



Management of Aquatic Ecosystems Through Community Husbandry (MACH)

LAILA'S NEW LIFE



"We had always depended on our husbands and what they could earn from fishing" says Laila Akhter, but "after my earnings increased I couldn't believe it. It was such a joy to be earning for my family."

Laila Begum is a changed woman. Once working only in the house, she now has a large tree nursery, a papaya plantation and a poultry farm in addition to still sharing responsibility in the house. "When MACH first approached me and the rest of the women in my locality about forming a mohila samity (women's group) I was nervous, but also very excited. As women, we'd never really had an opportunity to be earners before. We had always depended on our husbands and what they could earn from fishing" she says.

In 2000, MACH-Caritas began offering training and loan options to the women of the Sinabaha Ekota Mohila Samity, of which Laila was a member. Women were provided a variety of training options from which to choose, including tailoring, cattle rearing, poultry farming, and tree nursery implementation. Laila was initially attracted to the development of a nursery due to the assured profit and market provided through MACH's buy-back scheme, where trees that she raised were guaranteed to be purchased by MACH for use in local reforestation efforts.



Laila used a 5,000 taka loan from MACH to start her nursery and a second loan of 8,000 taka to expand it. Her efforts were rewarded with a hefty 10,000 taka profit. “I couldn't believe it,” says Laila, “it was such a joy to be earning for my family.” With her earnings, Laila discovered a new found-amity with her husband. “I was respected as contributing to our family's welfare. He began consulting me on our investments. Together we decided that I should take out another, larger loan.”

Laila caring for the chickens in her poultry farm



Laila's third loan of 30,000 taka was used to expand a poultry farm that had been started by her husband after he received training from the local youth development center. “We pooled our resources,” says Laila. “Because we work together, because I was viewed as a partner, we have been able to make this work and make it profitable.” So far, Laila and her husband estimate they have earned close to 20,000 taka in profits from their chickens.

Laila and her husband also rely on the other members of the mohila samity to support their activities. “When I'm in need, the women in my group help by feeding and caring for the chickens, tending to the trees in the nursery or caring for the papaya in our plantation ” she says. Laila returns the favors offered by her friends, allowing poor community members to take chickens at times when they are unable to pay. “I know that I will be repaid when they are able. I know what it is like to fall on hard times, to have no money, she says, “I give them what I can. I give them friendship and trust.” Laila also gives them hope. Inspired by her example, several other women in the area have under taken nursery and poultry farming projects.



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