*Women in Fisheries news articles compilation*

*FROM MARCH 2020 to MARCH 2022*

***KERALA*:**

**1. Kerala: International Women’s Day: Two Kerala women to be honoured for successful ventures in fisheries sector**

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/good-news/2021/mar/07/international-womens-day-two-kerala-women-to-be-honoured-for-successful-ventures-in-fisheries-sect-2273451.html>

Raji George and Smija M B have all the reasons to cheer this International Women’s Day. In a model for women empowerment, both of them showed their grit to become successful entrepreneurs in the fisheries sector. While Raji George from Angamali in Ernakulam district scripted the success story in integrated farming, Smija, an engineering diploma holder who hails from Moothakunnam, near Paravur in Ernakulam, chose cage fish farming as her profession. In recognition of their achievements, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) will honour both the women entrepreneurs during the Women’s Day celebration to be held at the institute on Monday. Raji started her entrepreneurial initiative by establishing a fish farm named ‘Anna Aqua Farm’ in a defunct quarry near Angamaly, after receiving training from the CMFRI and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra functioning under the institute. Apart from fish farming, she also runs ‘Anna Agro Farm’, an agricultural farm focusing on organic vegetable cultivation. In addition, she undertakes fodder cultivation, an incubator for chicks and a poultry farm which includes chicks, ducks and quails. In as many as eight cages in a deep quarry of 60-feet depth, she farms fishes like gift tilapia, catla, catfish, rohu, mrigal and dam gold. Raji cultivates almost all types of vegetables on her agricultural farm avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Important crops on the farm include tomato, bhindi, cowpea, brinjal, chilli, carrot, ginger, turmeric, cauliflower, cabbage and tapioca. Her poultry farm has over 250 chicks including local breeds and around 300 quails. Maintaining a sustainable integrated farming system in the homestead plot of 75 cents, Raji George also rears cows and goats. She also finds time to empower the housewives of the locality in poultry farming through experience sharing and disseminating technical information based on her experience. She strategically utilises social media platforms to find a market for her produce and she made home deliveries too.

Smija started her venture by establishing a cage fish farming unit in the Periyar with the technical guidance of the CMFRI. Gradually she expanded her farming into more cages by ensuring the participation of other women in her locality in the venture. Now, she is the leader of a self-help group named ‘Periyar Activity Group’. Her leadership skill helped her popularize the cage farming technology in her entire locality and she made a huge impact in the area with many women forming self-help groups and launching cage fish farming. Her initiative helped many families in the locality to find a regular income through cage fish farming. Apart from her farming activities, she also focuses on providing training to a large number of women in her area inspiring them to become small-scale entrepreneurs in cage farming. CMFRI Director Dr A Gopalakrishnan will honour Raji George and Smija MB at the Women’s Day celebration to be held by the Women Cell of the CMFRI. Actor Subi Suresh will be the chief guest at the function.

**2. Kerala: Fisherwomen steady biz under Theeramythri project**

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/mar/21/fisherwomen-steady-bizunder-theeramythri-project-2432338.html>

The alternative livelihood initiatives for fisherwomen have managed to beat the hurdles posed by the Covid pandemic, enabling business worth over Rs 63 crore during the previous financial year.

Around 6,000 fisherwomen from 10 districts are part of the small business units started with government support. There are 1,578 small business units under Theeramythri, a project managed by the Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) — a body registered under the Fisheries Department —since 2010.

“Even when the state was affected by Covid, the women managed to do business worth Rs 63.75 crore in 2020-21. The target this fiscal is to conduct business for `80 crore,” said Asha Augustine, joint director of fisheries and executive director of SAF.

**3. Kerala: Women fish vendors from Anchuthengu capital form venture for doorstep delivery**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/women-fish-vendors-from-anchuthengu-in-kerala-capital-form-venture-for-doorstep-delivery/article65065451.ece>

If not for the pandemic, Joys Alex would likely have continued to frequent the Kaduvapally market near Kallambalam to sell fish. Today though, Joys and five other women have launched a venture for marketing fresh fish on WhatsApp.

