

**Evaluation Study on Saving Cum Relief Scheme**  
**Fisheries Department**

**Executive Summary**

The Centrally Sponsored ‘National Scheme of Welfare of Fishermen’ scheme operative since 1987-88 is providing financial assistance to fishermen for construction of houses, community halls for recreation and common working places, installation of tube-wells for drinking water and **assistance during lean fishing period through saving cum relief component**. The savings cum relief component is meant to support the fishermen during the monsoon period of three months when they are prohibited to do fishing activities. This component is implemented through fishermen/fisherwomen cooperative societies. The members who are engaged full time in fishing activities are eligible for aid under this scheme. The scheme is over 25 years old. Fisheries department intended to do a rapid assessment of the scheme to see if the scheme is serving the intended purposes and whether it requires any reforms.

**1. Coverage**

The scope of the study is the marine fisheries in the three coastal districts – Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada and covers a sample of fishermen/women benefitted under the savings scheme. A sample of 30 Cooperative societies across the three districts was selected at random, and over 800 sample beneficiaries under the scheme were interviewed to assess the impact of the scheme. Also some non beneficiaries were selected to understand the effect of not being a part of the scheme.

**2. Beneficiaries**

- a. The growth in the **number of beneficiaries** under the scheme over the last five years in the three districts has increased from over 19000 to about 40000, showing an increase of over 110%. The increase in number of

beneficiaries is more in Udupi district as compared to Uttara Kannada district; it is lowest in Dakshina Kannada district.

- b. As per the guidelines a **beneficiary contribution** of Rs.600 is to be made as their share in the savings scheme and a matching contribution of Rs.600, each by the Centre and State, is to be made and distributed to the beneficiaries during the three months of the lean season. During the last five years, the beneficiary contribution increased from Rs.117 lacs in 2009-10 to Rs.235 lacs during 2013-14. The overall relief for the beneficiaries, including the State and Central share increased from Rs.351 lacs to Rs. 704 lacs.
- c. The growth in the **total members and the number of beneficiaries** in the sample societies over the last five years is 45% and 53% respectively. The percentage of members availing benefits under the scheme during these years is in the range of 22% to 24%.

### **3. Profile of Sample Respondents**

- a. A sample of 803 beneficiaries was selected constituting 5% of the total beneficiaries covered under the scheme in the sample societies. The number of sample beneficiaries in each society is selected based on the proportionate distribution of total number of beneficiaries. The **awareness** about the savings and relief scheme is reported by all the beneficiary respondents and 69% of the non beneficiary respondents.
- b. Overall 98% of the sample beneficiaries have **received the benefits** from the scheme. Across the social categories, all the SC & ST respondents reported receipt of the benefits. 98% OBC and 80% Muslim respondents reported receipt of the benefits.
- c. Regular monthly payment of beneficiary contribution is reported by 99% of the respondents as being done regularly. One percent of the respondents felt that

no regular payment of contribution is made.

- d. The number of income sources reported by the sample beneficiary respondents range from 1 to 3 sources. 62% of the sample beneficiaries have reported 2 sources of income, 33% reported single source and 6% three sources. In case of non beneficiaries, 66% reported single source and 34% have 2 sources of income. Among the different social groups, ST, OBC's and Muslim beneficiaries have reported more than one income source.
- e. The average household annual income of beneficiary (Rs.53213) and non beneficiary (Rs.57586) respondents is marginally different. With more number of income sources, the average income is higher across all the social groups, except the ST group respondents who have reported less income despite having more number of income sources.
- f. The different sources of income are fishing, fish vending, and non fish related activities. 91% of the beneficiary respondents have reported income from **fishing** as against 66% non beneficiary respondents. The average income from fishing shows higher income among the non beneficiary respondents as compared to beneficiary respondents. This is more so in Dakshina Kannada district and in Udupi district it is the converse.
- g. The number of respondents reported earnings from fish vending is 57% of the beneficiary respondents, as compared to 41% of the non beneficiary respondents. The more dependence on fish vending is reported in Uttara Kannada district (83%) as compared to 63% in Dakshina Kannada and 36% in Udupi districts. The average income earned from fish vending shows a higher annual income reported by the non beneficiary respondents (Rs.24167) as compared to beneficiary respondents (Rs.18731).
- h. The other sources of income reported by 26% of the sample beneficiary

