

STHREE NIKETH VANITHA FEDERATION

(SNVF)

Womens Groups : Sthree Niketh Vanitha Federation,
Shanthi Daw, Saurin
and

A Story of Organized Woman Power

Mary Jeramias of Mampally, Anchuthengu, Thiruvananthapuram belonging to a fishermen family got the loan of Rs. 2000/- to run her small provision store and that way support her family. Earlier she was not able to recover from her debts because she was continuously giving 120% interest for Rs.2000/-. With the new loan given to her by the Fishermen Society affiliated to the Trivandrum District Federation of Fishermen (TDFF) and its women's wing, she could repay the debts in full. The women's wing became Sthree Niketh Vanitha Federation (SNVF) in 1993. Mary was only one among many.

SNVF has a history and pre-history. Everything started with the community development experiments in 1960 in Marianadu, a coastal village in Thiruvananthapuram. The late Bishop Dr. Peter Bernard Pereira took the initiative. Marianadu model has inspired development cases and movement. TDFF was one of the offshoots of Marianadu model. Traditional artisanal fisher people were organized initially to reduce the exploitation of various phases of the fishing economy. Organizing for self-development and for higher awareness was the initial motto. Slowly this developed also into the additional objective of providing non-fishing jobs to the fishing people of needed.

Fisherwomen were the most exploited. Less literate and male dominant atmosphere complied with lowest level of development variables (vis-à-vis a higher one in the neighborhoods as acclaimed as the Kerala model) kept most of these women in a poverty-ridden economy and gave them a culturally untouchable space in the socio-economic plane. Lack of organization has furthered their ridiculous existence.

Development decades and voluntary initiatives have offered some space to this lot also. TDFF efforts have seen that the fishermen also get organized. They were mostly fish vendors who carry head-loads of fresh fish catch from their men of sea to distant village and city markets by walk. Hard work, less money, less rest and less sympathy from their communities and above all physical domestic silence of times kept them as a section which needs to be uplifted in any way.

From men to women

When gender equality entered the arena of development and empowerment, development organizational and institutions in 80s and 90s started giving way to the emergence of women's groups or forums as fraternal gender groups. Initially, this emergence of women's wings was no way a conflicting experience for the male dominated organizations. In TDFF, the fisherwomen's societies in the coastal areas Kanya Kumari and Thiruvananthapuram districts were given a horizontal linkup. SNVF became the apex body or in other words, the vertical head of a horizontal link up of fishermen societies.

After seeing the SEWA (Gujarat) experience, the male members of TDFF themselves decided to bring the fisherwomen into the mainstream of development. Women were made members of TDFF. But matters got worsened when the women realized that the so-called gesture of granting membership to women in TDFF had its limitations. They were not allowed to hold official positions. They were not made party in operating bank

accounts or control over assets. Hence women decided to form their own organization, SNVF. However, the men felt that by having a separate federation, women will be taking away good part of possible resources both human and material. The expert advices were not to divide the strength of the community by having two independent bodies for men and women. Finally the byelaws of TDFP were amended to give women equal representation against men in holding official positions.

Though laws were amended, men needed much time to amend their hearts. The question of equality created tensions within the organization between men and women. Finally, after a year of struggle, both men and women decided to function independently, TDFP for men and SNVF for women, of course by sharing the assets as in the family.

From fisherwomen to women.

SNVF is apex body of 89 fisher women societies spreading over a long stretch of 95 kms. along the Arabian Sea from Anchuthengu in the north (Thiruvananthapuram district) to Thoothoor in the South (Kanya Kumari district). Each village level society on an average has 75 to 150 women members engaged in fish vending or related activity. They elect their representatives at the village level who are the general body members of the SNVF. The presidents of the member societies form the Managing Committee, which elect a President and Vice-President for two years. A lady co-ordinator and assistants who are appointed by the Managing Committee in general handle the management.

Though SNVF has its grassroots among the fisherwomen, it can be seen that the organization has developed itself as a frontal organization networking various levels of women's and general activities of the state level. The area of work has got diversified into income generation and production activities, besides awareness generation in environment, skill training and Panchayath Raj.

Objectives

The main aim of the federation is "to work for the social, economic and educational development of fish vending women". Welfare activities to promote their health and housing, alternate employment, their artistic and cultural development, etc. are aims to supplement this aim.

