



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AQUACULTURE: CASE STUDIES FROM BANGLADESH

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WorldFish

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Study Background and Purpose

Introduction to research study

Rationale:

- Gender gaps in access to agricultural assets and resources undermines agricultural performance (FAO 2011)
- Gender equality in access to agricultural assets and resources has potential to reduce global hunger by 12-15% (FAO 2011)
- Further understanding of these gender inequalities, their underlying factors, and strategies for and factors contributing to women's empowerment, is needed in order to help design interventions and policies that are conducive to engaging and empowering women

Study Goal

- Delves into the potential of aquaculture to contribute to empowerment and explores the assumption that women's involvement in aquaculture will lead to empowerment
- This study aims to assess and analyze women's social and economic empowerment in aquaculture which will lead to deeper understanding of how aquaculture interventions can better enable women's equitable and gainful participation, and ultimately empowerment.

The study has been grounded in Kabeer's definition of empowerment which is "the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer, 1999, page 437)

Research Questions

In what ways, to what extent, and why, are different women in Bangladesh empowered or disempowered by their engagement in aquaculture?

- i) What are the gendered patterns of engagement and roles played by women in these types and nodes of aquaculture?
- ii) What enabling and constraining factors shape these patterns and roles?
- iii) What are the positive and negative outcomes for women in these different aquaculture roles and nodes?
- iv) What factors shape these outcomes, including what enables or constrains women in successfully meeting their aspirations in or through aquaculture?

Methodology

- Small Qualitative Study: Key Informant Interviews (6), FGDs (7) and In-depth Interviews (13)
- Sex-disaggregated data collection
- Further differentiation based on trained vs. untrained, pond size, worker type and religion (case1: Hindu vs. Case 2: Muslim)
- Tools used include **Wealth** ranking, Gendered **roles, benefits** and **costs, Enabling** and **Constraining** factors, Who **Decides** what, **Access** to resources and services and Ladder of **Power** and **Freedom**

Limitations

- Short time frame
- Represents a single point in time
- Not representative of entire sector
- Qualitative study thus statistical extrapolation not possible
- Inability to contrast wealth groups
- In-site inter-religion comparisons were not possible

- Factory owner perspective missing

Country Context

- Bangladesh has the highest poverty rate in the Asia-Pacific region (ADB, 2014) with 47 million people still below the poverty line (World Bank, 2016). Poverty and low incomes are particularly concentrated in the rural sector (Hayes & Jones, 2015) where 70% of the population reside.
- As of July 2012, the population is 152.7 million, with a growth rate of 1.36% (BBS, 2015).
- Bangladesh was ranked 86th in the Global Gender Gap Index 2012 from among 135 countries surveyed (“Social, Economic and Political Context in Bangladesh”, 2016). Gender discrimination persists in Bangladesh largely due to practices rooted in the traditional social norms that favour boys over girls, including child marriage, abandonment, dowry, and polygamy (Begum, 2014).
- Bangladesh has been ranked as the 5th largest inland water capture fisheries producer and the 5th largest producer of aquaculture food fish (2.6% of the world’s total) in the world by FAO in 2012 (FAO, 2014)

Two Case Studies: Background



Homestead pond aquaculture production

Close to home for easy access (time and labor burden, mobility and access constraints)