Named Fresh Fish, it promises quality fish from women of Anchuthengu as part of a Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) Livelihood initiative. Others in the group are Shirley Paulose, Ajitha S., Jesly J, Liya V., and Lissy M.

Buffeted by a cyclone and floods a couple of years ago, women fish vendors were hit even harder by the COVID-19 lockdowns that led to the closure of many fish landing centres. When the catch did become available and some of the women such as Joys managed to purchase fish, they found no demand in markets, streets, or even in door-to-door sales.

The menfolk who were out of work in the wake of the pandemic began foraying into fish vending, selling fish at low prices. Many from outside the fishing community too saw this as an opportunity to roll out online ventures, promising fish at one’s doorstep. Says Joys who has been selling fish for nearly four decades: “Only one in 10 persons bought fish. We were not earning even half of what we needed to pay the bills, for children’s education and medicines, not to mention other expenses such as weddings. Then the men started taking over the sale of fish.”

The SEWA Union, of which Joys and many other fish vendors are members, mooted the idea of the women starting an enterprise themselves as an alternative to their traditional method of selling fish. It took some time, but one group, headed by Joys, finally came around to the idea, and decided to take the plunge at a meeting at Mambally. A couple of young housewives who too were SEWA members were roped in to make receiving orders and payments easier for the seniors.

Online training

SEWA then stepped in to provide the women a series of training in online marketing, how to purchase and sell fish, financial aspects and so on. It made the initial investment, supplying equipment needed to run the venture and a two-wheeler for making deliveries on the condition that the loan would be repaid in interest-free instalments that would in turn be used to help other groups.

Fresh Fish was launched on Wednesday. The number of orders received on WhatsApp has been going up as word goes round. Orders are received from 6.30 a.m. to 10 a.m., and deliveries are made to Attingal, Chirayinkeezhu, and Varkala areas, says Joys.

Sonia George, secretary of the SEWA Union, says talks are on to expand the initiative to other women’s groups, particularly from the coastal areas of the city such as Poonthura and Valiathura, that have evinced interest in online avenues of marketing fish. Fresh Fish service can be availed of in the WhatsApp numbers 8921658297 & 9497342327

**4. Kerala: Scheme for fisherwomen groups**

<https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/scheme-for-fisherwomen-groups/article37146979.ece>

Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) under the Fisheries Department has invited applications from fisherwomen groups to start enterprise units under Theeramythri project. Seventy five percent of the project cost will be grant, 20% bank loan and 5% beneficiary contribution. Application forms are available at the offices of SAF and Matsyabhavan. Last date for accepting applications is November 2. Call 9633076431, 9745403570 or 9895332871 for details.

**5. Kerala: Fisherwomen land in deep waters**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-women-fish-vendors-basket-of-woes-brims-over/article35885303.ece>

COVID-19 related curbs, difficulty in commuting, and arrival of sophisticated supply chains and apps during the pandemic have made life difficult for women engaged in fish vending across the State. While incidents of police brutality and ill-treatment by protocol enforcers are on the rise, the women say they are aghast at the lukewarm response of the government that considers safety of women a priority. “I have been selling fish for the past 35 years and life has never been so difficult. We are scared to sit at our usual spots and many times a day we are forced to run from one place to another with the heavy basket. These days we get panic attacks seeing government vehicles and we wonder if fish vending is an illegal affair,” says Mercy, a fisherwoman. She has lost several customers of late as people got accustomed to online purchases and home deliveries during the lockdown. “Most days we arrive late or are forced to conduct sales at different points due to the ever-changing norms.”