Apart from this, SNVF aims at organizing women in general and working for their social, economic, cultural, educational and employment related development.

Activities

1. A residential and non-residential training programme for the staff of SNVF is designed to motivate them and to develop their leadership abilities. Training intends also a healthy and balanced psychological development of the individual. Training

to build capacities on public areas like logistics of running an organization and accountancy is also conducted by SNVF.

2. Skill training for alternate employment like carpentry, weaving, tailoring, fish processing, pickles making, production of greeting cards, envelopes and packing materials, etc. were given
3. SNVF runs a lending library for the use of its members including the primary sangham members.
4. Networking and linkages are taken up in areas like credit and saving and women in PRIs.
5. Credit unions are organized to cultivate the savings habit. Loans are lent from the savings. SNVF mediates with banks for loans primary societies.

Present Condition of SNVF

Main Activities

Training Programme

In order to increase the social awareness among the members of the Federation, training programmes has been conducted. In this year, Federation could organize the effective training programmes on this topic and the Federation maintaining the same in various topics like micro-finance, education guidance, leadership, and awareness on epidemic.

Network

The members are given all help to approach the Vanitha Commission for any problems of the women. Apart from this, SNVF cooperates with Kerala Shtree Vedi, Sakhi, KSMTF, Kerala Civil Supplies Commission, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation in their activities.

Welfare

Welfare fund is a financial support that is given when a member dies to the dependence. SNVF is giving Rs. 10,000/- as the welfare fund, for this, SNVF collecting Rs.200/- from each sanghams.

Family Welfare Scheme

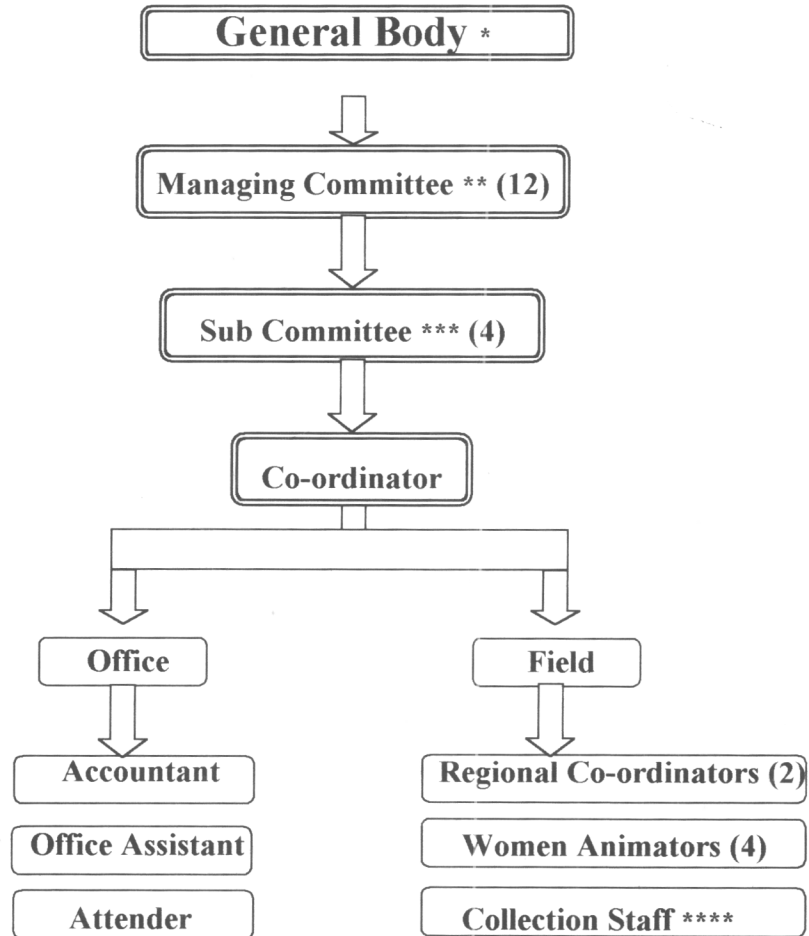
FWS is also financial support that is given Rs.20, 000/- when a member dies to the dependent. For this, SNVF is collecting Rs.100/- from each member annually. The dependents return Rs.1, 000/- as contribution to the Federation for giving scholarship of Rs.500/- as an encouragement for the students who have passed the SSLC.

