In the past, significant contributions by women to sustaining the socioeconomic well-being of their families has been neglected or taken for granted. As a result, women's economic contribution and potential are underestimated. In recent years, however, there has been considerable concern about the need to acknowledge and stimulate women's economic contribution and participation in development. The United Nations Declaration of the International Decade of Women in 1975 only served to enhance this concern and awareness as manifested by the proliferation of research projects and studies on the roles of women in development.

In a developing country like Malaysia, the concern for increasing women's economic participation can be seen within the socioeconomic condition of poor households, especially those in the rural sector. Persistent poverty and deteriorating economic conditions have forced many women from poor rural households to work outside their homes and venture into various economic activities while continuing to perform their traditional household duties. It has been generally observed that women in many M alaysian households actually work for as long as 15 to 16 hours daily, carrying out household chores such as cooking, washing and cleaning, taking care of the children, working in the fields either as unpaid family labour or as paid seasonal workers during peak seasons, and engaging in other income-generating or income-substituting activities. Women are no longer confined to their traditional gender roles as wives and mothers but are now wage paid workers and income earners for their families.

Abstract
Like their counterparts in other developing countries, women working in the small-scale fisheries in Malaysia are usually not recognized as being economically active. Yet, general observations and empirical studies show that M alaysian women in small-scale fisheries daily put in long hours of work, with half their time spent in self-employed, income-earning activities. Unfortunately, there is no census or survey that adequately documents the full extent of the economic participation in the small-scale fisheries sector. This paper, which forms part of a larger study on the same subject matter, provides an overview of the socioeconomic status and participation of women in the M alaysian small-scale fisheries sector. The study also aims at highlighting the potentially significant role of public policies and programmes in enhancing the women's economic participation in small-scale fisheries development. The focus of the study is the "women in fisheries" in the two east coast states of K elantan and Terengganu where the women are more economically active than their counterparts elsewhere in the country.
Despite these changing roles, however, women, particularly in the rural sector, still occupy a lower socioeconomic status than their male counterparts. Their freedom and chances of enjoying equal access to employment and educational opportunities are often hampered by religious, social and cultural constraints, besides the numerous household chores and responsibilities by which they are bound. It is also a common knowledge that women's involvement in socio-political matters, particularly in decision-making and leadership roles, is limited. Furthermore, women in the rural communities have long been neglected in most development programmes. A few specific attempts have been made by the various government agencies like KEMAS, FELDA, RISDA, LPP, and Lembaga Kemajuan Ikan M alaysia (LKIM) to integrate women into rural development plans. Past experience has shown, however, that programmes aimed at women in the rural sector were too welfare-oriented while programmes to promote their genuine economic opportunities were seriously lacking. As a result, women in the rural sector have been deprived of the direct socioeconomic benefits generated by the many rural development projects.

Economic activities of women in Malaysian fisheries
As with their work in other sectors of the rural economy, women working in the small-scale fisheries are usually not recognized as being economically productive. This is aggravated by the fact that they are primarily engaged in subsistence rather than commercially oriented activities, and female labour is customarily classified as "unpaid family worker". Yet, general observations show that Malaysian women in small-scale fisheries daily put in long hours of work, with half the time spent in self-employed, income-earning activities. There is no denying that such activities do indeed supplement the average fishing household's income-earning capacity. Unfortunately, there is no census or survey that has adequately documented the full extent of women's economic participation in the small-scale fisheries sector. Hence, women's economic contribution to the fisheries economy has not only been sadly neglected but also grossly underestimated.

Economic activities in which women actively participate are:

