

2.6 Maharashtra State-Level Workshop on the SSF Guidelines

Mumbai, Maharashtra

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Organizers and Resource Persons

- Arpita Sharma, Principal Scientist and Head, FEES Division, Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Central Institute of Fisheries Education (ICAR-CIFE)
- Kiran Koli, Secretary, Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samittee (MMKS), Mumbai
- P.S. Ananthan, Principal Scientist, FEES Division, ICAR-CIFE
- Ashok Jawale, Fisheries Development Officer, Department of Fisheries, Maharashtra
- Akilandeshwari, PhD student, FEES Division, ICAR-CIFE, Mumbai
- Priyanka Nakhwa, PhD Student, FEES Division, ICAR-CIFE, Mumbai
- N. Venugopalan, Programme Officer, ICSF

Introduction

The Maharashtra state-level workshop on the SSF Guidelines was organized jointly by ICSF, ICAR-CIFE and MMKS in Mumbai on 15 March 2023.

Following the welcome address by Sharma, Koli gave an overview of the workshop. He highlighted the importance of government schemes' delivery to small-scale fishers.

Jawale, as a government representative, gave detailed information on the 'Maharashtra Government Support Schemes for Marine Fisheries and Fishers'. This information included marine sector schemes under the PMMSY such as mariculture and seaweed cultivation; refrigerated and insulated vehicles; live fish-vending centres; motorcycle/cycle/three-wheeler for fish vending; installation of cold storage of ten-ton capacity; modernization of cold storage/ice plant; construction of fish retail markets; construction of fish kiosks; development of deep sea fishing through support for acquisition of deep sea fishing vessels for traditional fishermen; upgradation of existing fishing vessels for export competency; establishment of bio-toilets in mechanized fishing vessels; insurance of fishing vessels and fishers; support for demolition of old craft and construction of new ones; repairing of craft; installation of fish tracking system; upgradation of closed cooperative societies; marine hatcheries; crash programme scheme by the Department of Fisheries, Maharashtra for harbour development; and e-shram for registration of fishworkers. He also shared that around 12–15 awareness programmes regarding PMMSY had been organized in Mumbai and suburban districts, despite which only 20 to 25 proposals were received till date by the department for availing the benefits under the scheme.

This was followed by a presentation on 'Fisheries Development Programmes and Schemes in India and Maharashtra' by Akilandeshwari. She explained the terms used in fisheries budget, like budget, demand for grants, budget estimate, revised estimate, etc. Fisheries budget

estimate of Maharashtra for 2022–23 was also presented by her which is around Rs 392 crore and is divided into:

- Rs 174 crore for state level schemes for development of fishing ports (study groups), development of fishing ports under the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development scheme, modernization of fishing ports (Sassoon Dock), small fishing port construction (Karanja, Mirkarwada, Anandwadi), subsidiary constructions through voluntary grants, mechanization of fishing craft and improvements in craft.
- Around Rs 64 crore for district-level schemes such as assistance to fisherworkers' cooperative societies, establishment of fish seed production centre, survey, improvement for development of fishing port, mechanization of fishing craft and improvement in craft (assisted), development of small fishery ports (Dhadak programme), aquaculture in impounded waters, concession in electricity tariff to fishworkers' cooperative societies, financial assistance on purchase of fishing equipment, and the preservation, transportation and sale of fish (assisted).
- Around Rs 153 crore for the PMMSY schemes_including central-sector scheme, centrally sponsored scheme and state scheme/state-sector schemes.

She highlighted that in PMMSY's estimated investment of Rs 20,050 crore for 5 years (2020–21 to 2024–25), the Centre's share was only Rs 9,407 crore, with the remaining divided between state (Rs 4,880 crore) and beneficiary contribution (Rs 5,763 crore). The Centre's share is relatively less compared to the state and beneficiary share. Expenditure in Maharashtra for PMMSY beneficiary-oriented schemes for 2020–21 and 2021–22 showed an actual total expenditure of Rs 63.74 crore and Rs 216.54 crore respectively with major contribution from women beneficiaries. The expenditure was very less compared to other states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka as per research done by FEES division, ICAR-CIFE. District-wise expenditure under PMMSY 2021–22 for marine fisheries scheme components showed the highest contribution from Ratnagiri district and the lowest from Mumbai city.

Group Discussion

Issues discussed by the participants are as follows:

1. Age limit of fisherwomen for registration of e-shram card should be increased from present 60 years as many aged fisherwomen are engaged in fish vending activities.
2. Members of the Varali fishermen cooperative society reported that fishers are facing problems in getting bank loans under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme as banks are asking for mortgage against the loan and also different banks are following different documentation rules. Fisherwomen are facing more problems in opening accounts under KCC as they have hardly anything in their name to show for mortgage.
 - a) One solution offered was that they could pay CENT interest to the government, and the government will take care of mortgage of the beneficiaries.
 - b) To address the fishers' demand to club bank loan facility for fisheries entrepreneurs under PMMSY schemes, it was proposed that a meeting with the assistant commissioner of Fisheries be organized.