Women provide time and labor to household
Resource

Rural Hindu setting



Shrimp Processing Factory

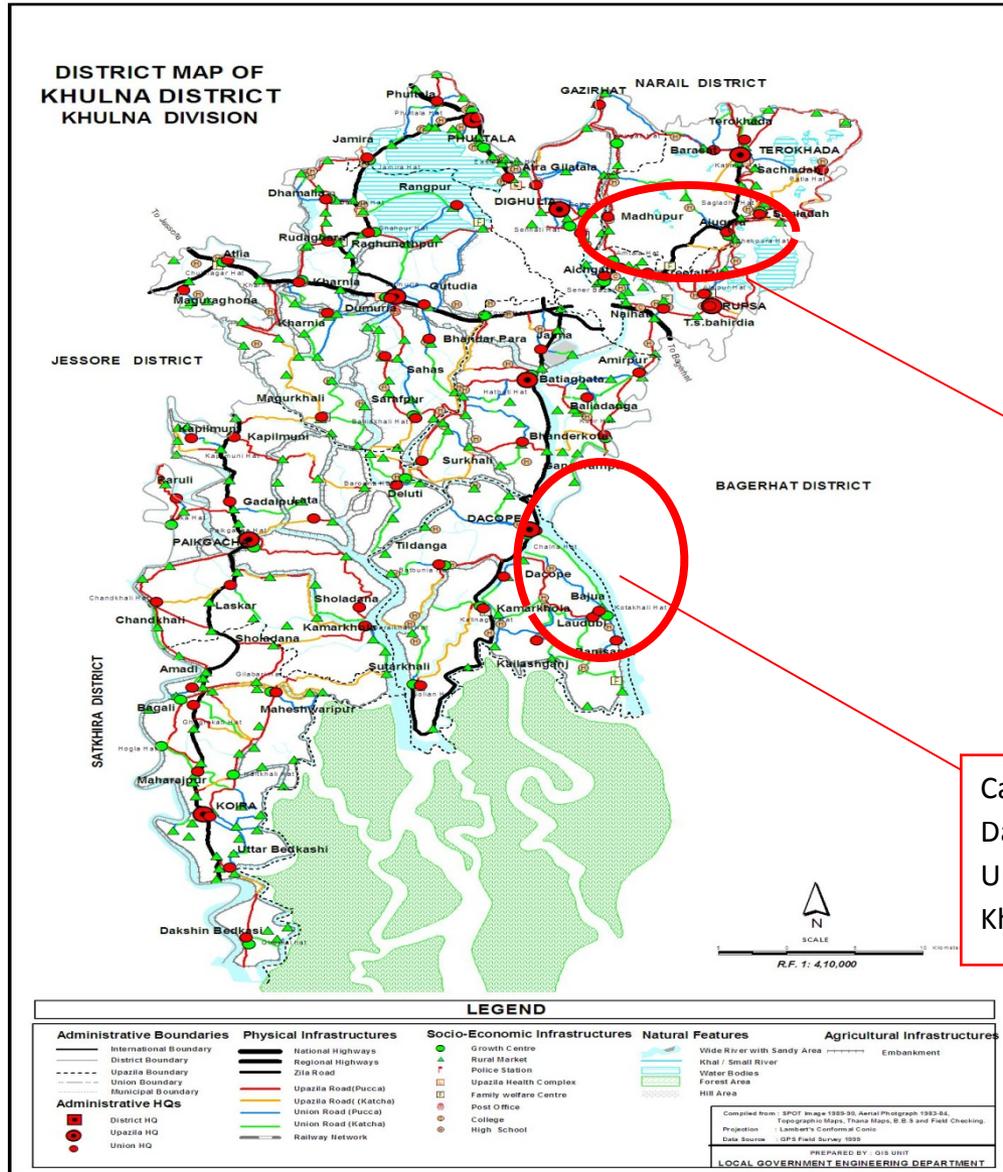
Large number of women employed: Feminization of the sector

Demand for women workers are high

Settled, migrated close to factories for ease of work

Urban/peri-urban Muslim setting

Study Sites



Case 2: Catchment area where workers and factories are located straddles an urban area (Kulsum Galli, Natun Bazar Char, Khulna City) and a peri-urban area (Rupsha Upazila, Naihati Union, Bagmara village, Khulna district).

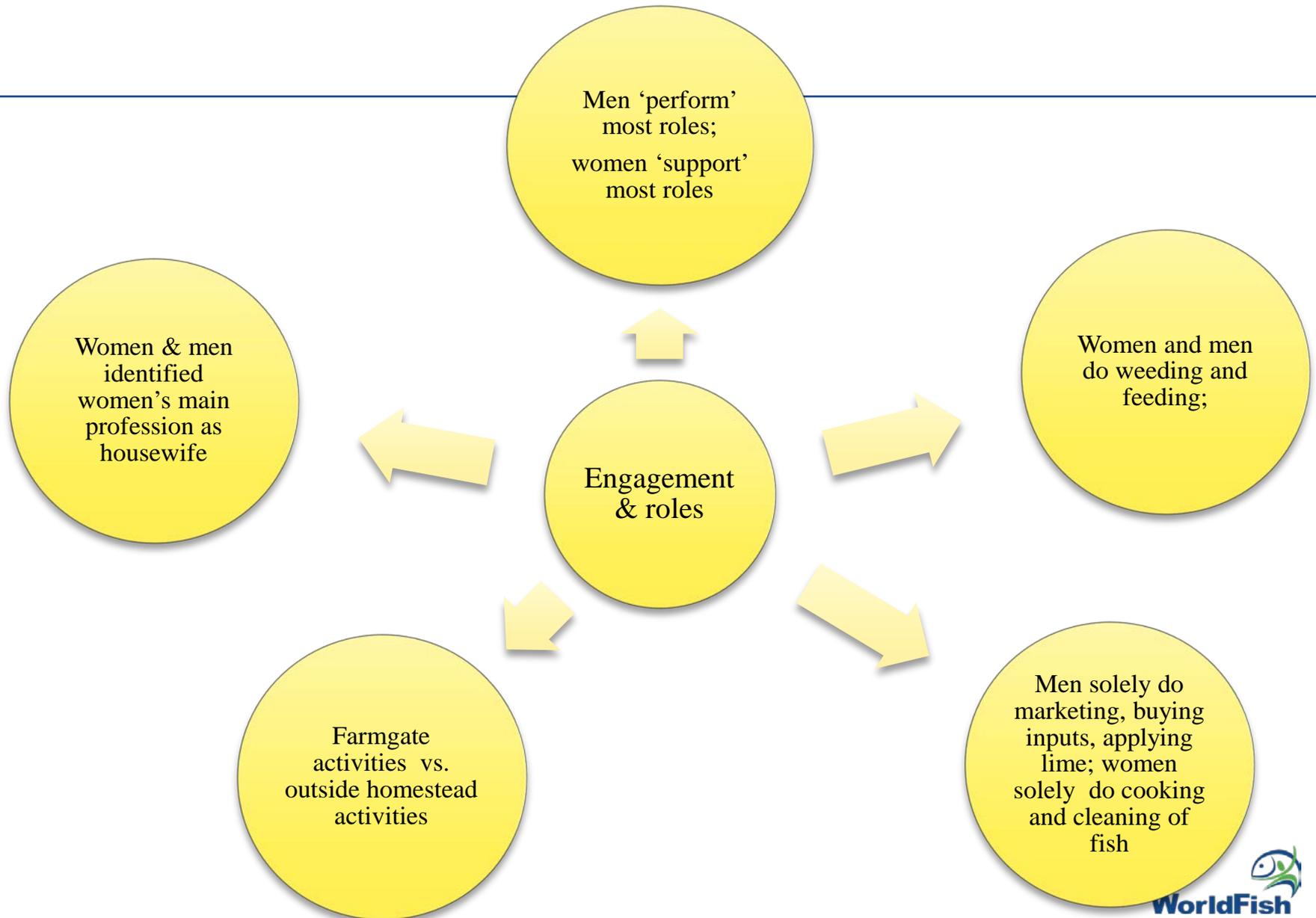
Case 1: The rural area of Dacope Upazila, Laudobi Union, Kotakhali village, Khulna District



