

GENDER EQUITY IN COASTAL AQUACULTURE - A REALITY

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In Tamil Nadu, coastal aquaculture, in comparison with fishing, is a fairly recent activity; therefore the role of women is growing. Women clearly play a definite and small part in farm activities in India and in processing, where women are most involved, a small workforce is developing. Economic empowerment of women is expected to transform them into powerful agents of the society. A total of 120 female laborers working in shrimp ponds in Tamil Nadu were selected for this study. A structured questionnaire was developed and the respondents were interviewed in their local language. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The objective of the present study was to discern the state of gender participation in aquaculture extension activities and thereby to find ways for designing gender-balanced extension packages. The key findings of this study showed that on-farm labour was clearly divided between the genders and women's roles were different to those of men in production activities and they faced different constraints. Men labourers undertook pond preparation, stocking, liming, fertilizing the pond, feeding, sampling, health monitoring and harvesting. Women labourers played a vital role in pond preparation, removal of filamentous algae, mixing of the feed additives, feeding, hand picking and post harvest handling. For many women, the income generating activities are equal to those of men. The total work time and the labor power of women were greater than those of men.

Empowering women labourers and increasing their income through coastal aquaculture is the best way to address poverty. The role of fisheries extension in supporting women in culture activities needs to be strengthened to make their work visible. Training should be given. This training must cover all aspects of culture activities but emphasis and priority should be given to the management aspects where their training needs are great. Training should be focused on knowledge, skills and attitudes of the women. Training and extension services are male-oriented and are traditionally carried out almost exclusively by men. There is consequently a shortage of trained female extension personnel at all levels of most extension services. To achieve gender equity, changes have to occur at several levels in the field of coastal aquaculture. The existing gender-related programs have resulted in awareness of gender issues which has to be translated into more visible actions. Continued and coordinated efforts are necessary to bring about long-lasting changes in the area of gender equity in coastal aquaculture.

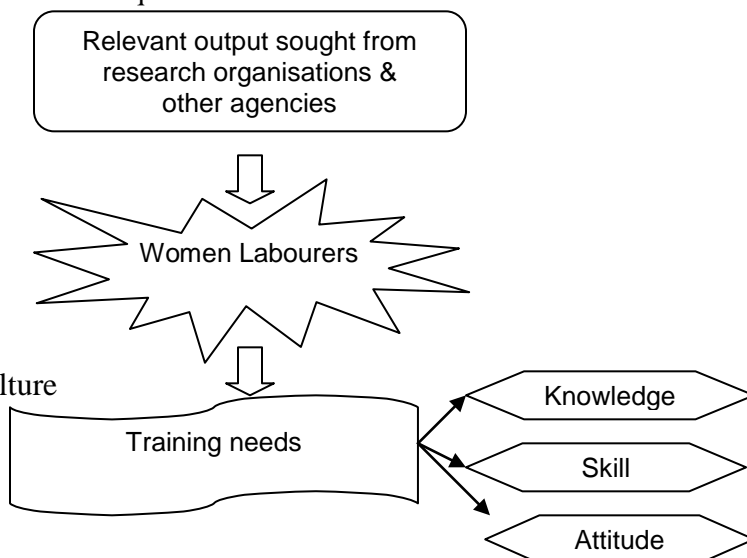


Figure. Gender equity in coastal aquaculture