respondents are mostly private sector jobs followed by fish cutting and non agriculture labor. There are many other sources of income which the respondents are depending on for their livelihood. The average income generated from other sources is about Rs.25000 per annum. The highest income generated is through working as an auto-rickshaw driver followed by pension income.

i. The different types of fish vending are raw fish, dried fish and the fish products. Among the respondents generating income from fish vending, 93% do raw fish vending, 21% dried fish vending and less than half percent do fish products vending.

k. 84% of the beneficiary respondents and 90% of non beneficiary respondents do not engage in any work during the three lean months. The remaining respondents have reported various activities, including fishing in back waters, fish vending and other occupations. The average earning of the households during lean months is reported to be Rs.8262 among the beneficiary respondents as compared to Rs.5000 for non beneficiary respondents. The fish related activities, such as local boating and fish vending, is earning Rs.5000 to Rs.10000 during the three months. Some of the business activities being carried out by very few respondents are earning a higher income.

l. The average **household size** is 4.1 for the beneficiary respondents and 3.8 for the non beneficiary respondent. The **workforce status** of the household members indicates that among the beneficiary households it is 71% as against 67% in non beneficiary households. The **occupational distribution** reveals 51% of the beneficiary household members and 34% in the non beneficiary households depend on fishing and fish vending activities. Among different

social groups, ST households depend more on fishing activities followed by SC and OBC household members. Among the Muslim households 30% depend on this occupation.

#### **4. Impact of the Programme**

a. **Adequacy of relief for essential needs:** 96% of the beneficiary respondents depend on fishing and fish vending directly as compared to 90% of the non beneficiary respondents. It is observed that 3% of the respondents are doing fish cutting and labor in fish factories, and 1% do not generate any income from fisheries sector. Among the non beneficiary respondents it is seen that 10% do not depend on fishing sector. Among the beneficiary respondents, the average income from fishing is higher as compared to income from fish vending. The monthly income of these households during the fishing season of 9 months is estimated at Rs.5000 and Rs.3000 respectively, as compared to the non beneficiary respondent's monthly estimated income of Rs.6000 and Rs.2500 respectively. The relief is distributed during the months of September to April, with majority reporting as January. These periods are not the lean months for the fishery dependent population. Based on this, the question of adequacy of the relief does not arise as the respondents are managing with the current income generated, irrespective of the relief amount distributed under the scheme.

b. **Number of fishing households regularly availing the scheme benefit:** The total number of beneficiaries in the three districts shows an increasing trend of beneficiaries in the last five years from about 20,000 to 40,000 fisher folk. It is seen that among the sample 803 beneficiary households, 1256 (38.4%) of the total 3267 persons are members in the sample societies. Thus the average number of members per household is 1.56. Considering

this average, the number of fishing households availing benefits is about 30,000 and reaching to nearly 1.5 lacs population.

- c. **Opportunity cost of availing the benefit of the scheme:** The norms of the scheme is that the members have to make a contribution of Rs.75 per month for 8 months (September to next May) and this has to collected by the society in which they have membership. The society has to remit the members' contribution into an account as per the direction of the fisheries department, and send the list of contributors to the office of the Assistant Director Fisheries in their taluk. The department pays the relief; the amount is paid to the societies and the societies in turn distribute the relief to the beneficiaries. Practices vary among societies in distribution of money. In few societies **it is reported that the membership fee, subscription charges and other charges are deducted from the relief amount itself, which varies from Rs.10 to over Rs.100. A few societies are reported to be retaining a sum of Rs.600 from each of the beneficiary as their share in the contribution for the next year. In reality this is a onetime contribution (or contributions for one whole year) of Rs.600 which fetches them a relief of Rs.1200 from the government every year without any subsequent contributions.** However this is being done at the society level over which the department has no control. Hence there is no cost involved for the beneficiaries in the process of getting the relief.
- d. **Does it really stop the beneficiaries from fishing during the lean season:** It is reported by 84% of the beneficiary respondents and 90% of non-beneficiary respondents that they do not engage in any work during the three lean months. Others reported various activities, including fishing in back waters, fish vending and other occupations. The average income generated during the lean season indicates that fishing related activities earn