Engagement and Roles: Case 1 & 2

"Women cannot carry big loads on their head for shipment, we need men for that. We men also hand out tokens based on weight to women and have to write them down, which a woman cannot do." (27 year old male contract worker)

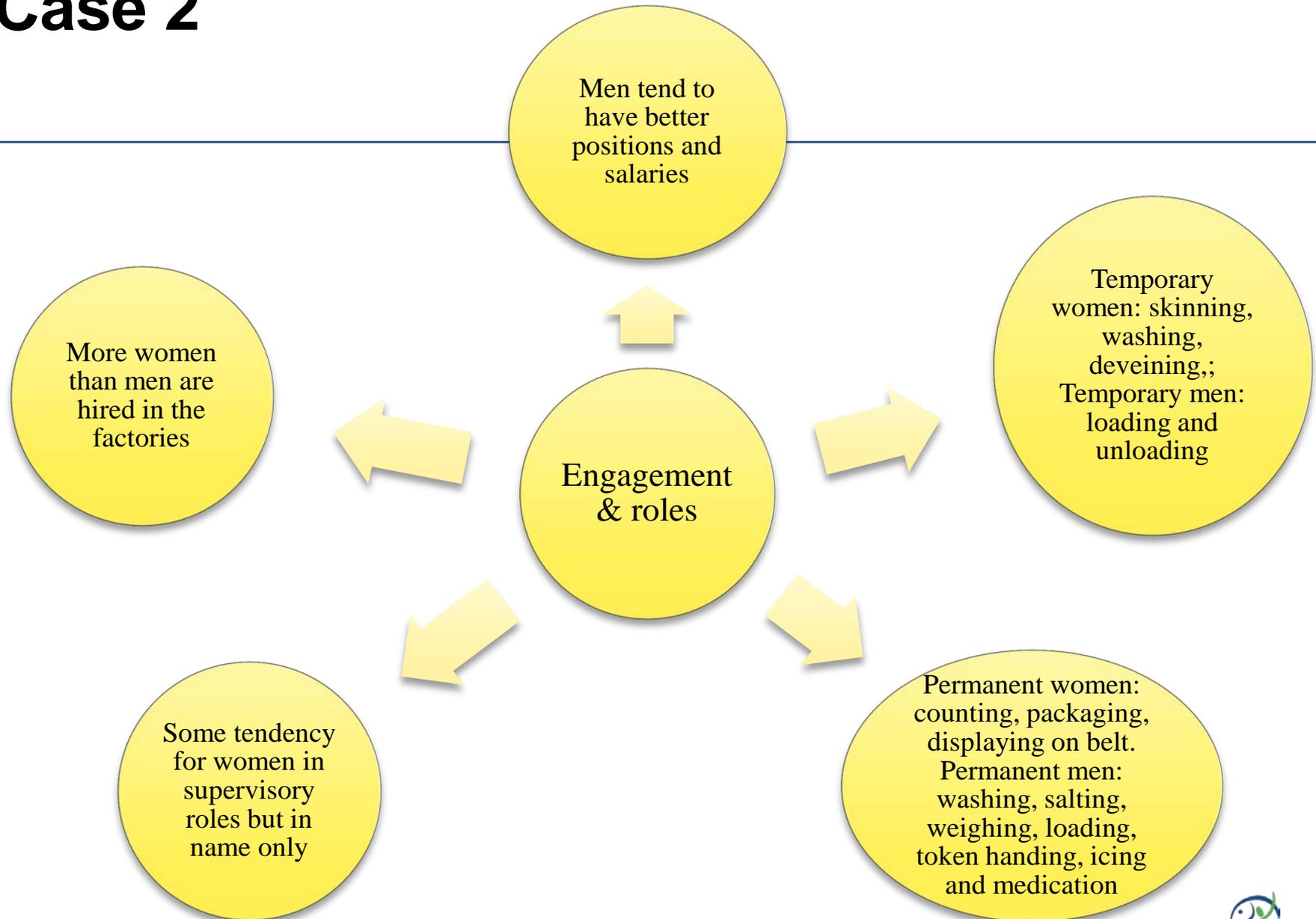
Case 1

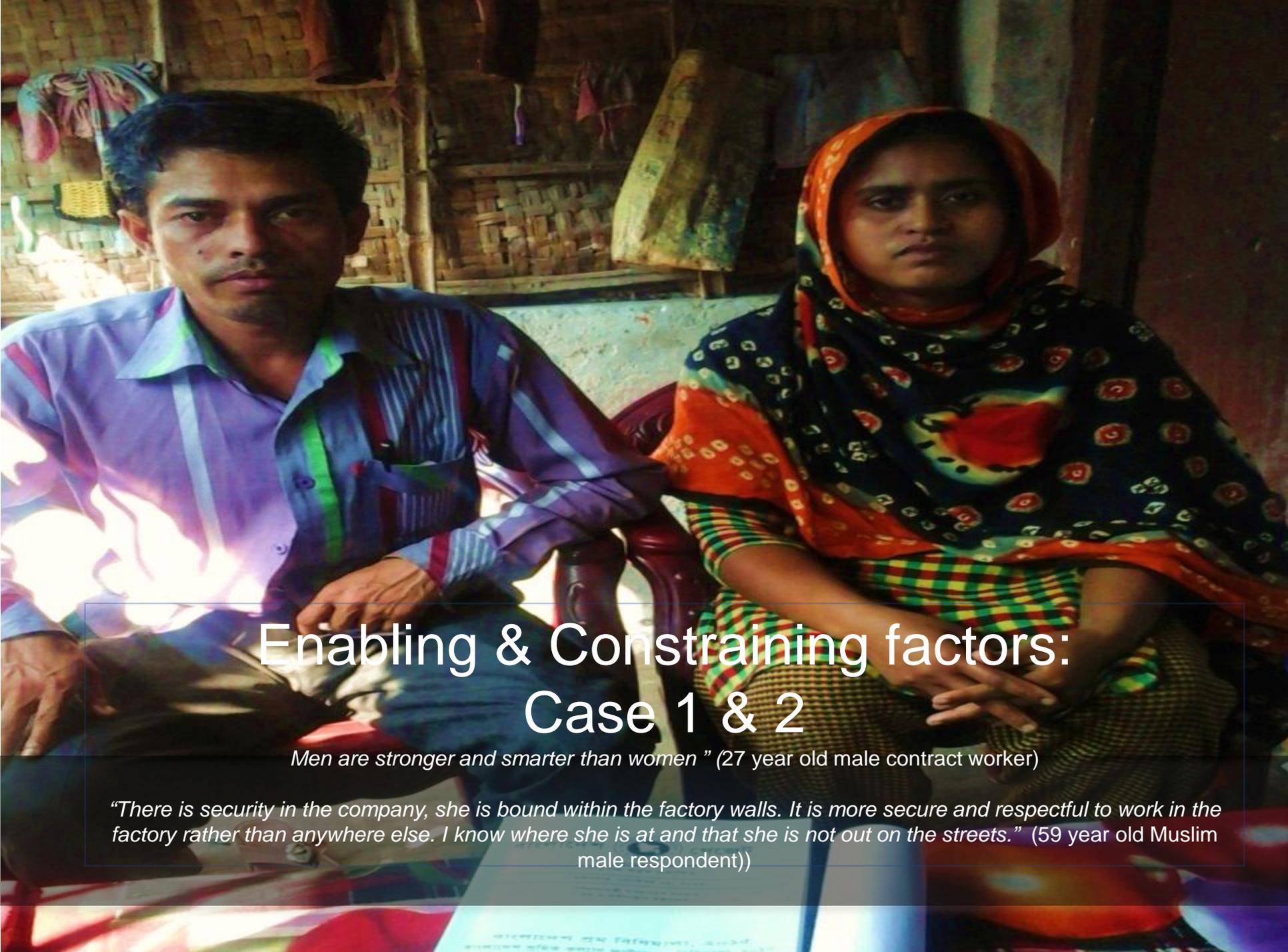


A comparative look at who performs key roles in pond aquaculture: Perceptions of untrained women and their husbands

Roles Performed	How long does it take? (6 decimal pond)	Who does this role?		How long does it take? (6 decimal pond)	Who does this role?		
		Women	Men		Women	Men	
Women: Untrained				Men: Husbands of untrained women			
1. Pond preparation	9 Hours	√	√√	8 Hours	√	√√	
2. Feeding / Apply supplementary feed	0.5 hrs	√√	√	20 minutes per day	√√	√	
3. Weeding	1 Hour	√√	√	3-4 Hours	√	√	
4. Liming	0.5 hrs		√	1 Hour		√	
5. Netting around the pond	2-3 hours	√	√	8 hours		√	
6. Purchase of Fish feed	2 hours		√	1 hour per week		√	
7. Stocking of fingerling	0.5 hrs	√	√	1- 1.5 hours		√	
8. Fish harvest for consumption	1 hour	√√	√	0.5 hours	√	√	
9. Fish harvest for sale	3 hours		√	2-3 hours	√	√	
10. Fingerling purchase	0.5 hrs	√	√√	1 hour		√	
11. Fish transport to market	0.5 hrs		√	1- 1.5 hours		√	
12. Selling fish/ Marketing of fish	1 hour		√	1 hour	√	√√	

Case 2



A photograph of a man and a woman sitting in a room with woven walls. The man is on the left, wearing a purple and blue striped shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a colorful patterned headscarf and a matching shawl. They are both looking towards the camera with serious expressions.

