Enhancing Fisher Women’s Involvement in Hilsa Fisheries in Bangladesh

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• Why Gender has been prioritized?
• How it is being integrated throughout the program
• Challenges & insights
Hilsa (Illish) Indian Shad

- National fish in Bangladesh
- 11% of Bangladesh’s total catch
- 1% of GDP
- Rich in Omega 3 and essential minerals such as Vitamin A and Zinc
- Bangladesh harvests 65% of global hilsa
- Conserving hilsa may enhance biodiversity
Improved resilience of the Meghna River ecosystem and communities reliant on coastal fisheries
ECOFISHBD Project Overview

Enhanced Coastal Fisheries in Bangladesh (ECOFISH BD)

Title: Base Map Showing Villages and Sanctuary Distribution of the Project Area

Legend:
- Villages Year 2016
- Villages Year 2015
- Sanctuary Location Identification Points

Sanctuaries:
- 20 km stretch of lower Padma River
- Bresora of Bhalia district to Char Ramesh of Patuakhali
- Char Ramesh to Char par of Bhalia district
- Shatkhola of Chandpur to Char Alexander of Lalmypur
- 40 km stretch of Andermanik River in Kalapara Upazila of Patuakhali

Basics:
- Island (Char) Areas
- Major Rivers
- Village Boundary
- District Boundary
- International Boundary

Data Sources:
1. EcoFish Project, WorldFish, 2. ICBERED
2. WorldFish, 3. WorldFish, 4. USAID

Map: EcoFish Project Map 1

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Why Gender in EcoFish?

- **Women’s participation** in Hilsa fisheries value chain in Bangladesh is largely **invisible**
- **Weak power** of poor fishermen and women relative to other **stakeholders** in Hilsa fisheries sector
- Lack of **active participation of women** in different **co-management** group
- Limited scope of **participation in decision making** in household as well as community level
- Limited access to **productive resources/income generating opportunities** for women
- **Over burdened** with **micro credit loans**, which are **beyond their control**
Hypothesis

If women’s capacity and livelihoods are improved, this will enable better Hilsa conservation.
ECOFISH\textsuperscript{BD} aims to promote resilience and improved livelihoods through better access to science and analysis for decision making; taking actions to support co-management; building enhanced diversified livelihoods, equity and empowerment of poor women and men depending on hilsa fisheries; and improving policy for gender equity and governance.

Ensure gender integration at each stage of the project cycle, eg.

- Planning and design
- Implementation and management,
- M&E,
- Reporting & documentation
Planning & Design
Active participation of women & men in community profiling exercise
Gender analysis in community profiling for identifying of development needs in fishing HHs
Implementation
At least 30% fisher women involved in Hilsa Conservation Group (HCG)
Community savings scheme are exclusively focused on women
Creating opportunities of AIGAs for women in fishers HHs
Increase resilience and social cohesion through AIGAs
Market Linkages through Pebble

Connecting the fisher women with global markets
Paravet (Community Animal Health Worker) Development
Floating Boat Fishers

Rays of hope among boat fishers and promise of Hilsa conservation
Fisher Women Congress

Conservation of Hilsa through Women Empowerment

Pledge for Parity in the fishing Households
M&E

- Qualitative & Quantitative gender disaggregated data
- Baseline & Endline assessment of women empowerment through WEAI
Conceptualizing Equity & Empowerment initiatives

- **Economic & Livelihood**
  - Savings Groups, AIGAs, Market linkages etc.

- **Social Structure**
  - Women participation in co-management groups (e.g., HCG, HGG)

- **Policy**
  - Hilsa Fisheries Management Action Plan (HFMAP)

- **Cultural Norms & Ideologies**
  - Gender Analysis

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[Logos of USAID and WorldFish]
Reflections on Outcome & Challenges

- A visible change in the Women of 80 fishing communities have been noticed in terms of
  - Women promoting conservation through motivating their husband to comply with regulations
  - Contributing to family well being through AIGAs
  - Get rid of micro-credit loan through Community savings scheme
  - Improved market access through Pebblechild (http://www.pebblechild.com/).

However,
- Gender norms & relation limiting women’s mobility & freedom
- Lack of participation of men & women in Hilsa conservation initiatives
- Women involvement in Co-management system is still challenging
Thank You

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