



Developing a framework for inclusive fisheries governance in India

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Abstract

One of the main issues facing development theorists and policymakers in recent decades has been the depletion and degradation of Common Pool Resources (CPR). This is especially true in nations like India, where the vast majority of the impoverished in rural areas rely on resources like pastures, forests, groundwater, and others to make a living. But when it comes to common resources, governance and choosing the right institutions to administer them are two of the most important factors. This topic has generated a lot of discussion among social scientists, especially mainstream economists. Some believe that when market arrangements fail, the state is the best option, while others believe that privatization is the only way to solve the problem. It should be noted that, up until the 1980s, most academics believed that the people who used these resources couldn't organize themselves to manage them, thus they suggested that the government or private sector should be imposed. These discussions frequently make the assumption that the lines between the public, private, and communal types of resource tenure are clearly established.

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Introduction

There is a propensity to place trust in the state as the exclusive steward of natural resources, and the environmental discussions in India are a reflection of these institutional quandaries. However, there has been a partial and gradual departure from this way of thinking, which can be attributed to two significant and related factors: the inability of centralized policies to produce the desired development outcomes and the rise of various popular movements that challenged the role of the state (Baiju *et al.*, 2022). Since the 1970s, these two reasons have compelled India's successive governments to acknowledge people as change agents and finally place them at the center of a number of initiatives aimed at promoting participatory development. As a result, there are now many studies that argue against those who support government control and the market (Techera, 2021). In actuality, these research have started to question the generalizability of findings that highlight the detrimental elements of local community resource management. Even if they are few, these recent research loudly highlight the advantages of local control (Kelkar and Arthur, 2022). According to a number of these studies, villagers adopt good management practices that incorporate ecological factors as well as the welfare of both individuals and the group as a whole, and they possess unparalleled knowledge about the resources they own. They provide numerous examples of real-world villager customs to support their claims. In this contentious discussion about the role of the market and the state

vs the community in groundwater governance (Tilley *et al.*, 2021).

Methodology

Nowadays, the phrase "environmental governance" is often used in academic and policy circles to refer to natural resources, such as meadows, forests, and water. But it tends to ignore the realities of political democracy, and as the concept of "government" gradually gives way to "governance," it is being used more and more to describe various "commons" (Bavinck *et al.*, 2005). The state, the market, and civil society, as well as their hybrid relationships, have all been proposed as the actors that make up governance (Chatterjee and Agarwalla, 2024). The relationship between the state and society is known as co-management or co-governance. Although there are different types of decentralization, this connection is typically defined by the transfer of state activities to community-based actors at the local or regional level, especially in the post-colonial and more neoliberal developing world (Gurung, Chaudhary and Bhatta, 2019). As a result, community-based actors have been included in this study together with the state and the market as crucial players in groundwater governance, especially when it comes to comprehending shared well irrigation institutions. It should be noted that in India, groundwater is not primarily managed by common property agreements. Although groundwater is a CPR by definition, it is typically subject to unrestricted access or the rule of capture in India. The resource's boundedness is one of the design tenets of long-standing, effective CBNRM systems (Katre *et al.*, 2024). Another is when the state acknowledges a

community's rights to the resource, even if such rights do not necessarily include the ability to alienate (sell). With the difficulties of a caste-based system, groundwater resources in India (and virtually everywhere else) defy the first, if not the second, design principle. The study's primary goal is to assess how well fisherman SHGs operate through cooperatives in terms of inclusive development and socioeconomic empowerment. Additional goals are:

- To assess how catch structure varies at various phases of fisheries development.
- To determine the socioeconomic indicators of the fishermen at the sectoral and sub-sectoral levels.
- To assess the quality of life for fishermen.
- To assess income disparity and poverty in the various subsectors of the fishing industry.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 presents an illustration of the study's theoretical framework. There are now "too many vessels chasing too few fish" as a result of the subsectoral developments brought about by globalization and related advancements in the fisheries industry. This led to a number of complex problems, including resource depletion, seasonality, catch variation, shifting landing centers, etc., which had a direct effect on the fishermen's income and security of livelihood. These issues also included low resource creation, an absence of expertise, low expectations for everyday comforts, and obligation trouble. Social exclusion and poverty are the outcomes of this. The process persisted like a

vicious circle combining lack of assets and skills, poverty, exclusion, and problems with livelihood. Although the trawl ban helped to some degree to slow down the depletion of resources, its effects on fishermen's livelihoods were more evident for women employed in related fields. The official and informal institutional linkages in the fisheries industry were initiated by Kerala's top fisheries cooperative federation, Matsyafed. Kerala's fishermen experienced another flood of improvement and monetary dependence with the introduction of SHGs and Cooperatives, which guaranteed livelihood security, asset building, empowerment, and improved living standards.