Enabling & Constraining factors: Case 1 & 2

Men are stronger and smarter than women ” (27 year old male contract worker)

“There is security in the company, she is bound within the factory walls. It is more secure and respectful to work in the factory rather than anywhere else. I know where she is at and that she is not out on the streets.” (59 year old Muslim male respondent)

Enabling & Constraining Factors: Case 1 & 2

Case 1



Enabling

- Training and knowledge
- Enabling gender and power relations
- Location (vicinity of homestead)
- Need for additional income

Constraining

- Norms behind gendered roles
- Need for family consent
- Financial support
- Lack of Access to up to date knowledge
- Reputation issues
- Household responsibilities

Case 2



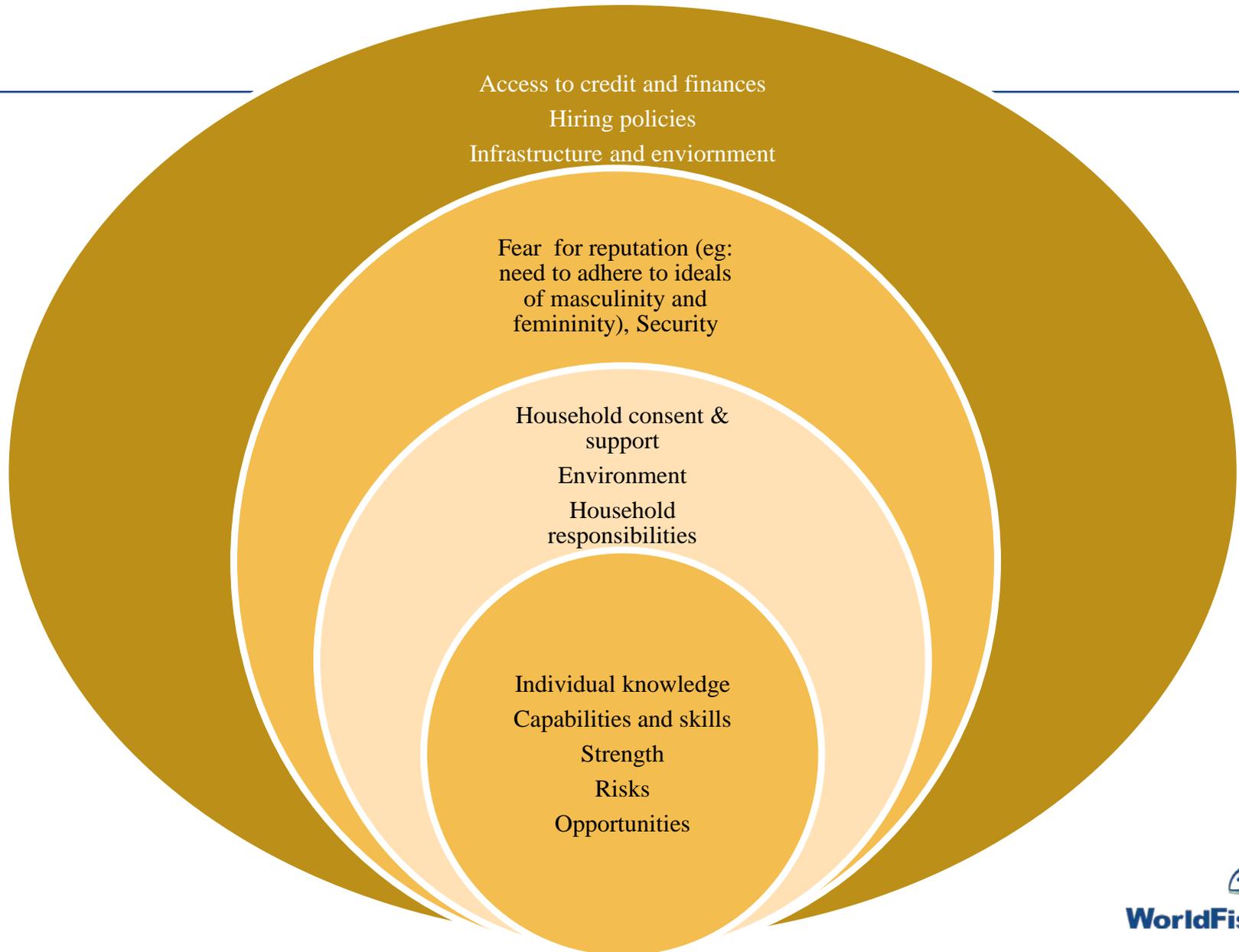
Enabling

- Demand
- Security
- Group cohesion
- Contribution to family income
- Support from spouse
- No education or skillset required

