

Vulnerability of Indian Coastal Fishing Communities: Exploring Health and Issues related to Livelihood

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Abstract

The status of many small-scale coastal fishing communities in India can be described as vulnerable. The fragile conditions of these communities are the outcome of a wide range of climatic, natural, technological and social factors. Intense competition among stakeholders to gain economic benefit from limited coastal resources exacerbates their vulnerabilities. All of these factors have a direct bearing upon the livelihoods of small fishing communities. Health, an important building block of socioeconomic development of fishing communities determines their ability to maintain viable livelihood options. The present study aims to understand the vulnerable conditions of Indian fishing communities inhabiting in coastal areas with special reference to their health conditions. The study briefly discusses the major socio-economic and health challenges affecting coastal fishing communities of India and analyses the range of livelihood activities adopted by these communities to reduce their higher dependency on the fishing sector. A few suggestions have also been given to mitigate their future economic and health risks.

Keywords: Fishing Communities, Socio-economic Vulnerability, Health, Coastal Resources, Livelihood

Introduction

Fishing community is defined as a community that is substantially dependent on or substantially engaged in the harvest or processing of fishery resources to meet social and economic needs. It includes fishing vessel owners, fishing families, operators, crew, recreational fishers, fish processors, gear supplies, and others in the community who depend on fishing (Blackhart et al. 2006). The fishery sector tends to be deeply rooted in small-scale heterogeneous fishing communities. In India, fishing communities belong to different caste systems having distinct social and cultural practices. Generally, a fishing hamlet in India is characterized by a particular caste group. In addition to the caste and kinship- based

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