Fisheries production and processing
The contention that women in fishing households are not economically active is arguable. Even though traditions and superstitions which link women with poor catches inhibit their involvement in direct fishing, women are known to perform essential but generally underestimated roles in fisheries-related activities such as unloading, sorting, gutting, net mending, processing, and distribution and marketing. These supplementary and supportive roles played by the womenfolk were succinctly described by Rosemary Firth (1943), who noted that "when the fisherman comes in wet and tired after a day's fishing he expects his wife to be down on the beach, to throw skids for the boats, help in the sale of fish, distribute the free catch allowance to crew members and carry back the husband's fishing gear to the house". Hence, as far as the men are concerned, their share of the work is completed once the boats return with their catch, and the women are expected to take over from there on. Although not all the tasks completed by women are necessarily paid for and are often taken for granted, they are critical in creating form, place and time utilities which in turn will have a significant impact on total fisheries production and distribution. In fact, it may be argued that it is the post-fishing and distribution activities undertaken by the women that have ensured the persistence of low-cost services and goods which are affordable by the local communities.
The notion that women are completely banned from fishing is not absolutely true since there are instances when women do fish. Interestingly, women's participation in actual fishing is evident only in the east coast states of Kelantan and Terengganu and, to a lesser extent, in Kedah on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. These "fisherwomen" fish mainly from the shore or in shallow protected waters using simple hand-operated gear such as hooks and lines, scoop nets or traps. The catch is used primarily for home consumption while the surplus may invariably find its way to local fish dealers, village retailers, friends and relatives. It is reported that an increasing number of women in small-scale fishing communities in Kelantan are accompanying their husbands to sea owing to the lack of income-earning opportunities in the villages. To some other women, accompanying their husbands fishing is just a way of life. With their fishing background and the years of exposure to the sea, the inclination of these women to fishing activities is natural.

Women's involvement in shore-based activities in small-scale fisheries is most evident in the seafood-processing sector, involving both small home-based establishments and large industrial fish/prawn processing plants. These small-scale, home-based establishments are usually operated on a family or household basis. Characterised by small-scale operation, low capital investment, simple labour-intensive technology, these establishments produce a wide range of fishery products such as fish crackers, fermented fish, fish balls, fermented fish sauce, shrimp paste, dried jelly fish, dried anchovies, salted fish and fish satay. These businesses usually employ a high proportion of daily-paid female labour, the majority of whom are the wives and daughters of fishers. Their main job activities include sorting, gutting, cleaning, drying, curing, and packing of fish and/or prawns. It is understood that such employment provides low cash incomes, usually in the range of RM 5.00 to RM 8.00 a day.

Beside the small fish processing establishments, women in fishing communities are also employed in the large industrial fish/prawn processing plants. Because of their general lack of education and skills, women workers in these large processing plants are once again restricted to low paid labour-intensive work such as sorting, dressing, and packaging. On the other hand, activities like the management of the plants, supervision, and operation of machinery remain very much the monopoly of the male workers.

Fish marketing and trading
Another economic activity involving extensive women's participation is fish trading and marketing. It is generally observed that women's involvement in fish trading is most significant in the north-eastern state of Kelantan, and diminishes in importance, as one moves southward into the states of Terengganu, Pahang and eastern Johor. There are two categories of women fish traders, namely, those selling only the catch brought in by their husbands, and those who are engaged in the buying and selling of the fish traded in the market. Invariably, a majority of these women fish traders turn out to be the wives of fishers wanting to generate a supplementary income for their households. With limited capital and other financial constraints, most women traders can manage to trade only small amounts of fish at a time, and the fish are usually taken to inland markets where prices are slightly higher. Other marketing outlets for the fish handled by the women traders are the bigger fish traders (or daganans as they are called on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia), the small retailers who sell from house-to-house, and the village retail shops. In some cases the fish are gutted and cleaned before they
are sold, thereby increasing their value. The marketing functions undertaken by women fish traders, besides earning them a supplementary income, are indeed very productive in the sense that they are able to create place and form utilities. This invariably pushes the price of fish higher than if they were sold ex-vessel or on the beach. In other words, as aptly pointed out by Yap (1980), the handling and distribution activities performed by the women fish traders provide “fishermen with additional bargaining power that otherwise would not be available if they had to sell on the beach”. Given the additional marketing channel, it is believed that the fishers are less susceptible to exploitation by middlemen. Furthermore, the petty distribution and marketing functions undertaken by the women fish traders ensures the existence of low-cost services for the fishers and affordable fish prices for the local consumers.

Unfortunately, this important role of the women fish traders in small-scale fisheries is gradually being eroded with the introduction of more sophisticated fish distribution and marketing systems. Bulk buying and direct dealing with the fishers and the growth of a large wholesale trade, even in small-scale fisheries, has considerably reduced the role of the small fish traders. Moreover, with the construction of modern landing and marketing complexes, and the introduction of fish auctions in these complexes, it is envisaged that the hitherto important functions performed by small fish traders and dealers will gradually be diminished if not completely phased out. Should such a displacement take place, the women fish traders will be the first to be ousted.