Constraining

- Gendered division of labor
- Double burdens
- High supply of women workers
- Lack of alternative jobs
- Men's dissatisfaction with women's household work
- Reputation issue

Multi-scale look into constraints



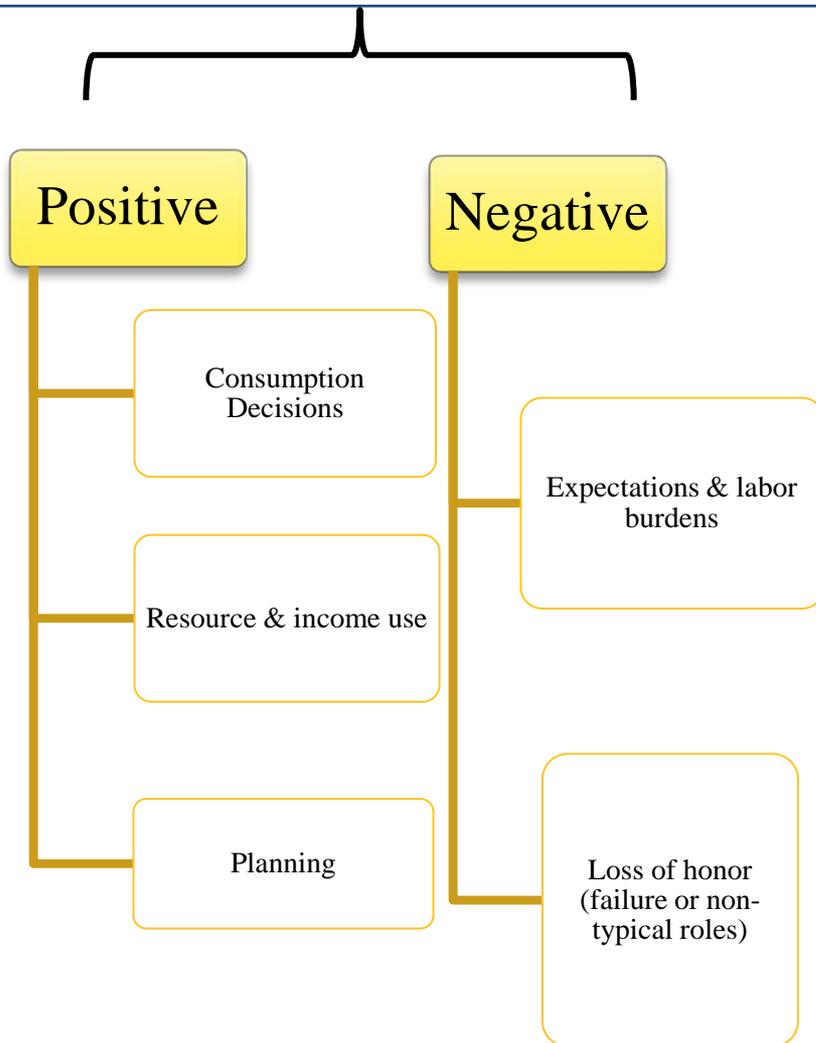


Outcomes: Economic and social benefits and costs : Case 1 & 2

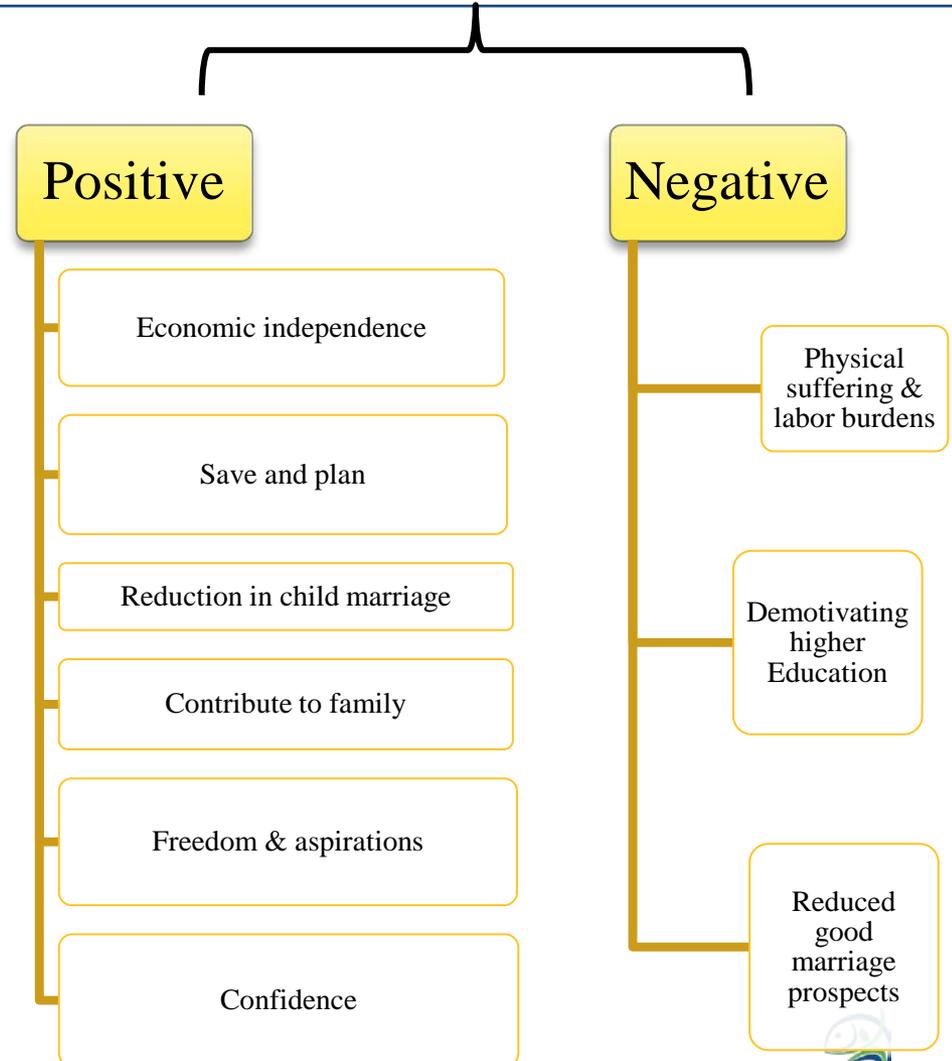
"We will not be able to afford so much fish to feed the guests during my daughter's wedding and so I have decided not to harvest the fish this year" (trained, 35 year old Hindu respondent).

