Integrating gender perspectives in aquaculture projects: Case study of Greater Noakhali Aquaculture Project

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The study

- Aquaculture’s empowering effect on women?
- Factors and processes in which aquaculture extension can bring about change in women’s status and decision making power.
- Case on Greater Noakhali Aquaculture Project (GNAEP) in Bangladesh.
- Based on interview of 99 women and men under the project (55 women, 44 men)
Aquaculture systems

- Pond poly culture by fish farming group (FFG)
  - Credit, training, household approach

- Integrated pond farming (IPF)
  - Farmer field school, focus farmers, CBO, separate training for women and men

- Carp and prawn nursery program for women-headed households
  - Making Opportunities for Women-headed Households for Improving their Livelihood through Aquaculture – MOWHILA
  - Fry production in backyard, women’s groups, FFS

- Cage culture
  - Landless farmers with joint ownership of ponds, training by needs basis
Women’s involvement in aquaculture

- Aquaculture new activity for most households.
- Women engaged in most of the aquaculture activities (including guarding ponds)
- Cage and MOWHILA women perceived that they do most of the aquaculture work.
- Time spent for aquaculture
  - IPF women 4.2 hours, men 3 hours
  - Cage women  3.16 hours
  - MOWHILA women  2.88 hours
  - FFG women 2.8 hours, men 2.67 hours
Income increase through aquaculture activity

- Relative importance of income from aquaculture
  - Nearly half of net HH income for MOWHILA
  - 26% for cage culture
  - 5.5% for IPF
  - 30% for FFG.

- MOWHILA had little alternative income source, while IPF earned more from non-agriculture income, and cage culture by vegetable.
Decision making, self-confidence and participation in community activities

- No change in intra-household decision making pattern and division of labor for reproductive work.
- Women’s contribution invisible?
- Improved self-confidence
  - 42.3% of women said self-confidence improved (MOWHILA 68%, cage 16%, IPF 100%, FFG 25%)
- Permission to go out
  - 66.2% of women replied that they need men’s permission, while 79.3% of men did.
- Higher participation in community activities
Helping community people

![Bar chart showing percentage changes after and before for different groups: FFG, IPF, WHH, Cage. The chart indicates the proportion of male, female, and both participants.]
Conclusion

- Women involved in all types of aquaculture, but no change seen in division of labor or decision making patterns in household.
- Women’s contribution invisible?
- Increase in mobility and working side by side with men improved their self-esteem.
  - Pond side training
  - Old settlers (cage and FFS)
  - How they think they are treated by extension workers
Integrating gender perspective in aquaculture extension project is not only about targeting women for knowledge dissemination, but about improving women’s confidence.

The way to do this is culture and context specific.