3. The fishers asked for allocating sites for crab culture in mangrove areas along the Palghar Coast.
4. In case of KCC, the participants pointed out that if regular transactions are not present in the beneficiary's bank account, then they will not get the 3% interest remit to total interest. Jawale suggested drafting a letter to the district magistrate and routing it through the cooperative society to the assistant commissioner of Fisheries.
5. To get certified training on value added fish products from research institutes like CIFT or CIFE, fishers' cooperative societies should come forward to bear the training costs for the non-SC/ST beneficiaries as well.
6. Small-scale fishers asked that the problem of estuarine and marine pollution due to effluents coming from different coastal plants be addressed. Jawale informed the fishers about the five effluent treatment plants inaugurated by the prime minister Narendra Modi in Mumbai, which can be replicated in other districts too. Active monitoring of pollution control by the government was highlighted by all participants. Correspondence and follow-up need to be initiated with the government to formulate policy for regulating the pollution in the creek of Mumbai and adjoining districts.
7. Participants expressed the need to change or modify the existing fishing policy for sustainable fishing.
8. Discussion was held on the regulation of purse seine and LED fishing in Maharashtra. The participants strongly demanded strict implementation and monitoring of ban on hydraulic boom used in purse seine as well as on operation of illegal purse seiners beyond 12 nautical miles. Jawale explained that most of the purse seine craft are operational within 40–80 nautical miles from the coast and cannot be monitored by the coast guard as the jurisdiction of the Maharashtra Department of Fisheries is only upto 12 nautical miles and the Marine Fisheries Regulation Act is not applicable beyond 12 nautical miles. The participants also suggested the option of monitoring through helicopter/drone, but this is not practical due to security reasons and also coast guard helicopters can monitor from not less than 100 meters from the sea surface from where it is difficult to locate the craft. Jawale said that despite shortage of technological advancements and manpower, action have been taken against illegal purse seine and LED fishing in Maharashtra.
9. Koli did not agree with the findings that the expenditure of Maharashtra in PMMSY beneficiary-oriented schemes was less compared to other states. If so, the reason is due to lack of representation from the fishworkers' community in parliament to speak on behalf of them, like in other states, and also because of the non-inclusion of fisherfolk in the planning of development projects.
10. Fishers raised concern about infrastructure development projects like renovation and construction of fishing harbours despite the decline in fish catch. They also cited the example of the proposed port in Satpati village of Palghar district, at a cost of Rs 256 crore, despite decline in fishing in the area. Fishers complained that in developmental activities, authorities give priority to public interest rather than the social security of local fishing communities.
11. All fisher representatives insisted on relaxing the BPL criteria mentioned in beneficiary-oriented schemes as it is likely that the cost of living is high in Maharashtra compared to other states, and hence so will be the income.

12. It has been suggested that fisheries investment of the state should be decided based on its contribution to the overall export. Presently in Maharashtra investment is very low compared to the export contribution.
13. It has been observed that in Maharashtra, fishers are interested in cage culture activities but due to strong currents and winds along the coast and pollution in the backwaters, success in the same is low. There is need for more research and development in this area to increase the beneficiaries under the PMMSY scheme.
14. Madhuri Patil of MMKS discussed how development schemes under the Bombay Improvement Trust affect the land rights of the local community, as in Sion and Mahul Koliwadas (fishing villages) in Mumbai. Developmental activities pollute nearshore waters and subsequently affect fish breeding in these areas. Presently, due to reduced fishing activities there, authorities do not consider them as Koliwadas and are demanding that the local people prove their land rights.
15. Fishing communities never gave importance to documentation, but these days, documents are important to prove their rights on their habitats as well as on their resources. Also, some women fish vendors do not readily get licenses because of this. Creating awareness regarding documentation is important.
16. There was a common demand to demarcate all Koliwadas in Maharashtra, including residential areas as well as common extended areas used for allied activities (not included in the earlier demarcations), based on CRZ 2011. The proposals should go through all panchayats to initiate the movement. It was suggested that the fishers pay minimal tax to local gram panchayats for the areas in use to claim their rights over the long term.
17. Drone mapping surveys have been almost completed in Mumbai and suburban areas but are still pending in Raigad, Palghar and other districts. But fishers demanded that manual demarcation be done rather than using drones.
18. In coastal zone mapping, many fishing villages are missing.
19. There is a need to formulate comprehensive marine fisheries policy based on amendments made in the fisheries policy.
20. Ananthan, spoke on ‘Access Rights of Fishing Communities’ on behalf of Gayathri Singh, Advocate, Mumbai High Court, based on their telephonic conversation, which included four ways of customary rights protection:
 - a) **Article 13, Clause 8 of Constitution:** Through this, traditional rights can be protected.
 - b) **The Indian Easements Act, 1882:** This too can be used for the protection of traditional rights.
 - c) **The Mahul Creek Act, 1922/Land Acquisition Act:** If developmental activities affect the livelihoods of local communities, compensation shall be calculated based on the extent of effect (adequate compensation).
 - d) **Forest Rights Act, 2006/Forest Dwellers Rights Act:** This can be used to propose a ‘Fishery Dwellers Act’.
21. On 9 March 2023, a new Government Order (GO) was released in Mumbai in relation to the impact of the Thane-Vashi Bridge. In this regard, the Bombay High Court ordered the authorities to form a compensation policy committee which was to include all the bureaucrats, but no representation from the fishing community. In this GO, the definition

of fisherfolk includes ‘those who fish for survival’, which is not inclusive of all fishworkers, like women fish vendors and others. The GO also defined the ‘influence zone’ as an area within 500 meters affected by the bridge, which is incorrect as the influence zone is larger. In case of Valvan Port, authorities are not ready to give compensation for new projects as compensation has been claimed for earlier projects and this is also the case in Nava Sheva and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust projects. Considering all these, Ananthan and Singh concluded that the GO is not very supportive to fishing communities and alerted fishing communities to negotiate it further.

Concluding Remarks

In her concluding remarks, Ujjwala Tai urged all the fisher leaders to create awareness among the local community in their areas with the information from the workshop and to come together and start a common movement to protect their access rights.