

# **AQUACULTURE EXTENSION APPROACHES AND WOMEN'S IMPROVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING: CASE STUDY OF GREATER NOAKHALI AQUACULTURE PROJECT**

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The study compared the extension approaches and women's involvement among four different types of aquaculture activities supported by Greater Noakhali Aquaculture Project (GNAEP) in Bangladesh. The groups selected were pond-polyculture, integrated pond farming, prawn nursing, and cage culture. Pond polyculture targeted women and men equally, and created fish farming groups. Integrated pond farming took farmer field school approach and at the same time took a household approach where both husband and wife are the members of FFS. Prawn nursing was targeted to women-headed households. They were provided with training and in-kind credit. Cage culture support was provided to farmers with joint ownership of ponds. There was no formal training and technical inputs were done on the field.

The study found that the division of labour in reproductive work as well as decision making pattern in the household did not change much after the introduction of aquaculture. Except for women-headed households, little change in actual practices have been seen. This might be because the income from aquaculture was not distinguished as women's income, and also because income from aquaculture was not indispensable for most of the aquaculture types.

However, some perception changes have been seen among women aquaculturists. Many of the women respondents across aquaculture types noted their increased participation in community activities. They also expressed their improvement in self-confidence as well as sense of freedom to be mobile. There has been little difference between the aquaculture types, although women-headed households showed higher improvement level. The study argues that integrating gender perspective in aquaculture extension project is not only about targeting women for knowledge dissemination, but about improving women's confidence. This is culture and context specific and there is a need to develop different approaches for different contexts.