

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CARP CULTURE ACTIVITIES IN INDIA**

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In India, carps account for most of the production from the inland aquaculture sector and almost all of this production comes from rural areas. A study was undertaken to understand carp farming status in ten different states of India, namely Assam , Manipur Tripura , West Bengal, Orissa , Uttar Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkand and Punjab, representing different agro-climatic conditions with varied intensities of carp culture and cultural differences among the farmers. Part of this major study focused on understanding the role and contribution women make in carp culture activities.

Participation of women in carp culture activities varied widely among the ten states studied. Their participation in aquaculture activities was generally low in most of the states and their role was negligible in states like Andhra Pradesh and Punjab where carp culture has made rapid progress and has achieved a higher level of production compared to the other states. However, in some of the states such as West Bengal, Assam and Manipur, women's participation in aquaculture was higher. In these states, aquaculture still remains largely a subsistence activity, though increasing numbers of families are selling fish to buy other family necessities. Whenever women's participation involvement was recorded in small scale carp farming activities, the women were largely engaged in feeding of fishes and pond fertilization. Availability of inputs is one of the major constraints experienced by farmers to improve their productivity levels. Further, availability of money to buy the inputs is also another constraint experienced by farmers. As the farmers ability to take risks by investing in this new activity is low, carp culture continues mainly as a subsistence activity in many locations even after three decades of extension effort.

In places where women's self help groups (SHG) have been formed, these SHGs were found to play a key role in managing the activities as a group. Women participating in the activity recognize the power of aquaculture in improving the family economy and nutrition and thereby their improved position in the family owing to their contribution to the family economy. When women were not involved in carp farming, men identified lack of time , societal norms , etc., as the reason for the women's non-participation.

Carp culture is not adequately recognized yet by extension personnel as an activity that can be performed as a backyard activity by women. As a result, women are not targeted for training and men continue to be those primarily involved. In addition, cultural norms prevailing in the society prevent women from active participation. As men dominate the extension division of all the states with very few women extension officers, breaking this cultural belief has not been possible.

In this paper an effort has been made to assess the level of participation of women in each of the states and identify the factors that have been hindering or supporting their participation. Strategies that are needed to enhance participation of women have been identified. Policy approaches that are needed to promote greater participation of women and to build the knowledge and skills of people to target women are outlined.