Beside their involvement in fish trading and retailing, women in small-scale fishing communities are also engaged in other small retailing businesses. The women retailers characteristically operate from small huts outside their houses or in local markets in neighbouring villages and towns. Dry food provisions, household goods, fish and vegetables are some of the common items sold by these women retailers. They usually carry out their retailing business with the help of the children and adolescent family members.

Aquaculture
More recently, women in small-scale fisheries have become increasingly involved in fish farming in synchronization with the rapid development of aquaculture in the country. The participation of women in aquaculture extends to every aspect of fish farming such as preparing of fish feed, feeding of the fish, cleaning of nets/cages, and the general maintenance and upkeep of the ponds or cages. It is recognized that fish farming is a suitable activity for women since it does not require them to be away from their homes for a long period of time, hence causing them to neglect their household or domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, activities related to fish farming like preparing fish feed, feeding the fish, and minding the ponds/cages are often perceived as extensions of the women’s household chores. In this way, the women are able to combine supplementary income earning activities with household activities without neglecting the latter. A study of the floating cage culture project in Sungai Merbok, Kedah (Hotta and Yahaya, 1985), confirms that the women are extensively involved in activities related to fish rearing. The project was successful in attracting the extensive involvement of women since it was based on the family unit concept where labour is provided by family members.
Non-fisheries activities
Another recent activity involving women's participation is related to tourism. With the rapid growth of the tourism industry in the country and the availability of the various incentives extended by the government, it has been reported that a few enterprising fishing families, especially on the East Coast, have started operating holiday lodgings in the vicinity of their houses for foreign tourists. It is also reported that it is the women who actually undertake the daily management of these guest houses, performing routine household activities like cooking, washing, cleaning, and general housekeeping while their husbands are at sea. As with fish farming/rearing, the women's involvement in running the guest houses or holiday lodgings does not require them to be away from their houses and household responsibilities. Although only a few fishing households are currently taking up such tourism-related, income-generating activities, the number could certainly increase in the future given appropriate incentives and support facilities. In this connection, agencies like Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) and LKIM have initiated schemes specifically aimed at providing such business and employment opportunities in tourism-related industries to the fishing and other coastal communities. In view of this, tourism-related activities seem to be one of the most effective avenues for the potential gainful employment of women in small-scale fisheries.

Besides their participation in relatively new fields like aquaculture and tourism, women in small-scale fishing communities have been traditionally involved in the production of local handicrafts such as batik-making, songket weaving, brass and silver manufacturing, and mat weaving, for generations. These cottage industries, which rely heavily on the conventional skills and craftsmanship of the women, are usually operated in the home, thus enabling them to combine household duties with income-generating activities to supplement the family income. Farming is another significant supplementary income-earning activity undertaken by women in the small-scale fishing communities, working either as seasonal farm workers or unpaid family labour in family-based agricultural production of planting, weeding, and harvesting. A socioeconomic study by ESCAP/FAO (1970) revealed that 27.5% of the women in fisheries with secondary employment were engaged in farming, especially in tobacco growing and padi planting. The study also showed that owning businesses and retailing are other important supplementary income activities for women, providing employment to about 21.6% of the total. This is consistent with the general observation that the women from the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia are more business-oriented than their counterparts from the West Coast, although this is more distinct in Kelantan than in the other states on the East Coast.

Several reasons can be put forward for the higher economic participation of women in the fishing communities on the East Coast compared to their counterparts on the West Coast. First, the socioeconomic circumstances of the East Coast fishing communities are such that the women are forced to seek additional income to supplement their meagre household incomes. Second, fishing activities on the East Coast are highly seasonal owing to the influence of the northeast monsoon. During the monsoon period, especially between November and January, rough seas and bad weather conditions prevent most fishermen on the East Coast from fishing, thereby compelling them and their household members to seek other alternative and/or supplementary income-earning activities. Finally, the traditional craftsmanship inherited from their forefathers and the availability of local raw materials have enabled the East Coast
women to pursue handicraft activities such as batik-making, mat and basket weaving, and brass and silver making. It is noted that such natural skills and craftsmanship are conspicuously absent in women in fishing communities on the West Coast.

Economic potential of women in small-scale fisheries
If women in the rural sector, including those in the small-scale fisheries, are to be integrated into the development process, their economic potential should be utilized to the maximum. Until recently, government programmes for women in the rural sector were more family-development oriented and geared mainly towards enhancing the domestic roles of women as wives and mothers. The trend of promoting income-generating activities for women emerged only recently and was sparked by the realisation that women contribute significantly towards the socioeconomic welfare of their families and economic development.

