

Importance of Studying Public Expenditure on Fisheries: Indian Context

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SUMMARY

The Indian fisheries sector, a bustling hub of economic activity, contributes significantly to the national GDP and provides sustenance to millions. It directly impacts rural livelihoods, food security, and nutritional health. Amid the vastness of such contributions to society, the relevance of studying its public expenditure becomes increasingly paramount. There remains a deficit in comprehensive research into the impact and efficiency of public expenditure on this sector. This essay critically examines the importance of studying public expenditure on fisheries in an Indian context, citing government schemes, socio-economic impact and ecological sustainability as primary angles of deliberation. The efficiency and impact of government spending in fostering the fisheries sector also holds implications on the fiscal policy at large. Public expenditure directed at fisheries is ultimately taxpayers' money. As such, transparency in terms of where this money is going, and how effectively it is being used becomes crucial, lending another reason for studying public expenditure on fisheries.

INTRODUCTION

India is blessed with bountiful inland and marine fisheries, which play an essential role in socio-economic development and provide employment to millions. Nevertheless, the vitality of public expenditure in the fisheries sector has often been under emphasized. This essay delves into the importance of studying this critical component from a uniquely Indian context. Public spending on fisheries assumes considerable noteworthiness for myriad reasons. One of such is the role it plays in enhancing the productivity and profitability of the sector. The government of India rolled out various schemes like 'Blue Revolution,' aimed at boosting fish production. The Indian Fisheries Act of 1897 laid the foundation for the development of the fisheries sector in India and delineated the responsibility of provinces toward the development and conservation of fisheries in the country.

Extension and Innovation:

Public expenditure towards fisheries extension carries a significant role in the sector. It can help in the development and conservation of fisheries in the country. Public expenditure often encompasses investing in research and development (R&D), crucial for bringing about technological innovations in the fishing industry. Understanding the nature of public expenditure shows the public-sector commitment to modernising the industry and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Sustainability of Fisheries:

Understanding public expenditure on fisheries helps assess the government's commitment to the sustainable development of the fishing industry. By analyzing resource allocation and expenditure patterns, it is possible to identify if sufficient investments are being made in conservation measures, research, and infrastructure development to ensure the long-term viability of fisheries resources. A study by Kibria et al. (2018) emphasized the need for proper allocation of funds to conservation measures and infrastructure development for sustainable fisheries management. Public expenditure in fisheries also shows the country's commitment towards environmental sustainability, considering the contemporary issue of overfishing. Thorough research on expenditure allows for appropriate scrutiny of funds directed towards maintaining ecological balance.

Public Health, Livelihoods and Food Security:

In India, fish is a prominent source of affordable and high-quality proteins, vitamins, and minerals contributing significantly to public health. Studies show that approximately 270 million Indians consume fish amongst other animal proteins. An in-depth study of public expenditure helps to determine the funding allocated to ensuring the sustainability and access to this nutritional source, thereby safeguarding food security and public health. As per estimates by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), over 14 million people in India are dependent on fisheries for their livelihood. Public expenditure, thus, actively supports not merely the

sustenance of this industry but ensures livelihoods for people relying on it. A meticulous study of such economic patterns assists in understanding how these funds are utilised and aids in identifying potential areas for future investment. Public expenditure can play a greater role in small-scale coastal fishing, as suggested by Article 26(2) of the Indian Fisheries Act.

Fisheries play a significant role in India's economy, contributing to employment and income generation, especially in coastal communities. Studies on public expenditure provide insights into whether sufficient funds are allocated for supporting small-scale fishers, enhancing their livelihoods, and improving food security for vulnerable populations. A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) regarding "Sustainable Development Goals and Small-Scale Fisheries: A Roadmap for India" highlights the importance of public investment in small-scale fisheries to enhance livelihoods and ensure food security.

Resource Management:

Effective management of fisheries requires sound policies and regulations, enforcement mechanisms, and scientific research. Analyzing public expenditure helps assess if appropriate investments are being made in these areas to ensure sustainable resource management. It also helps identify any gaps or areas of improvement in government initiatives related to fisheries management. CMFRI, emphasizes the role of public expenditure in supporting research and conservation measures for sustainable resource management.

Infrastructure Development:

Adequate infrastructure is vital for the efficient functioning of the fishing industry. This includes facilities such as fishing harbors, landing centers, storage facilities, and processing units. Studying public expenditure helps evaluate if the government is investing in the development and maintenance of fisheries infrastructure to support the growth of the sector. A study by Banerjee et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of public investment in the development and maintenance of fishing harbors, landing centers, and storage facilities.

Institutional Strengthening:

Research on public expenditure sheds light on the institutional framework governing the fishing industry. It reveals if there are sufficient funds allocated for capacity building, training programs, and strengthening the administrative and regulatory bodies responsible for managing fisheries. This information is crucial for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional arrangements. The publication "Fisheries Governance in India" by the World Bank highlights the role of public expenditure in strengthening administrative and regulatory bodies of fisheries management.

Policy Evaluation and Advocacy:

Public expenditure studies provide evidence and data that can be used to evaluate existing policies and advocate for change. By analyzing financial allocations and outcomes, researchers and advocacy groups can identify areas where policies are working well and those that need improvement, fostering informed decision-making and policy development processes. A research article by Sen et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of analyzing public expenditure in order to identify areas where policies are working well and those needing improvement.

CONCLUSION

Scrutinizing the public expenditure on fisheries is of monumental relevance in the Indian context. Therefore, comprehending the quantum and pattern of public expenditure helps discern the effectiveness of government policies towards meeting the socio-economic objectives. A thoughtful study necessitates the scrutiny of resource allocation and management in the sector, trend analysis over time, and comparison with international counterparts. It serves a multiplicity of purposes enhancing productivity and profitability, safeguarding livelihoods, ensuring ecological sustainability, and maintaining fiscal transparency which hold significant implications for India's overall development narrative. Therefore, policy strategists, researchers and academicians. In summary, studying public expenditure on fisheries in the Indian context is essential for assessing the government's commitment to sustainability, livelihoods, resource management, infrastructure development, institutional strengthening, and policy evaluation. By understanding how public funds are allocated and spent, it becomes possible to identify and address gaps and prioritize initiatives that support the sustainable development of the fishing industry.

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