

Process Evaluation of “Aquaculture: increasing income, diversifying diets, and empowering women in Bangladesh (IDEA)”

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RATIONALE

One of the most productive and dynamic industries with enormous potential for future growth in Bangladesh's rural economy is the fishing sector. Considering the untapped potential of aquaculture in North-western Bangladesh. WorldFish is implementing - “Aquaculture: increasing income, diversifying diets, and empowering women in Bangladesh (IDEA)” project along with BRAC and TMSS, two major local NGOs in Bangladesh. The project was launched in 2019 to improve incomes, nutrition, and women’s empowerment in Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions in northwest Bangladesh.

3ie conducted a process evaluation of the IDEA project, an aquaculture intervention in Bangladesh, to understand the

- Drivers of intervention results
- COVID-19 disruptions and
- Changes in the theory of change.

This study will inform a full impact evaluation of the project.



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RESULTS

Due to COVID-19, the project was not delivered at scale and had to be reconfigured to account for reduced resources and restrictions.

- Training farmers on feed management, pond management, fingerling selection and transportation, fish preservation, and cultivation of different varieties, led to increased awareness on best practices.
- Two major factors influence the issue of fingerlings transportation- one is the scale of aquaculture, and another is the sources of fingerlings. Farmers who do aquaculture commercially seem to be more concerned about maintaining precautions during transportation. On the other hand, small-scale aquaculture farmers are not worried about the quality of fingerlings and put less emphasis on it.
- Farmers reported that lack of financial resources impede adoption to commercial animal-based fish feed.
- Smallholder farmers who undertook subsistence aquaculture, were less likely to follow best practices.
- Farmers rely on several sources like- relatives, neighbors, television programs for information. The implementing NGOs have become the major source of information for the farmers who are currently following the GAPs.
- Among female farmers there was still an acute lack of awareness in GAPs
- Inability to hire female local service providers affected the gender and nutrition components of the program.
- Few farmers have been linked with private market actors due to implementation delays

IMPLICATIONS

Understanding the effectiveness of aquaculture interventions aimed at smallholder farmers in a context like Bangladesh can help inform donors focused on strengthening rural livelihoods, particularly women, and their impacts on empowerment and nutrition. Specifically, the process evaluation is being used to

- Inspect the validity of key project assumptions
- Capture heterogeneity in demand of project participants
- Sharpen the targeting of interventions
- Manage expectations of project participants

METHODS/ANALYSIS

- Adopted a mixed-method approach, collecting qualitative and quantitative data. The sample was drawn from 10 unions in four districts of Rajshahi and Rangpur.
- Collected primary data through 25 key informant interviews and 36 focus group discussions of implementers, partners, small-scale and medium-scale households, value chain actors and facilitators. Of 242 farmers from control and treatment areas, 108 were women.
- Qualitative data was translated and transcribed, then coded into themes using NVivo.
- Data on knowledge, attitude, and practices of “good aquaculture” was collected quantitatively.
- Questions covered current aquaculture practices, access to information and inputs, nutrition, gender norms and behavioral aspects on women's participation and market linkage.