According to them, the recent incident at Attingal involving an elderly vendor is not a stray episode. “They say another incident at Paripally is fabricated, but in Attingal you all saw the woman begging the municipal employees not to take away her merchandise. Fisherwomen have been facing this issue at many places and the authorities keep supporting and justifying the perpetrators,” says Mable Rymond, president, Theeradesha Mahilavedi. With Matsyafed stopping its special bus service to fish landing centres, women are struggling to carry out sales at many places. “Arranging transportation and hiring vehicles to get the catch from harbours have added to our miseries,” she says. The women say that while the authorities mostly ignore other street vendors, they target fisherwomen. “At Attingal you saw the municipal employees taking the fish to the garbage van and the chairperson arguing for them. Our men risk their lives venturing into the sea in this weather and they simply throw it to the garbage heap. It’s our livelihood and seeing that broke our hearts,” says Mercy.

Jenet Cleetus, Thrivananthapuram district secretary of the Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation, says these incidents can be part of a larger conspiracy to help branded supply chains. “When these incidents continue the women will be forced to go in search of other options. They want to get rid of fisherwomen so that these suppliers will have a monopoly and it may be the reason for this open abuse of power. These women have been selling fish in the same area for decades. The authorities are now trying to kick them out exploiting the COVID-19 situation. They used a similar tactic to evict us from our homes in the name of blue economy. We have decided to launch strong agitations if these atrocities continue,” she adds.

**6. Kerala: Meet Haritha, the first woman captain of fishing vessels in India**

<https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/good-news/meet-haritha-the-first-woman-captain-of-fishing-vessels-in-india-qualified-captain-breaking-stereotypes-women-empowerment-1.6238790>

Many ships go fishing in the deep sea from India, but only a few women are in it. None of them is a captain. However, ‘breaking the male dominance’, KK Haritha, an Ezhupunna native, qualified as the captain of fishing vessels. Haritha is the first woman in the country to pass the ‘Skipper’ (Captain) examination for appointment to Marine Fisheries Research Vessels under the Union Government.

The result of the exam that was held on November 23 was released on the previous day. She started her success stories in the ‘Mate of Fishing Vessels’ examination conducted by the Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering (CIFNET). She sailed for 12 months on ships of the Union Government and private companies and received expert training. Also, she served as a Chief Officer of the Fisheries Survey of India.

Haritha attended the ‘Skipper’ test after sailing from Australia to the US aboard the Mumbai-based Synergy Mariners. After completing the Bachelor of Fisheries Science and Nautical Sciences (BFSC) in 2016, Haritha has been busy with her higher studies, international training and sailing. Haritha, who returned from a 20-day voyage, is set to sail again on December 10. She passed the exam amidst working. Haritha said the certificate would be issued within ten days. Haritha is the daughter of Kaithakuzhi Kunjappan and Sudharma of the Ezhupunna gram panchayat here.

**7. Kerala: India’s first licensed fisherwoman now collecting oyster to make ends meet**

<https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/offbeat/india-s-first-licensed-fisherwoman-now-collecting-oyster-to-make-ends-meet-1.5751812>

Rekha, the first and only woman who obtained a deep sea fishing license in India, is now making a living by collecting oyster from the shore. She earns Rs 60 for a large basket full of oyster shells. She manages to take care of her family including husband and four daughters with this job. ‘On some days, I keep searching in the sea for many hours but would not be able to fill even one basket,’ the 40-year-old woman said. Her life took a different turn after her husband Karthikeyan developed a heart disease. Rain havoc, trawling ban and lockdown also were barriers for her. When Rekha obtained deep sea fishing license in 2016, it had made headlines in the national media. She accompanied her husband while fishing in the deep sea and was hailed as a symbol of women empowerment and dignity of labour. Rekha’s house is located at Ethayi in Engandiyoor in Chettuva. The house is always under threat of high tides and rough sea. However, the family still lives there.

