

ORL-GA&F-01**Men are From Mars and Women are From Venus: Differences in Perceptions of Women and Men in The Nepali Fish Farming Sector**

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Fish farming production in Nepal has grown rapidly and continuously since its introduction in the 1940s, which has seen a rise not only in the number of fish farmers, but also in associated activities for instance fish processing, logistics, education and training. Majority of the fish farmers in Nepal are small-holders, with many working through co-operatives. Similar to global trends, fish farming in Nepal is a male dominated sector. However, women participation in fish farming in Nepal has also been developing as have women fish farmer cooperatives.

In our study, we investigated how Nepalese women's participation in fish farming contributes to their socio-economic status. We inquired about Nepalese male and female participation in fish farming and the perceptions that women and men hold over the activities they perform. The study was conducted through face-to-face interviews of 193 persons with almost equal representation of women (53%) and men (47%) in six fish farming cooperatives in Chitwan and one fish farming cooperative in Nawalparasi, covering 108 households in total.

Women face substantive challenges to engaging in and benefiting equitably from fish farming and are often subject to discrimination. They have low access to and control over assets and resources and often the time they dedicate to fish farming activities is not noted. Women report a lack of spare time as a challenge in fish farming, more often than men. Women generally have more household chores to perform than men, and the time they spend on household activities and farming is not perceived as work. Men's farming activities are, on the other hand, perceived as work.

While some decisions regarding fish farming are discussed among the family, involving both genders, males generally have the last say. Interestingly, there are differences between women and men on who make decisions. The perception of men is that they make the decisions regarding fish farming alone, whereas women say they make decisions together with the men. In regard to decisions on other household activities, men respond that they make decisions together with their spouses. Women, on the other hand, respond that major household decisions are made by men. Men and women interviewed almost equally perceived fish farming activities like digging of ponds, liming and stocking as those that should be performed only by men. Activities like preparation of feed, feeding, monitoring of ponds, fish processing and selling of fish were perceived as those that can be performed by both women and men. On the other hand, whereas women were of the opinion that both women and men can purchase fish seed and participate in harvesting of fish, whereas men were of the opinion that these are activities that only men should be responsible for.

Nepalese women have fewer opportunities and receive smaller returns from fish farming than Nepalese men and are more vulnerable to poverty, despite their contributions. Indeed, women have a vital role in the sector, which can be tapped into for even better fish farming results. A transformative gender equity policy for the fish farming sector in Nepal is recommended to address gender inequity in Nepalese fish farming. This will be critical for creating improved social safety nets, improving livelihoods through income generation and poverty reduction, as well as enhancing food and nutrition security.