Savings and Credit

This is the main source of income of SNVF. By this programme SNVF is making practice the member to save little from her daily income. The average savings of a member is now Rs. 500/-, which is, varies member to member.

Credit Programme is bliss to the members of SNVF. SNVF is giving small loans starting from Rs.2, 500/- to 20,000/- for improving their standard of living. For the loan amount, SNVF is now depending on SIFFS, KSBCDC, Indian Overseas Bank and its own fund. Till now SNVF has disbursed Rs.4, 38,86,310/- for 6,214 members.

Structure of Sthree Niketh Vanitha Federation (SNVF)



Registration	: 1993.
No. of Societies	: 72: 81
No. of Members	: 6000.
Main Activities	: Savings & Credit.
Target Area	: Anjengo in Trivandrum District to Erammenthurai in Kanya Kumari District.
Areas Divided	: Four Regions. [Anjengo, Thiruvananthapuram, Pulluvila & Thoothoor]

Note:

*	= No. of societies x 3
**	= 3 people from each region
***	= 1 from each region
****	= No. of societies x 1

Future Plans of SNVF

1. By giving more loans to the member, encourage them to do small-scale jobs for Income Generation.
 Make possible all the members to get loans, which directs them to practice to do small-scale business for their daily hood.
 2. Fundamental Development of the fish market.
 There is a need to gather together and talk for the well planned selling of the fish – where to sell and for the price determination.
 3. Regional wise building for cold storage.
 4. Make easier vehicle transportation in each region.
 5. Communication facility with modern equipments.
 With the help of the modern electronic devices, they can communicate with other people for collecting information of possibility of more resources.
 6. Give them training to handle the above in a useful manner.
 7. Enlarge the Membership for the growth of the Federation.
 8. Enlarge the Staff strength for smooth handling of the Federation.
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I am Mrs Geeta Vistumbhar. I am

1) WISE PRESIDENT & SOUTH KANARA DISTRICT

Fishermen Organisation. 99 Villages in

(South Kanara & Udupi Dist).

2. Matka Sangha affiliated to Maharashtra Sangha.

(State level) & also affiliated Arila

Kannada fishermen & women in National

level & also national fish workers forum

3) Actually in 42 types of caste - in last 6 yrs

comes under SC/ST. 32 under Gangaakula.

(Total 50 lakhs).

Even in state government level we

are fighting for the benefits for women

in women shed get - As government for

we are fighting through NFF also for

benefits shed get.

1) there we are not having any

benefits shed get. 2) for Dry fish mtr. industries have almost

nothing

3) Also we need Transportation facility from where we buy fish from Port to Market for selling.

4) We also see in some Market there is no proper water facility & lights.

5) I will give 1 example. see in rainy season how cow ~~house~~ ^{drench} in rainy ^{season} like that our poor women also ^{are} drench ^{and} sell the fish to one place to another \odot

6) In the time of Auction, Middleman Exploitation problem, for our women

1) Mrs. Ulsha Rani

i) Director of South Kanara & Udupi District
Co-operative Fish Marketing Federation

ii) Vice-President of Mangalore Fishermen Co-operative
Society.

which is functioning in two districts.

2) Mrs. Geetha Vishukumar

Vice-President of South Kanara & Udupi District
Fishermen Federation

which is functioning in two districts.

Mangalore Fishermen Co-operative Society.

established in 1942

having 2000 members

50% of them are women

• Our organisation is related to

i) Akhila Karnataka Fishermen's Parishad
(State level)

ii) National Fish Workers Forum (NFF)
(National level)

i) Fisher women's have not having any decent fish market to sell the fish. They are suffering from the middleman.

ii) Harbours:- All the 15 fishing harbours are not drigged and not having breakwater. So we need good harbour in future.

iii) In 1996 co-operative Society started giving rights to fisherwomen, even though only 1 women holding position in co-operative Society.

- Atleast 8/3 women rights should be given.
- Women's should be given decision making power as well as good marketing place to sell fish.

iv) Fisher women's suffering from the middle man.

- In auction place most men's covers the costly fishes and immediately they sell fish to women's in higher prices.