Hailing from Koorkenchery in Thrissur, Rekha shifted to the coastal area after marrying Karthikeyan, a fisherman. She had completed Plus Two and Hindi Vidwan course before marriage. Though she was not familiar with sea before wedding, it became part of life later. For deep sea fishing, they have to move at least 50 kilometres in the sea. There should be minimum 3 people in the boat. Rekha’s husband and a helper will be in the boat with her. Meanwhile, Karthikeyan was diagnosed with heart disease and fishing was stopped as per the doctor’s direction. They arranged surgery and treatment at Kottayam medical college. But the surgery was postponed after the second wave of pandemic intensified. Rekha and Karthikeyan have four daughters. Eldest one Maya was married off. Anjali, Devapriya and Lakshmipriya are the younger ones.

**8. Kerala: Gender budgeting touches Rs.4,025-cr.**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/gender-budgeting-touches-4025-cr/article33596027.ece>

Gender budgeting in the State has continued to move in the right direction with allocations for women going to 19.54%, a huge improvement from 11.4% in 2017-18. The gross provision for women in the State budget in 2020-21 was 18.4%. While the allocation for women-specific schemes has come down from 7.3% in 2020-21 to 6.54%, indicating slower growth, that for composite schemes has risen from 11.1% to 13% in the same period.

In 2020-21, Rs.1,509.33-crore was allocated for women-specific schemes and Rs.2,300.54-crore for composite schemes, taking the total gender budget for the year to Rs.3,809.87 crore, which was 18.4% of the total Plan outlay. The total outlay for 2021-22 has increased to Rs.4,025.4 crore (19.54%), with the allocation for women-specific components coming to Rs.1,346.91 crore and that for composite schemes to Rs.2,678.49 crore.

The budget acknowledges that though slow, there has been a growth in flow of resources to women in 2021-22 despite the shortfall in GST revenues, fiscal constraints, and huge losses in production and employment. This is owing to the emphasis on women’s employment and livelihood support measures. Funds have been allocated for livelihood support projects for Kudumbashree, agriculture, animal husbandry, women and child development, and fisheries under the Rebuild Kerala Initiative. Though women have been included in composite schemes in agriculture and allied activities and sectors such as IT and ITes and industry and services, their share in employment generation though small is growing.

It is expected that this year women will set up enterprises in select industrial parks, in nine of which women facilitation centres to support educated women’s participation in the workforce are proposed to be set up. A women entrepreneurship mission proposed by KSIDC, women entrepreneurship start-up programmes under the Kerala Startup Mission, Skill development and capacity building programmes, Gender Data Centre in collaboration with UN Women, a women football academy under the Kerala State Sports Council, building materials production unit by women, and allocation for civil defence of Kerala are some of the highlights of the gender budgeting this year.

For Anganwadis

The outlay for the Women and Child Development Department is Rs.901 crore. Of this, Rs.607 crore is for anganwadis. Monthly pension of anganwadi teachers has been increased to Rs.2,000, and that of helpers to Rs.1,500. Their monthly allowances too have been hiked. The outlay for women protection and development is Rs.208 crore. Child friendly model grama panchayats will be encouraged. An amount of Rs.84 crore has been earmarked for child protection and development.

**9. Kerala: Soft loans to cheer Kerala fisher women affected by COVID-19**

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/aug/15/soft-loans-to-cheer-kerala-fisher-women-affected-by-covid-19-2183762.html>

With the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the livelihood of fisher women the fisheries department has formed plans to revive their small businesses through institutional credit. Kerala Bank will offer revolving funds and working capital to women groups who are often had to depend on high interest rates charged by private lenders. The funds will be channelled through Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF). To begin with 1000 fisher women in Kollam and Alappuzha will get the revolving fund of Rs 10,000 each. They have been divided into 200 liability groups consisting of five members. Each group will get Rs 50,000 which they can use for fish sales or similar activities. “The fund given is free of interest and the group members get adequate time to return it,” said executive director of SAF, Sreelu N S. According to her, the scheme will be extended to fisher women in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam also by the end of this year. The members are encouraged to pay back on time with more money from the revolving fund. The beneficiaries are also eligible for long term credit and Kisan Credit Card. Fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma will inaugurate the project named 3R – Rebuilding, Revival and Reforms, on Saturday.The aid comes as a major boon for the fisher women as the interest rates charged on loans by loan sharks are often exorbitant.

