



WorldFish
C E N T E R

PROJECT FLYER | 2011-61

Small Fish Can Mean Big Nutrition

KEY FACTS

Project

Linking Fisheries and Nutrition: Promoting Innovative Fish Production Technologies in Ponds and Wetlands with Nutrient-dense Small Fish Species in Bangladesh

Donor

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Partner

Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh

Project leader

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Location

Bangladesh

Start – 2010

End – 2013



Malnutrition levels in Bangladesh are amongst the highest in the world. Approximately half of Bangladesh's population lives below the food poverty line and the dietary intake of both adults and children are severely deficient in key vitamins and minerals. It is now understood that women and children are the more food-insecure and micronutrient-deficient in the population.

This project, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, aims to increase household income in poor, rural households in Bangladesh, and improve nutrition, especially in women and children, through increased intake of nutrient-rich small fish.

This project promotes innovative new technologies designed to increase the production of small nutrient-rich fish species in two separate and environmentally distinct agricultural areas. The project targets approximately 1,500 households with small fish ponds in the northwest districts of Rangpur and Dinajpur, and approximately 500 households in the northeast district of Sunamganj, an area dominated by wetlands and an open water capture fishery.

Mola for monga

The northwest is an area with a high incidence of poverty, and with large numbers of people suffering as a result of seasonal food insecurity ('monga') and malnutrition. Small fish ponds are an important source of water for livestock and domestic purposes and most are also used for traditional, low productivity fish culture (<1.0 t/ha). Using recently developed technologies the opportunity exists to increase fish productivity to >3 t/ha and significantly increase household incomes. Equally important is the opportunity to improve household nutrition, particularly for women and children, by adding micronutrient rich small fish to these fish culture systems. This program will culture small, nutrient-dense fish, particularly Mola (*Amblypharyngodon mola*) in highly efficient low-risk polyculture systems that include a variety of high value fish including carp and freshwater prawn.

Mola is rich in iron, zinc, calcium and preformed vitamin A as retinol. It is readily available for pond stocking, is highly desired by households and commands a good market price. New pond management techniques are being introduced, such as increasing pond depth to conserve broodfish, which will benefit householders and reduce the problems usually encountered due to broodstock transportation.

Hoars and beels

In the northeast (the Sunamganj District), the 'small fish and nutrition project' is working in an area with many hoars and beels (wetland ecosystems). Much of this area, with almost 500,000 ha of seasonally flooded wetlands, is underwater for 4-7 months per year. It is one of the most disaster prone and food insecure parts of the country. Here, 500 households will be involved in the wetland portion of the program which focuses on management practices that will increase small fish production through the stocking of broodfish of mola in ditches, application of best management practices such as sanctuaries, closed fishing seasons, regulation of gear and market linkages. Again the emphasis is on technologies to increase the productivity of the nutrient dense, small fish species.

A consumption survey will be conducted with the program households. This will include baseline (pre-intervention), and end line (post project) information on the food consumption of one woman (child-bearing age) and one child (preferably under two years of age) per household. This survey, the first of its kind, will seek to capture species level consumption information as well as seasonal trends in fish consumption related to micronutrient nutrition.

Education starts at home

As part of this project, the households members involved in small fish production will be trained on methods to effectively use small fish (processing, cooking and techniques useful to children). Nutrition education will include the importance of a complete diet comprised of small fish and vegetables produced by the households in homestead areas.

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