Dixon (1978), in her studies on rural women in South Asia, proposed a model of female employment which incorporates elements designed to integrate women into the rural development process. The central concern of Dixon's model is the creation of non-agricultural employment for rural women. For maximum impact, the strategy must incorporate the following considerations: it should be located in small towns and villages; create jobs outside agriculture on a small-scale; involve labour-intensive light industries; draw women out of their homes into a central work place; organise production cooperatives; and offer additional services and incentives (Dixon, 1978). Another relevant consideration is that, before determining which income-generating projects are suitable and feasible, it is important to study the production activities in which the women are currently involved. It has been generally observed that, in most cases, these are subsistence activities, and thus should be upgraded to income-earning employment. In view of the dualistic roles of women, it must be remembered that the new income-generating activities should not draw women out of their homes for such long periods that they cannot perform their domestic tasks as usual. To further enhance their economic roles, women should have at their disposal basic household appliances, such as washing machines, refrigerators, cookers, etc. which could help reduce their domestic chores. Unfortunately, such amenities, the presence of which are usually taken for granted by urban housewives, are generally not available in the majority of fishing households. This means that more effort, time and energy have to be devoted to domestic activities, leaving the women with less time for income-earning activities outside their homes. This is further compounded by the lack of social amenities such as clinics, schools, postal services, communication, transportation, and pre-school play group facilities. Although, this is a basic problem common to rural women in general, it is most apparent among women in small isolated fishing communities.

Without losing sight of the above considerations, four main areas in which women in small-scale fisheries can actively participate and earn incomes have been identified as:

i. Traditional subsistence activities such as fish processing, preservation, and fermentation which can be upgraded into income generating production.

ii. Activities in aquaculture (brackishwater, cage, and mussel culture) such as the collection of fish fry, prawn seed etc., stocking of ponds, the feeding, and the rearing of poultry (chicken and duck) by the fishponds.
iii. Home-based, labour-intensive cottage industries such as batik-making, weaving, silver making, basket making, sewing, local handicrafts (ornaments made from sea-shells, corals etc.), and other agro-based industries such as fruit preservation, copra and coconut-oil extraction.

iv. Operation of holiday accommodation or guest houses for tourists.

Fish processing
By long tradition, the women in small-scale fisheries, particularly on the East Coast, have engaged in a wide range of traditional fish-processing activities such as salting, sun-drying, preservation, and fermentation to produce products like fish-crackers (keropok), fish sauce (budu), shrimp paste (belacan), and shrimp sauce (cencalok), and salted and dried fish, cuttlefish and prawns. It was estimated that nearly 30% of marine fish landed in Peninsular Malaysia are processed into these traditional fishery products which provide a cheap source of animal protein to the rural population. These activities are carried out either at the household level or at numerous small processing units dispersed throughout the fishing villages. The methods employed to process the fish are traditional, requiring minimal capital and technical know-how. However, this traditional processing technology coupled with poor sanitation of the premises and utensils, and the absence of quality control, results in products which are inferior in quality and therefore fetch low prices and have limited markets. In view of this, it has been proposed that training to improve processing methods should be extended to a group of selected female fish processors who would in turn spearhead the dissemination of knowledge and skills to the other women processors (ESCAP/FAO, 1970). The technical support and assistance of relevant government agencies like MARDI, LKIM and the Fisheries Department would be appropriate in making such a training project a reality.

The numerous fish processing activities traditionally undertaken by the women in fishing communities are performed by the individual or the family unit, but rarely as a cooperative. The women would benefit considerably if they were organized into small cooperatives primarily concerned with fish processing and curing. Such a cooperative effort offers several economic and social advantages over individual enterprises or being an employee in a processing factory. Government assistance in the form of low-interest loans, technical expertise and training should emphasise simple cooperative principles, book-keeping, saving schemes, improved processing and preservation methods, and hygienic sanitation. To facilitate marketing, special retail outlets should be established not only in the vicinity of the village but also in neighbouring towns and cities.

Handicraft cottage industries
The concept of organizing women’s economic activities into small cooperatives can also be extended to other fishery-based cottage industries such as net-making, local handicrafts (ornaments made from sea-shells and corals), and other fishery by-products. These cooperative ventures should not be confined to fishery-based industries but extended to other small-scale agro-industries such as fruit preservation, copra, and coconut oil extraction, etc. The establishment of such home-based, labour-intensive production units which utilise readily available local materials and use intermediate technology, offer vast income-earning opportunities to women who have hitherto been employed in the subsistence and informal sectors. In this connection, it is envisaged that LKIM, with the technical assistance and support
of agencies like MARDI, KEMAS and MARA, can play an important role in developing small-scale, home-based industries which involve women's labour in the fishing villages.

