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Strengthening of Rural Shrimp Farmers through Good Aquaculture Practice – a piloting by BEST-BFQ, UNIDO in Shyamnagar, Satkhira

“Now I can buy medicine for my family members, and pay for the studies for my son and daughters”. In the past days my village people ignored me, now they do not overlook anymore, but come and ask me how I am cultivating the shrimp.”
-Dramadas Karmake, Field Assistant & shrimp farm, Shyamnagar, Satkhira



A field assistant examines salinity of *Gher* water

Context

The Southwest Coastal Region of Bangladesh is unique in its environmental nature and is one of the most fertile regions in country. At present, 250,000 - 300,000 Bangladeshi shrimp farmers are producing about 170,000 million tons of shrimp per year in a cultivation area of over 217,877 ha of land mainly in the districts around Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat in the south-west of Bangladesh. However, the shrimp sector in Bangladesh has yet been facing difficulty in maintaining hygiene perspective during the handling of raw shrimp as well as follows modern sanitary practices, safety standards and quality requirement particularly in the farm level. To mitigate these problems the BEST-BFQ, UNIDO has made significant contribution towards building the food safety capacity of shrimp sector of Bangladesh.

Objectives

- Understanding the need of farmers and ensuring food safety and hygiene practices through implementation of Good Aquaculture Practice.
- Good Aquaculture Practice (GAqP) intensification and its expansion through local shrimp farmers
- Higher production with reduction of production risk

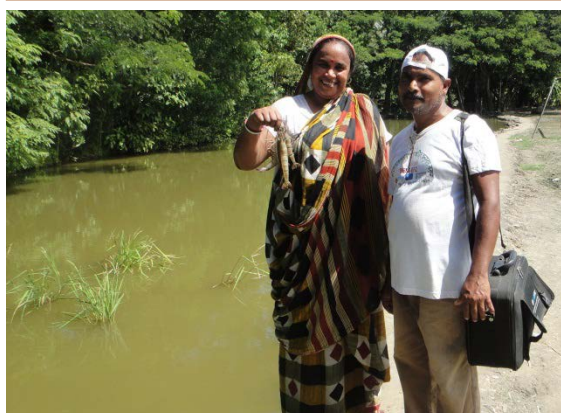
Impacts:

- A total of 24 Field Assistants received intensive training on Good Aquaculture Practices. They were provided the water quality Test kit and bi-cycle to give the technical support to the village shrimp farmers.
- From March to November, 2014 the field assistant visited totally 3448 number of shrimp farms.
- The 15000 beneficiary local shrimp farmers in the 12 unions of shyamnagar produced 150 tons of excess shrimp compared to last crop.
- More than 2000 village shrimp farmers from different unions of Shyamanagar, Satkhira attended farm level awareness program on “Good Aquaculture Practices at shrimp farm”
- Field assistants are now socially more recognized for providing support services to the local shrimp farmers. Through increasing income, living standards of field assistants and shrimp farmers have positively changed.

One of the field assistants Mr. Dharma Das Karmokar, 47 years old lives with his wife and his son and daughters in the tiny house in the rural area of Vetkhali Village under Shyamnagar upazila, Satkhira. Due to poverty, he could not complete his secondary school; however, he helped his father to lead their life in some way culturing 6 bigha shrimp Gher. He became shrimp farmers like his father. It was really too low income from their culture pond to survive five members' family. Life is not so easy in that region. Few years back a heavy storm came suddenly and destroyed all their belongings including tiny house. They became poor. After that, he took lease 24 bighas land to culture shrimp. At the beginning, shrimp farming was profitable and his financial situation improved. But then disease began to threaten his shrimp and harvest was lower. He had to take out a loan from his relatives and gain started farming the next year. That year also he did not get the good production and could not pay back money to the relatives and friends causing some problems in the family and relatives.

Day by day his life became ruined. That time he came to know about the BEST-BFQ, UNIDO is working with Department of Fisheries to improve their shrimp production following Good Aquaculture Practice to ensure the quality product. Then Mr. Dharmadas received basic training on Good Aquaculture Practice organized by the BEST- Better Fisheries Quality project jointly implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Department of Fisheries (DoF). He visited about 185 shrimp farms in his locality and earned about 5959 BDT. Mr. Dharmadas said *"besides visiting farmers' gher as field assistant I have earned Tk.170000 from 3.5 bigha land (approx. 1 acre) by using my knowledge following good aquaculture practice provide by UNIDO. I believe I can be able to earn more from this gher. I have not only changed my life but assist other rural farmers to follow me. Thus they were able to change their life. This activity triggered among the shrimp farmers in my locality. I am very much grateful to UNIDO for changing my life."*

This year the financial situation of Mr. Dharmadas has changed. He constructed a small house with electricity, purchased a TV and a fridge. He got award from the upazila as the "Farmers of the year" for achieving highest shrimp production in his gher. Mr. Dharmadas is one example. Like him, other field assistants have had the same problems. Now BEST-BFQ, UNIDO changed their life, giving confidence for the better. Rural farmers in Shyamnagar now promised to follow good aquaculture practice ensuring quality and safe shrimp.



Dharmadas, a successful Field Assistant
With his family



Field Assistant were provided the water quality Test kit
and bicycle from BEST-BFQ, UNIDO