For every Rs 900 given in the morning the fisher women have to pay Rs 1000 by the evening. According to Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) there are around 20,000 fisher women directly involved in fish mongering while an additional 30,000 are working in allied activities. SAF has also made deal with Kerala Bank to extend loans for alternative livelihood projects undertaken by women from the community. The bank has agreed to offer will offer soft loans worth Rs 5 crore to around 500 ventures, said Sreelu. According to her 50 per cent of the ventures started using the grants given by SAF have survived. It assumes significance as the national average is just 20 per cent. There are around 1500 ventures such as fish kiosks, dry fish units, eateries, tailoring units, even medical labs by the women.

**10. Kerala: Ban deepens crisis for fisherwomen**

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/jul/10/ban-deepens-crisis-for-fisherwomen-2167748.html>

The suspension of fishing activities along the coast have added to the miseries of fisherwomen due to Covid-19. The pandemic has put a question mark on the livelihood of several fisher families. The earnings by women has a major role in the financial stability of the family, said secretary of Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation (KSMTF) in Thiruvananthapuram, Janet Cletus. Compared to other districts, Thiruvananthapuram has more number of women involved in selling fish. The fishing activities were stopped on Wednesday as a measure to contain the pandemic in the coastal areas, particularly in Poonthura where more people have been infected. According to Janet, the measures taken by the government to enforce lockdown had been effective in Poonthura and nearby locations. A majority of people in the coastal villages are involved in fishing. This is why there is a low adherence to Covid-19 protocols in the coastal areas, she said. As the number of young men turning to fishing in coast now also have a threat to their livelihood from their own community. These are the men who have returned from Gulf countries or those who have lost job, said Janet.

They have taken over the sales on the road side and thereby turning away customers from fish markets where women have been selling fish for long, she said. In a fishermen family, there will be atleast one woman involved selling fish. T he savings are set aside for loan repayment, education and marriage of their children. According to KSMTF, the indebtedness have increased in the coastal region with few options for repayment ever since the lockdown was imposed. Valerian Isaac, a fishermen leader, said the lack of availability of fish was one of the major reasons by people take the risk of going to Kanyakumari for purchasing fish. One of the fish vendors turned out to be a source of infection and those who contracted the infection included fish selling woman in the local market.

**11. Kerala: Fisherwomen demand fair treatment from police**

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/17/fisherwomen-demand-fair-treatment-from-police-2131166.html>

Even as fruit and vegetable sellers have easy access to markets, small-scale fish vendors continued to be denied entry. The fish workers maintain that there are no clear-cut instructions whether the small-scale fish vendors can do business or not, even though they fall under essential services. This has led to a situation when the women would be driven away by police from markets. Meanwhile, many large-scale vendors are doing business without hindrance. Fisherwomen from Adimalathura and Pulluvila are allowed to sell fish outside the market and they follow social distancing too. Aat some point the crowd gets bigger and the police will be driving the customers and the sellers away, before they could even get the price of the fish they sold.

The police manage crowds at bank and at some shops, yet when it comes to fisherwomen, the authorities have double standards. They are paving way for large-scale vendors to sell rotten fish brought from other states. The government also needs to specify the restrictions when it comes to fishing community. As far as we know, only the fishing auction is banned as of now as it creates larger crowds. The women who carry fish on their heads to the markets near the coast are mostly the breadwinner of their families. They don’t have pensions and even for the ones who do have pension, the money will not be enough to make both ends meet, said T Peter, general secretary, National Fishworkers Forum. The plight of woman fisher sellers is the same in Pettah, Palayam and Poovar. We travel kilometres on foot to sell the fish. We don’t go from house to house anymore because of the restrictions. Our family will be hungry if we cannot sell the fish we buy after loaning money from the agents. We need immediate help from the authorities, said a fisherwoman.

