

EMPOWER WOMEN WITH AQUACULTURE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL TO INCREASE FISH PRODUCTION

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Fish is the most commonly consumed protein source among the people of Tripura State. To meet the large demand in the State, fish is imported from Andhra Pradesh, a Southern State and from Bangladesh, almost on a daily basis. The current level of average fish productivity is less than 1300 kg/ha and efforts are made to identify constraints to increasing fish production. This study was undertaken in the West Tripura district with a view to understanding the participation of women in aquaculture activities and the level of productivity obtained. Altogether, 996 farmers were surveyed in the district and the information related to various aspects of women 's participation in carrying out different aquaculture activities was studied.

Illiteracy was common among the surveyed population with 33.7 percent of women belonging to this category and another 20.3 percent of women having only a primary education. Except for a small percentage of women (1.16 percent), the rest had never attended any training related to aquaculture. Among the surveyed families, 42.6 percent of women were not involved in any of the aquaculture activities and they viewed it as an activity related to the men in the family. The rest of the women involved in aquaculture learnt about the activity largely through observing the activities carried out by the men in the family. Among the activities carried out by women, the most common were the regular harvesting of fish for family consumption, followed by feeding and fertilisation. The level of participation of women involved in aquaculture activities varied, but the majority of them carried out nearly 25-50 percent of the aquaculture activities. Among the various activities wherein women's involvement was seen, animal husbandry attracted a large participation of women followed by aquaculture and agriculture. Although women indicated that they were never invited to attend any training on aquaculture (80.6 percent), when they were asked whether they would be interested in attending training, only 32 percent of women said that they would be interested in attending the training.

Among the surveyed families, while the majority of the decisions were made by male members in regard to aquaculture activity, in the case of overall family management, decisions were made jointly involving both husband and wife. More than 50 percent of the women felt that they played a key role in contributing to the economy of the family. The popular poster "My wife does not work", produced by the Banchte Shekha of Bangladesh to reflect the women's situation was used to identify the relevance of that poster to their family as well to other families living in their area. 79.7 percent of women felt that the picture was of low relevance to their family, while 33.1 percent felt that it had moderate relevance to other families living in their area. Overall, the study showed that women's participation helped to increase fish production significantly. These results have been used to influence policies and the field level extension activities to make aquaculture development programmes focused more on women.