Aquaculture
In view of the government's recent thrust for the development of freshwater and brackishwater fish farming as alternative and/or supplementary livelihoods to marine fishing, there is a great potential for the possible involvement of women in this area. Rural women are known to be involved in integrated farming activities such as fish farming, vegetable gardening, poultry, and animal husbandry as secondary economic activities. While men attend to the more strenuous activities of ploughing the land, digging the ponds, and building the bunds and hedges, the women's role is confined to feeding the animals/fish, stocking and fertilising the ponds, preparing the fish-feed, and harvesting.

In coastal aquaculture practices, such as cage and mussel culture, the tasks of preparing fish feed, feeding, cleaning, and general up-keep of the cages and rafts, are carried out mainly by the women while their husbands are out fishing. With the recent thrust for small-scale aquaculture as a supplementary or alternative source of livelihood for artisanal fishers, the prospect of utilising women's economic potential in aquaculture appears bright. This is further reinforced by the recent rapid development of large-scale aquaculture projects (pond, raft, cage, on-bottom culture etc.), which would certainly increase job opportunities for women in this very important economic activity. The main activities commonly associated with the extensive participation of women are stocking of ponds, stock correction and growth checks, maintenance activities (weeding of ponds, clearing of bunds, cleaning nets and cages, protection against predators etc.), collection of fingerlings and fish fry, fertilizing ponds, feeding, harvesting, handling, and transport of fish from ponds, cages, rafts etc. to storage tanks (Yap, 1980).

Since these activities are not very time-consuming and do not draw women too far away from home, their normal household duties will not be affected. There is also a possibility of practising integrated farming such as the rearing of poultry and fish and the growing of cash crops along the bunds. For example, integration of fish and ducks/pigs has been successfully practised by Chinese pond farmers in this country. Therefore, both aquaculture and integrated farming appear to offer great scope for increasing women's economic involvement in the future.

Tourism
The possibility of women's participation in income-generating, tourism-related activities in fishing villages is yet another area where their economic potential can be utilised. With more tourists staying on the beach and at off-shore island resorts, guest accommodation and facilities should be improved and added to. Currently, there is a shortage of cheap accommodation (chalets, longhouses, etc.) for tourists on these beach and island resorts. As mentioned earlier, a few fishing households on the East Coast have taken the initiative to operate cheap lodging/guest houses for tourists on a small-scale basis. Such facilities are very popular among foreign tourists with limited budgets who wish to stay in a particular place for an extended period of time. In addition to providing cheap accommodation, such guest houses would enable tourists to experience typical kampung or village life. It would seem that such guest houses are becoming increasingly popular among low-budget, foreign tourists.
Women's participation in tourism-related activities such as operating holiday accommodation is the least dislocating in the sense that it does not require them to be away from their homes. The daily management of the guesthouses, like tidying, cleaning, and cooking, can be carried out as an extension of the women's routine housekeeping chores. Nevertheless, it is generally felt that women's involvement in tourism-related industries should also be expanded to other income-generating activities, such as retailing local handicrafts, operating small restaurants, and organising recreational activities and cultural shows for a fee. It is realized, however, that the women may not have the necessary skills and experience to undertake such activities.

In view of this, government agencies like MARA, LKIM, TDC, KARYANEKA etc. can play an important role in initiating and supporting small tourism-related projects for coastal communities in general and the fishing community in particular. The important areas where agencies can provide input are loans and credit (MARA, Bank Pembangunan Malaysia, Credit Guaranteed Corporation etc.), training and extension (Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan, KEMAS, TDC), marketing (KARYANEKA), and technical support facilities and manpower (TDC, LKIM etc.).

The government should spearhead and support income generating projects for women in the small-scale fisheries sector. Unless the government comes forward to subsidize the initial investment costs, such income generating projects will not be economically viable.

Policies and programmes
This study draws attention to the potentially significant role of public policies and programmes in enhancing the participation of women in fisheries in other economic activities.

