies for this purpose.

1991: A special wagon is made available to women fish vendors on passenger trains in southern Kerala and a few other parts on the west coast of India.

1992: As an outcome of women's struggles, fishers fishing in backwaters are granted compensation when inland fish is struck by the Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (EUS).

1997: The Labour Commissioner of Kerala decrees that the provisions of the Migrant Labour Act are applicable to women labourers migrating from Kerala to work in fish processing plants in Maharashtra and Gujarat. 