Outcomes: Case 1 & 2

Case 1



Case 2

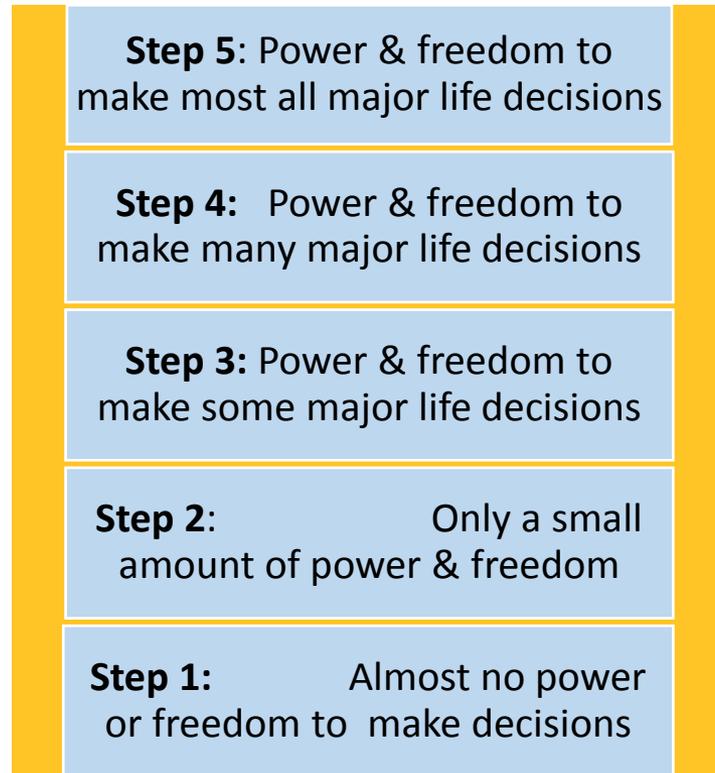


Power and Freedom to make life choices

In case 1, most women believe they are in step 3 or 4

10 years ago they were in step 1 or 2

Change attributed to engagement in economic activities mostly within scope of homestead



The Ladder of Power and Freedom
Source: GENNOVATE, 2014

In case 2, most women believe they are in step 3

10 years ago they were in step 1 or 2

Change attributed to income from shrimp factories. Number of years of contribution also matter



Enabling and constraining factors shaping the outcomes and success of women's in achieving their own goals in relation to aquaculture

"We need support from family. We need to plan with the family. We cannot just go to a training out of our own free will. It needs their decision" (trained, 35 year old Hindu respondent).