**12. Fisherwomen in Kerala and their discontentment with globalization**

<https://feminisminindia.com/2020/03/10/fisherwomen-kerala-discontentment-globalisation/>

Kerala has a coastline of about 590 km., out of which 60% (as of 2017) has been usurped by the government and private companies. Large and small scale projects are implemented on this land (most of them funded by institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or the World Bank and by the government), with very little regard for environmental norms, and claiming resources that should be available to the community that inhabits these areas. Fishing has been a source of subsistence for traditional fisher folk communities, both for fishermen and fisherwomen, whereby the work done by the latter has been barely acknowledged. With the advent of globalisation and mechanisation, radical changes have come to the sector and to the communities associated with it. Production has shifted from communities to industries. Globalisation And Its Effects On Coastal Communities After Independence, it was felt that modernisation and mechanisation of the fishing sector would help increase productive capacity.

The Indo-Norwegian Project (INP) a tripartite agreement signed in 1953 in New Delhi between the United Nations, the Government of India, and the Government of Norway- came to be as an investment by a Social Democratic government in helping a backward economy. With the INP, came technological advancements in harvesting processes. These advancements were supposedly meant to promote economic growth and bestow upon these villages for better infrastructure. The 1960s saw an increase in the international demand for prawns, which encouraged the government to promote export-oriented prawn fisheries. Mechanised boats were built, and fishermen were trained to use trawl nets. Export oriented fisheries and a high rate of investment allowed merchants, financiers and middlemen to slide into the sector, gradually pushing out the traditional fishing community from mechanised fishing. Prolonged periods of mechanised deep sea fishing and aquaculture, also a brought about a multitude of problems ranging from over-fishing, depletion of the oceans, indebtedness of the fish-workers etc. all of which posed an acute threat to the fisheries.

The state attempted to carry out the mechanisation program, while simultaneously creating producer cooperatives. Mechanised boats were to be issued only through producer cooperatives to groups of fishermen. However, as John Kurien points out, these cooperatives were often dominated by financiers and middlemen and were the furthest thing from being fishermen organisations. In order to counter this nexus of exploitation’, communities of artisanal fishermen saw it necessary to organise themselves, and forge linkages. The cooperatives that were formed by the fishermen, differed from the ones created by the government, in that they were run by members of the community and facilitated small repayments, at low interest rates. The Kerala Swatantrata Matsya Thozilali Federation (KSMTF) was one such organisation. These organisations led to the political awakening’ of the artisanal fishing community. As trade unions and cooperatives cropped up, the coastal communities of Kerala witnessed a barrage of hunger strikes, and demonstrations. Their chief demand was that trawling during monsoon season (breeding season for the fish near the shore) should be banned. Other demands included curbing the pollution of inland water resources, a comprehensive regulation by the Marine Regulation Act and that mechanised boats must not operate 5 km. beyond the coast. Women: The Worst Affected There are approximately 5.4 million people engaged in fisheries in India.

Women account for 1.6 million, and more than a million come from the 222 fishing villages in Kerala. Most of these women depend on supplementary activities like processing and marketing of fish for survival. However, the conception of the INP was based on the premise that fisherwomen had little to no involvement in the fisheries. Women in fishing households are traditionally not allowed to go to sea. They look after child care, and domestic chores. However, most of them were also involved in supporting activities such as head-load fish vending, deferring coconut husks and manual rope making, shell collection, processing, marketing, net-making etc. These activities served as a way for the women to supplement their family income. Taking up any of these activities was considered to be a loss of status for the family, and hence, when asked (through surveys, interviews etc), the matter was mostly kept private, leading to an erasure of the work carried out by these women. As a result of this erasure, violence was meted out to women, both on their identity in society and on their physical entity. The divide between men and women grew wider.