an income in the range of Rs.5000 to Rs.10000; business activities earn higher income and other activities lesser income.

e. **Satisfaction about the scheme:** It is reported by 86% of the respondents that they are happy with the scheme and want it continued.

f. **Better Implementation Strategies suggested by respondents:**

- Distributing relief on time as currently the matching grant from Govt do not come on time and hence relief is not provided on time to the beneficiaries;
- Societies have to participate effectively and consciously in the programme;
- Benefits from the scheme to be made available to all family members involved in fishing;
- Increase in the quantum of subscription which will increase the relief;

## **Recommendations**

1. It has emerged from the study that beneficiary contributions are made lump sum and deducted at source from the relief amount paid to them by the Society. It is not that the beneficiaries contribute in nine installments. Further, the relief is paid to the beneficiaries in not the three lean months when they are not fishing, but in the months of September to April, January being the modal month. Obviously, the fisher folk are not poor or need the relief for their survival. They are reported to have more than one source of income (including fishing). Also, the average monthly earning of the households during lean months is reported to be Rs.8262 among the beneficiary respondents as compared to Rs.5000 for non beneficiary respondents. These three findings are strong evidence of the fact that the relief provided under the scheme is like an additional income received by the fisher folk from the government. It is not something they need for making their ends meet or for living decently in the lean months. But the scheme was envisaged to provide relief to fisher folk presuming they would be living a difficult life in the lean period. That is not the case. The credit for the fisher folk not being in dire straits in the lean months goes to them and not the scheme. But all this makes the scheme redundant. No matter it is welcomed by the fisher folk (who would not welcome a scheme in which an investment of Rs 600 guarantees a return of Rs 1200 over and above the invested amount every year.) **The scheme is recommended for being modified to include and cover only fisher folk doing sustenance fishing and dependent totally on fishing (having no other source of income) or who is a Below Poverty Line (BPL) member.** The relief amount of Rs 1800 per beneficiary is very less. It is because it is seen that the average monthly income generated during the nine fishing months is Rs.5000. The current relief of Rs.900 per month is too meager,

being 14% of the average earning per month of fishing months. The beneficiary contribution is recommended to be increased to Rs. 500 per month for 9 months and a similar matching contribution by the Centre and State. This would increase the relief nearer to Rs 5000 per month.

**Under the scheme, all transactions of beneficiary contributions and relief payments are recommended to be made through RTGS or equivalent system, and the accounts of beneficiaries should have the features of beneficiary tagging by using a uniform and robust identity (Aadhar number/Voter ID number etc.) and linked with a *Jan-Dhan* savings account (the beneficiary thus gets credit benefit of Rs 5000 and insurance cover of Rs 2 lacs).**

2. Since deep sea fishing is difficult after attaining 60 years due to ageing, it is recommended that a pension scheme for the beneficiary doing sustenance fishing be introduced by the State with a yearly contribution from the beneficiary from the age of 30 years until he / she reaches 60 years. Alternatively, the relief scheme could be tagged with the recent launch by Government of India's Atal Pension Scheme. The State can make full/part of the monthly contribution required under the pension scheme. The three months relief scheme will then be withdrawn from the age of 60 years, as then the pension benefits equal to the relief provided under the scheme being evaluated, will take over for all months.