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“Resilience of agricultural systems against crises”

Small-Scale Cooperative Based Aquaculture in Kathar, Nepal

LADISLAO DI DOMENICA¹, MADHAV KUMAR SHRESTHA², STEPHAN WESSELS¹, GABRIELE
HÖRSTGEN-SCHWARK¹

¹*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Dept. of Animal Sciences, Germany*

²*Tribhuvan University Rampur, Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS), Nepal*

Abstract

In spring of 2000, the project “Women in Aquaculture in Nepal” began in Kathar village in Chitwan, Nepal, initiated by the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand, and the Aquaculture Development of Tribhuvan University, Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS), Nepal. The project was created in consideration of the following goals: to increase the limited availability of consumable protein in rural families, to create additional income for households through sales of raised fish and to empower women. In its early stages, the project was accompanied by multiple workshops that trained local women in successful aquaculture methods. Additionally, 26 fish ponds of varying sizes were constructed and stocked with Nile tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) and carp species (*Cyprinidae* spp.). External assistance was given to the farmers until May 2002 at which point the community was largely left to manage the fish ponds on their own as a cooperative. In 2011, 106 households with 121 fish ponds were involved in aquaculture production. The upward trend in growth and participation in aquaculture in this region suggests that more households are likely to participate. For the study, a *status quo* analysis and its impact on ethnic women in resource-poor communities was conducted through quantitative and qualitative interviews carried out in Kathar over a four month period. The presence of household fish ponds has been recognised to be beneficial to human health, because it enriches the diet by providing fish protein to the local population, and on family income, when the fish is sold on the local market, generating extra revenue which can be used to purchase additional food items.

As the project has been very successful in achieving the intended goals, the Nepalese government along with varying NGOs started to heavily promote and support the project. Currently, more research is taking place to find out if the implementation of similar projects in different areas might be as successful as the project in Kathar. Thus, rural small-scale aquaculture in Nepal is likely to expand and contribute to women empowerment, food security, income generation, employment and the country’s overall economic development.

Keywords: Carp species, ethnic groups, food security, fish ponds, Nile tilapia