



Blue Gold Program success story

Horizontal Learning (HL) empowering women: sharing poultry rearing successes

Context

The Blue Gold Program (BGP) is working to reduce poverty for all polder dwellers, with special focus on women and poor landless households.

Backyard poultry rearing has great potential to increase the incomes of women, empower them, and alleviate poverty.

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are important to enhance agricultural skills for homestead production, but have limited reach. This is where Horizontal Learning (HL) comes in.

Problems in poultry rearing before BGP



Poultry rearing without improved technology hardly generates profit



Knowledge and skills for improved technology were lacking



High mortality rates for unvaccinated chickens



Women had limited access to inputs and market actors



Social barriers to women undertaking their own initiatives

Poultry FFS in Chinguria

In 2016, BGP organized a FFS on poultry rearing in polder 55/2A in Chinguria, Patuakhali for 25 members of the Betagi Chikarbandh Water Management Group (WMG). The participating group was composed primarily of women.

The adoption of improved technology was high. Many participants transformed into poultry entrepreneurs, earning up to BDT 10,000 a month.

Horizontal Learning to share success

In February 2018, BGP organised a HL exchange visit in Chinguria, hosted by five successful poultry farmers. The 25 visitors were poor women from five other WMGs. They were accompanied by their husbands in the learning event. This involved:

- Hosts explaining usage of improved technologies, production methodologies, and marketing strategies
- Homestead visits to observe effects of improved technologies including poultry housing, hazals, and benefits of vaccination
- Discussion of lessons learnt from sharing experiences
- Action plan for next steps by the visiting couples

Horizontal Learning is an exchange of information where beneficiaries learn from each other, rather than receiving top-down instruction. These exchanges usually occur in person, across or within peer groups or communities.

HL increases the likelihood of replication of effective solutions, as communities can draw on the experiences of their peers.

Participation of women in Horizontal Learning events

Farmer Field Days (FFDs): 140,000 women participants (54% of total participants)

Exchange visits: 33,000 women participants (42% of total participants)



The availability of vaccination services is crucial to the success of poultry rearing.

Impact of HL visits

The results of the exchange visits were assessed through random visits to the homesteads of nine participants in July 2019.

- The HL exchange visit inspired visitors to take up poultry rearing
- Participants adopted improved technologies including construction of chicken houses, usage of hazals, and vaccination of poultry
- The participants who visited in July (save one, who had fallen ill) now earn increased incomes
- Men are willing to help their wives, as poultry rearing has become a valuable source of income
- Reported monthly incomes range between BDT 2,000 and BDT 10,000. The average monthly income is BDT 4,500
- Income from poultry rearing is used for the education of children, to purchase food, clothing, and on other household expenditures. It improved the overall livelihoods of participants
- Many participants also used part of their income on house repairs, investments in productive resources or assets, and/ or deposited it in savings
- Increased confidence and status of women. Improved relationship with their husbands, leading to increased joint decision-making at home

Helena's story

Helena Begum's family was very poor before she participated in the poultry rearing HL visit. Helena, with the support of her husband, started a poultry rearing business soon after.

Helena now has 85 chickens, and sells birds worth BDT 5,000 to BDT 10,000 a month. She earned BDT 100,000 last year.

The family used this income on household expenditures that include food, educating their children, clothing, and medicine. They even have spare money to socialise, and supported their extended family when required.

The status and well-being of Helena and her family improved and now they are happy.

Fatehma's story

While Fatehma herself was not a participant in the Chinguria HL exchange visit, her neighbour was. Her neighbour's success inspired Fatehma to take up poultry rearing. She learnt about good rearing practices, and now has 11 chickens and a chicken house.

While Fatehma is not earning from poultry rearing yet, she expects to start soon.

Fatehma's story exemplifies the success of HL through informal means.

BGP provides improved technology to rear local poultry, commonly known as Deshi murgi*.

There is high demand for Deshi murgi in Bangladesh. Consumers are willing to pay higher prices for the indigenous chicken over industrial broiler chickens. This means there is little risk of oversaturation in the market.

*Deshi murgi: local poultry raised for eggs and meat by farmers on a small-scale basis.