Enabling & **constraining** factors shaping outcomes

Case 1

Knowledge and Education

Family Support

Dependence on family & spouse approval

Differing priorities around the pond

Social and gender roles and stereotypes

Case 2

Organizations working on workers rights

Labor saving technologies, eg: rice cooker, curry cooker

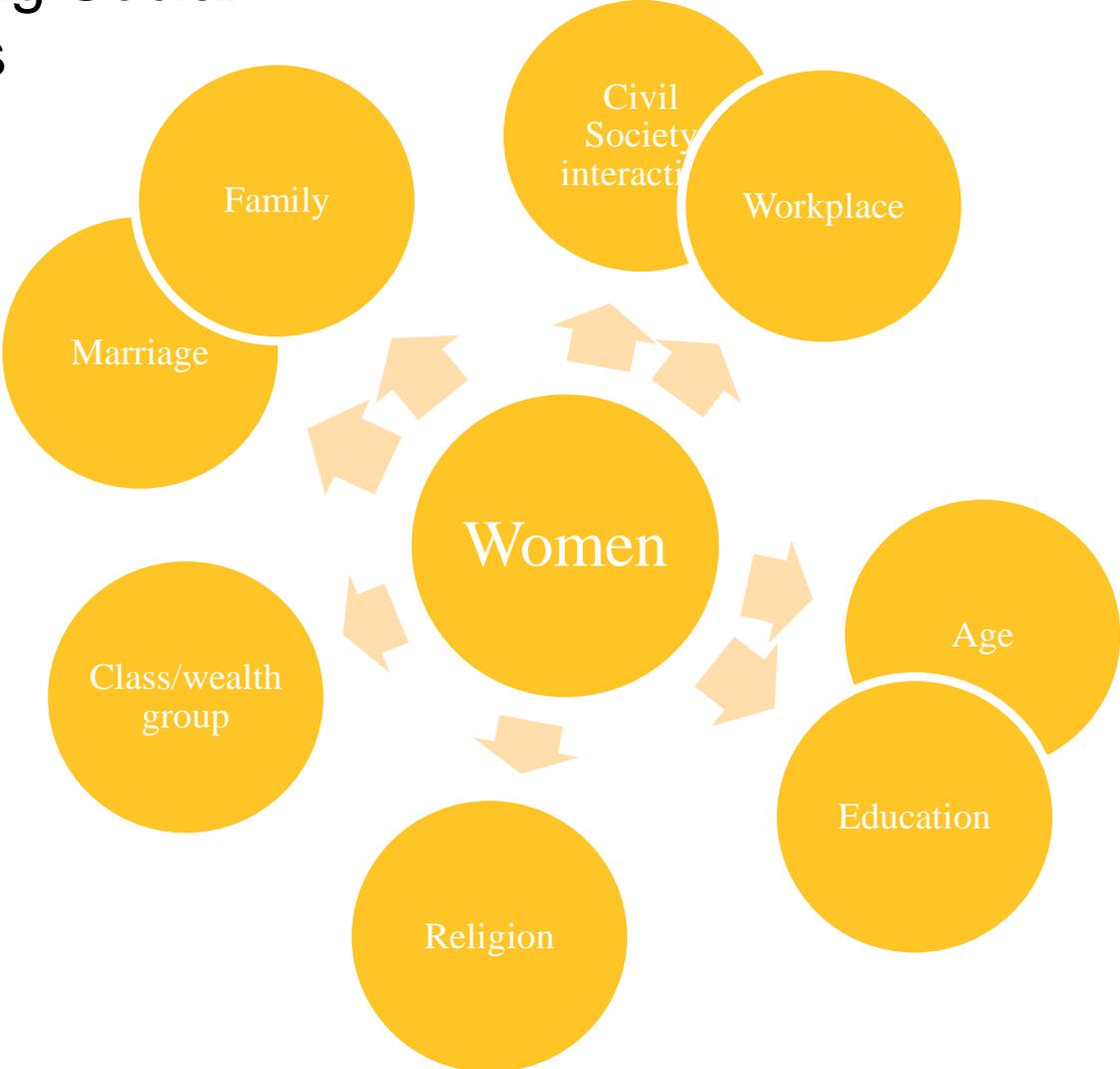
Accommodating men

Factories can help achieve life goals

Factory bias

Household responsibilities and associated fear of men leaving them

Intersecting Social Structures



Key Insights: engagement

- High level of involvement of poor women
- However, several pre-conditions exist for women to be able to uptake aquaculture work and receive income, and these are defined by the gender norms and traditions that guide the extent of acceptability of various roles for women. Exceptions occur mostly in case of necessity (poverty or absence of an able man), otherwise there are reputational and other repercussions on those who fail to conform.
- Fear of repercussions and injuries to ideals of femininity and masculinity were identified as contributing to gender role conformity; in contrast, the drive to fulfil basic necessities were found to stretch boundaries
- The study also suggested that once these basic needs were fulfilled, higher order needs of self-esteem, security and reputation re-constrained gender roles, and associated benefits and freedoms.

Key Insights: Outcomes

- Key positive outcomes:
 - Income or food source for future planning
 - Contribute to income either directly or through labor
- Key negative outcome: increase in work burdens.
- Key factors:
 - conducive environment: factory and home;
 - expectations of performing stereotyped gendered roles, non-conformity can have consequences on reputation and status.
 - Attitudes: notion of overall male supremacy with strength, smartness and abilities

Does aquaculture contribute to empowerment?

- Overall the study shows that involvement in aquaculture can have empowerment impacts on women to some degree in terms of knowledge and skills, ability to plan for the future and in making strategic life choices around consumption, around utilizing and investing the money and around influencing decisions around the aquaculture resource usage
- Yet it is dangerous to assume that inclusion can lead to empowerment. Above didn't fundamentally change freedoms women have.
- Empowerment is multifaceted and structural with norms playing a critical role
- Empowerment may not be sustainable or even possible without normative change

Looking Forward

Small study that provides a glimpse into the scope of empowerment within aquaculture, further mixed methods studies required that look further and across the value chain

Details of study will be published with open access

This is part of a small FAO-WorldFish collaborative project entitled *Women's Economic Empowerment in Aquaculture Production Systems in Asia: Comparative Case Studies and Synthesis from Bangladesh and Indonesia*



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Thank You



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Livestock and Fish

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