Results

Matsyafed is the primary financing source for the SHGs, according to the findings of the Participatory Rural Appraisal Method conversations with the office bearers of the organizations. Through various plans and programs, the Matsyafed has provided them with help, either directly or through the organizations.

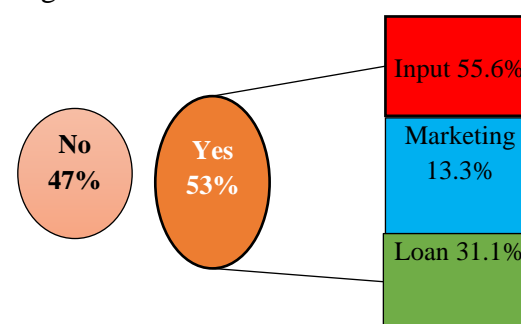


Figure 1: Revolving fund.

Social exclusion is widespread, but it is particularly severe among fishermen. The high exclusionary inclinations have multiple causes. Their poverty and sticky labor with no other means of support are

the most relevant factors. The social and cultural characteristics of the fishermen

differ from those of other social groupings in the state.

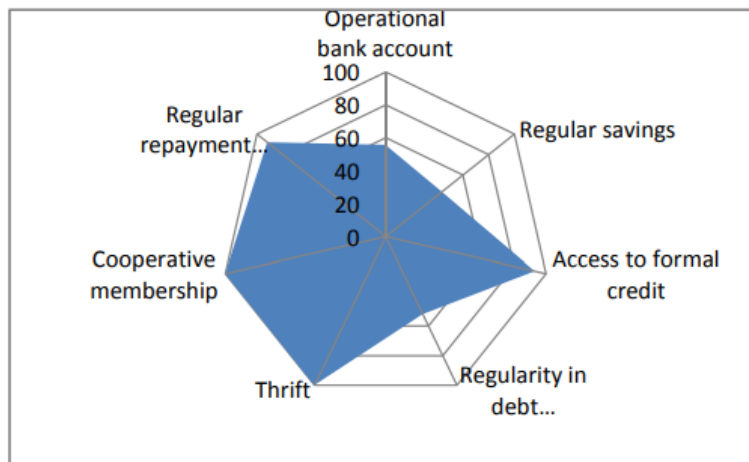


Figure 2: Financial aspects.

They have deficient framework, are topographically detached, and are frequently isolated from the mainstream of society and thought. The fish economy is primitive and rife with many forms of fraud and exploitation. Even while fish production is currently profitable, intermediaries steal a large portion of it, thus fisherman receive a pitifully small

portion of their harvest. This is especially true for low-value pelagic species like mackerel and sardine, whose catches are still dominated by traditional fishermen's output. To a greater extent, the SHGs' financial practices serve as an example of the degree of financial inclusion. Figure 2 shows a summary of the fishermen's financial practices.

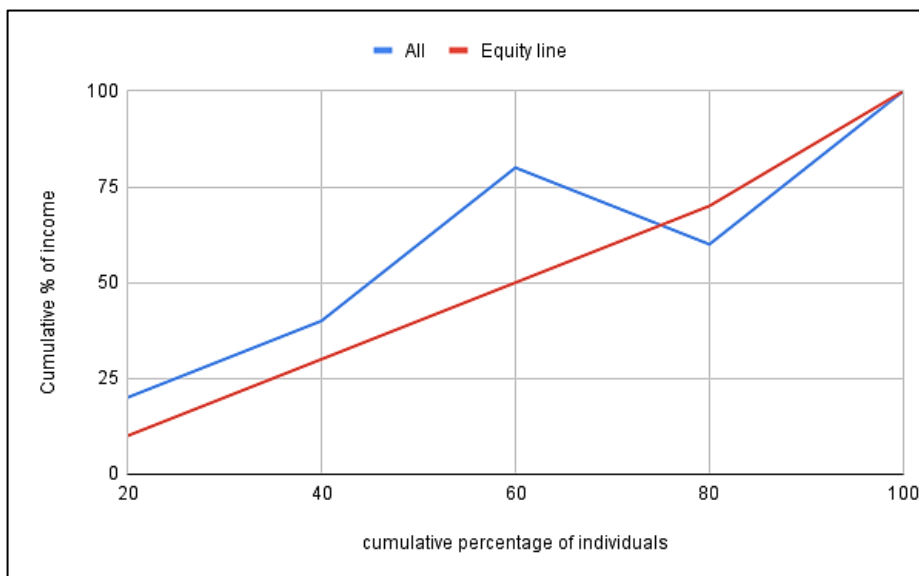


Figure 3: Lorenz Curve

Figure 3 shows the LC according to individual income. The line of perfect equality, or where all members of the population have the same income, is represented by a straight line. The figure