Although central fisheries agencies have embarked upon women-focussed programmes specifically for the small-scale fisheries sector, the extent and depth of these programmes are too limited to have any significant or long-term impact. Serious commitment to incorporate women-focussed programmes as an integral part of their overall development strategies is needed by all agencies concerned.

Depending on local needs, resources, and economic and social patterns, the programmes may concentrate on providing support for fisherwomen in one or more of the following broad areas: a) women-focussed economic programmes, b) social services and community activities, and c) organisational, technical, and financial support.

Economic Programmes
Women in fisheries must be given the opportunities and means to increase their economic capacities by:

i. Setting up small, cottage industries which utilise local raw materials, traditional skills and craftsmanship, require small investment, employ simple, hand-operated technologies, and manufacture products that are easily marketable.

ii. Setting up central work places near women's homes where organised economic projects like batik-making, weaving, silver working, tailoring, sewing, vegetable gardening, and poultry rearing can be conveniently carried out. Locating the economic activities of women in a central work place has several economic advantages.
• It provides an economy of scale and a division of labour that are impossible to achieve in a dispersed production system and it facilitates efficient marketing and distribution of the products.

• It enables closer supervision of workers and better control over the quality of products. It can also provide better working conditions.

• It facilitates the transfer of technology and investment in capital equipment and facilitates dissemination of knowledge and skills.

iii. Initiating special programmes for women in fisheries to promote cooperative forms of economic organisation such as seafood processing cooperatives, credit and marketing societies, and producers' associations.

iv. Diversifying the types of non-fisheries activities for women in fisheries depending on the local resources available, traditional work patterns, skills and interests, and the nature of the local economic structure. Small, home-based activities once again tend to be most viable since most women are also required to carry out domestic duties which require their presence at or near their homes.

Social services and community facilities
In preparing the women in fisheries for more active economic participation some essential prerequisites are needed to improve their economic leverage, thus enhancing their economic and employment potential. In particular, public policies and programmes should focus on the following:

i. Raising the level of education and the skills of women by drawing them into rural learning institutions such as elementary school, adult literacy classes, and vocational training.

ii. Developing and improving basic household amenities such as water and electricity to reduce the work load of currently burdensome and time-consuming household tasks, such as preparing food, collecting water from the well, and gathering wood for fuel.

iii. Providing facilities such as crèches, kindergartens, and child-care centres where women can leave their young children while they are working.

iv. Promoting family development and family planning information and services to reduce family size in the context of enhancing the economic role of women.

Organisational, technical, and financial support
Success in enhancing women's economic participation also depends on the appropriate organisational, technical and financial support for domestic, social and economic activities. This support would include:

i. Providing extension services for guiding and supervising a few selected women leaders or "link workers" from fishing villages. These workers would function as the "link" between women in fishing communities and the relevant government agencies in order to improve the communication flow and rapport between them.

ii. Providing specific training in the basics of fish handling, preservation, and curing.
iii. Providing low-interest loans and credit facilities to women in businesses such as fish marketing and trading, fish farming, and food retailing.

iv. Ensuring minimum wage legislation and a social security system for women in paid employment such as in large fish processing factories, handicraft, and batik-making factories.

v. Encouraging research and development aimed at developing improved technologies in fish processing or other non-fisheries enterprises in which women in fisheries participate.

vi. Promoting national campaigns to change prevailing social traditions, cultural constraints, and conservative attitudes that are discriminatory against women and limit their accessibility to economic resources and opportunities.

Conclusion

In the small-scale fisheries sector of Malaysia, the economic participation of women is grossly underestimated, their contribution towards the socioeconomic welfare of their families is often taken for granted and their economic potential under-utilised. Government programmes for women in fisheries are generally more family-oriented, geared towards enhancing the domestic role of the women as homemakers. More recently, the trend has been to promote income earning activities for these women. This has been sparked by the realisation that women do contribute significantly to household income and to the economic well-being of their families.

The issue of promoting economic activities for women, however, goes beyond fisheries development planning. Adequate attention and commitment should also be extended to other fundamental forces influencing social barriers, perceptions, cultural values, and sexual inequalities. Moreover, programmes aimed at enhancing the economic role of women in fisheries cannot be carried out in isolation but have to be integrated into other activities which come under the general rubric of rural development. In the final analysis, success in enhancing women's economic participation in the small-scale fisheries sector depends very much on the political will and commitment of planners and policy-makers. Without this will and commitment, the concern to enhance the economic participation of women in fisheries and to integrate these women into development will remain a widely discussed academic issue.

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