As men from local fishing communities were displaced as fishers and procurer of produce, they were still absorbed by the industry as head load workers, agents, fish-sellers, thereby displacing the women. They had greater access to technology and greater mobility within the markets and the villages, which allowed to them to do so. It was the fisherwomen who sold the catch the men brought in at markets. A fall in fish stocks meant that they would have to procure the produce from elsewhere, deal with the cooperatives, and resist manipulative moneylenders. Less produce meant less income, and less income left them indebted to money lenders. And with the traditional fish markets swallowed by big corporations, they were left all the more vulnerable and insecure. They found themselves having to travel long distances to sell their produce in markets, and yet they were being denied entry on public transport because of their smelly baskets. To add insult to injury, large scale sand mining activities made the water unfit for consumption, forcing women to walk long distances to fetch drinking water. A loss in productive activity had the men turn to alcoholism and gambling, leading to a spike in cases of wife beating and desertion and sexual harassment.

The Resistance As women started to collectivise, they started off by getting involved in religious activities and discussions on topics of common interest. The late 1970s-80s saw a rise in the number of women’s organisations in coastal villages. By the end of the 1980s, the women members of KSMTF decided to set up a women’s wing the Theeradesa Mahila Vedi (TMV). Women like Aleyamma Vijayan, Sister Philomene Mary, Sister Alice and Magline Peter set this movement in motion. Since its inception, TMV has waged continued resistance against the incessant marginalisation and exploitation of local fishing communities. The one that has been most proudly talked about is their fight for special buses. The women took to the streets, picketed, marched, fasted and organised a strike for about four to five years, until the government relented and provided them with special buses. In fact, the first ever march of the women fish vendors (1979) saw them march with their fish baskets to the secretariat to demand for the right to access public transport. Next on their agenda, demands were placed at the panchayat markets they worked for, for the provision of basic amenities like drinking water, ice boxes, a toilet, a space to change their clothes and protection from the goondas who circulated in these markets. Demonstrations have also been organised to protest unfair tax collection by the contractors. TMV and its members have also stepped in and pursued cases of domestic violence and sexual harassment, that eventually culminated in the arrest of the perpetrator, giving women the confidence to report cases of violence.

In 1992, the fisherwomen, along with the fish-workers association, set up thatched huts in front of the secretariat’s office where they cooked food, and slept for 15 days until fisherwomen were included in government schemes offering financial aid and insurance. Not only did this give them added financial security, but also demanded that they be recognised as fish workers by the state. The Resistance Continues The resistance by the artisanal fisherfolk community is the epitome of the phrase one step forward, two step backwards. Although the fisherwomen were given special buses plying to and from markets, in 2004, they took to picketing the office of the bus administration to discuss the shoddy maintenance of bus operations. In December 2004, a tsunami swept through coastal communities in Kerala and along with it, income and the ability to access cash for most women. Relief shelters offered very little privacy and sanitation facilities, separate toilets etc., and also put them at the risk of being harassed by men and being overlooked by male doctors. Livelihood programs, focused on the number of boats lost, thereby ignoring the work done by women and were simultaneously excluded from relief measures. In 2017, they carried out a 65 day struggle against the construction of LPG storage plant built by the Indian Oil Corporation in Kochi. Till date, most local fish vendors and hawkers face the threat of eviction by corporate lobbies, but it is the resistance of the fisherwomen that have kept these forces at bay.

**13. Dip in catch hits livelihood of Kerala fisherwomen**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/dip-in-catch-hits-livelihood-of-kerala-fisherwomen/article30916646.ece>

Pauline, a 55-year-old fisherwoman from Kappil, has been returning with an empty basket from the Neendakara harbour for the past four days. The boat that had been supplying fish to small-scale vendors remains anchored on the shore after multiple futile trips last week. The dip in marine stock, especially pelagic fish, has put the livelihood of thousands of fisherwomen in the State in jeopardy. The women, many of them above the age of 50, say they are facing an unprecedented crisis.