makes it clear that there is some inequality between people's income levels because the income distribution is farther from the equality line. 0.318 is the Gini value.

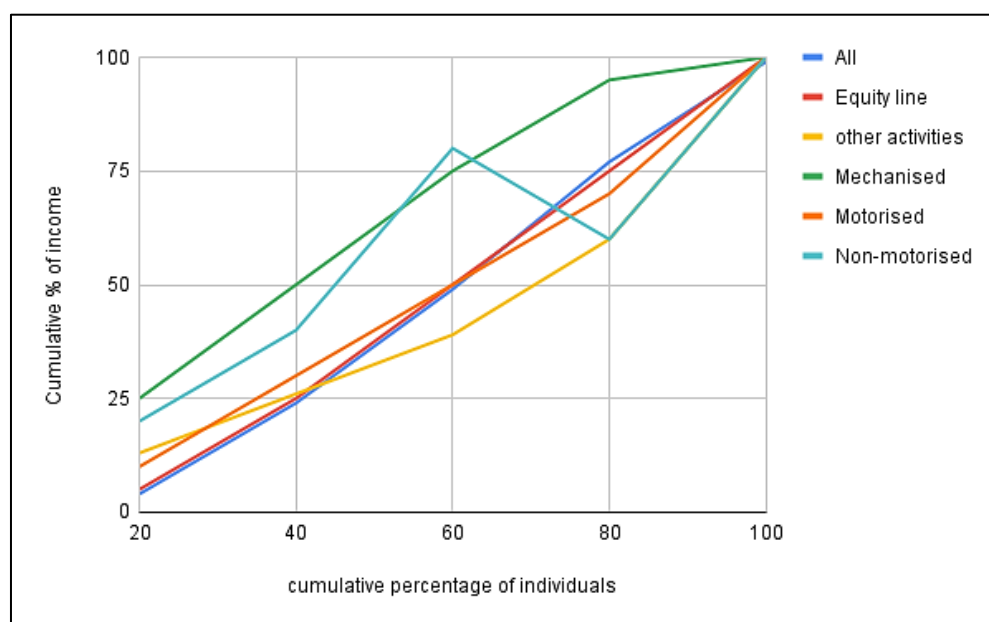


Figure 4: Lorenz Curve based on Activity

The four sub-sectors' occupation-wise Lorenz Curve is displayed in Figure 4. The motorized, non-motorized, and other related activities follow the equality line, which is closer to the LC for the mechanized sector. There is a lot of inequality in the "All" group. At first, the LCs of the motorized and mechanized sectors overlap, and the large income gap is also weak. At higher income levels, however, the motorized and non-powered curves intersect. This suggests that income disparity is low for motorized versus non-motorized sectors at higher incomes, and vice versa for low-income people. Those engaged in the other activities have LCs that are distinct from those of the other subsectors.

Conclusion

By placing it within the context of governmental, market, and community discourse, the study sought to offer a thorough grasp of groundwater governance in Punjab. In doing so, it attempted to comprehend how the state's groundwater resources had turned into a

political issue. It examined the continuity and changes that have occurred over the past three decades, as well as the various groundwater policies that have been in effect in Punjab since the 1970s. Based on a comprehensive field study employing a mixed method approach in the two blocks of Hoshiarpur district—Hoshiarpur1 and Garshankar—it investigated how informal water sharing institutions, such as water markets and shared tube wells, operated at the village level and determined the variables that affected their operation. Through a critical analysis of secondary sources, the study concluded that during the 1960s, food security was the primary focus of policy planning for agricultural growth in India, which ultimately sparked the "green revolution." By promoting the use of subsidized inputs and high procurement prices, this goal was made attainable. Even while India was able to produce enough food grains to support itself, accumulate buffer stocks, and buy grains for the public distribution system,

the high procurement prices also caused a monocropping pattern to arise.

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