Many varieties abundant some 10 years ago have vanished completely and it is for the first time I am witnessing such a famine-like situation. Women working in small processing units are also in dire straits, she says. Matsyafed operates special bus services for them to fish-landing centres and of late the majority of them are taking the trip in vain. Today there are 33 women from Thiruvananthapuram on the bus, but only a few got lucky with some anchovy. I have been selling fish for the past 30 years. At this age, it is not possible to start another trade, says Jenet Cleetus, who is also the Thiruvananthapuram district secretary of the Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation. The main reason for this alarming dip in catch, she adds, is illegal and unscientific methods of fishing, including night trawling. Primary earners In many families, these women are the primary earners and returning with no fish has made their lives miserable.

Though the boats are bringing hardly any catch, cheap formalin-laced fish from other States are available in the market. As a result, good fish has become dear and often we are not able to afford it. We used to get a basket of mackerel for ?2,000 early, but now the price has gone up to ?8,000, says Mable Rymond, president, Theeradesha Mahilavedi. Though the Theeramythri programme of the Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) has been offering the women alternative options for self-employment, it could not reach out to many, mainly the elderly. We are aware of the depletion in fish stock and this financial year we have formed groups mainly focussing on women engaged in fish vending. Around 50,000 women work in the sector and currently we have over 5,000 beneficiaries. At present we do not have any large-scale project, but in future we may be able to assist more, says Sreelu N.S, Executive Director, SAF.

**14. Kerala’s seafaring fisherwoman honoured for breaking male bastion**

<https://english.manoramaonline.com/lifestyle/women/2020/03/06/kerala-seafraing-fisherwoman-honoured-breaking-male-bastion.html>

After becoming the first woman in the country to get a deep-sea fishing licence, Rekha Karthikeyan of Thrissur district was on Friday felicitated by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) for excelling in what is conventionally a male domain. At a function in the MPEDAs headquarters here, Rekha was given a memento and a pair of life-jackets besides a financial package of Rs 6.6 lakh jointly contributed by Accelerated Freeze Drying Co Ltd, Tasty Nibbles Group and Seafood Export Association of India. MPEDA chairman K S Srinivas, while praising Rekha for her grit and determination, expressed happiness over women entering vocations that have traditionally been male bastions. These days, she fishes in the deep sea, covering 50 nautical miles daily on an average, he added.

All that, without the mariner’s compass or even a life-jacket. Rekha, 40, who lives with her husband and four children at their house in coastal Chettuva, south of Guruvayur, recalled that it was 12 years ago that she, without knowing how to swim, first ventured into deep sea with her husband K V Karthikeyan. While the sea is expected to be choppy, resistance awaited me back on the shores too. For, society kept saying fishing cannot be a females profession, said Rekha, who originally hails from Koorkenchery in suburban Thrissur. Women must not be indifferent towards injustice. We need to take up challenges boldly, she added, citing experiences from personal and professional fronts. Notwithstanding the initial hiccups, Rekha and her husband, of late a heart patient, would take their boat in the small hours (around 3 am) to fish. She also learned swimming and later applied for a licence to fish deep in the sea. Authorities refused to give her the document until the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute intervened and arranged to grant Rekha the licence in early 2019. It is not practical to go out to the sea without a helper in the boat.

These days, it is hard to find people to for this job. Chettan (Karthikeyan) looked out for someone for a long time and finally I decided to give it a try. We couldn’t afford to not go fishing; we have four girls to bring up and there’s never enough. Two were better than one and I was determined to give it my best if it would help him stay in the job. Now I am as good as any fisherman in casting the net, pulling the net in, steering the boat and so on. Of course, we faced the wrath of the village as tradition stops women from going to the sea. Now they have reconciled to the fact. The superstitions never scared me. Why would I be, when the sea is like my mother? I know I have nothing to be afraid of when I am in her lap, Rekha had said during an interview Onmanorama featured on December 9, 2017.