



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



Feed the Future Bangladesh Aquaculture Activity

Youth Strategy



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



The need for a youth strategy

The inclusion of young people is vital for the aquaculture sector to remain commercially vibrant and responsive to the pressures of rapidly changing demands and expectations from consumers, in a nation that is susceptible to the prevailing shocks of rapid climate change and environmental degradation.

The youth strategy of Feed the Future Bangladesh Aquaculture Activity (BAA) focuses on the scope and opportunity for youth inclusion into the aquaculture sector. The objective of the strategy is to understand how BAA can connect youth to opportunities in the sector.

The USAID funded Feed the Future Bangladesh Aquaculture Activity is working to engage more youths (age 15-29) in this nutritionally vital sector. BAA believes that young people have the capacity to view farming beyond traditional practices, bringing new perspectives and approaches to the evolution of the aquaculture value chain.

The youth interventions of BAA are focused on the concept of the Positive Youth Development (PYD), which is an approach that helps to understand the kind of opportunities and support young people need to thrive.

The youth inclusion strategy of BAA is defined by the following Feed the Future indicators of youth inclusion:

- Value chain activities and market strengthening activities working with micro, small, and medium enterprises
- Financial inclusion programs that result in increased access to finance, including programs designed to help youth set up savings accounts
- Workforce development programs that have job placement activities

Throughout BAA, youth inclusion is defined and understood based on the above indicators and on the concept of PYD.

This strategy informs the design and implementation of both specific youth focused activities that have been adopted in BAA, whilst embedding the issue of youth empowerment across the rest of the portfolio. It is aligned with a Market Systems Development approach to deliver sustainable and scalable change in value chains within the aquaculture sector in Bangladesh. The strategy is defined by identifying constraints and opportunities that impact youth in the aquaculture sector, providing context for addressing youth inclusion;

Constraints to Youth Engagement in the Bangladesh Aquaculture Sector
• Sector dominated by older family members who are generally the asset owners and decision makers , typically 42 to 50 years of age
• Assets, e.g. ponds, not available to youth
• Youths have limited capital and access to finance
• Youths lack technical knowledge on aquaculture farming.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perceived attractions of urban living, with greater opportunities in relation to rural communities provides a 'pull' effect on youths. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youths not traditionally seen as trusted partners by the private sector |

Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Bangladesh Aquaculture Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rise in digital connectivity draws youth to modern technology focused farming business, accessing information and commercial connectivity through digital platforms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of pre-conceptions around accepting novel methods of production and marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to be mobile and not tied to an asset base
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of other opportunities for employment beyond primary production
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong awareness amongst young people of the challenges of climate change and resource degradation on traditional practice, leading to fresh mitigation initiatives in the sector

The strategy to respond to these youth-specific issues is two-fold, namely;

1. Specific youth focused interventions by BAA

In response to the considerable constraints and opportunities mentioned above, it is important to have a separate youth focused intervention portfolio, as a key tool to drive youth inclusion, beyond simply acknowledging the need to include them where possible in mainstream interventions. Their unique talents can be best exploited by developing areas of activity that specifically speak to their skillsets, allowing them strong access to areas of the aquaculture value chain that will best respond to these. The following bullet points highlight areas of BAA facilitation that respond best to a youth empowerment agenda;

- By creating a partnership between BAA and selected youth entrepreneurs, scope is created for new business start-ups in novel areas of aquaculture commerce, delivering better exposure in the market and the scope for building linkages with the other private partners of BAA.
- Getting involved in a partnership with WorldFish gives credibility with other private partners for their business expansion
- The successful youth focused intervention can be set as an example to encourage other motivated young people to come forward and get involved in the aquaculture sector.
- By inviting business ideas from motivated youths informs BAA when identifying relevant youth inclusion opportunities
- Including youths through separate interventions creates an enabling environment for the youths to grow further within the sector
- The successes delivered by this approach can be advocated to and adapted by other organizations with an interest in youth empowerment and engagement in the aquaculture sector.

Examples of youth-specific interventions include;

- A fisheries graduate is working as a partner of BAA in providing aquaculture advisory services through a physical entity called FishBooth, alongside an associated online platform. The aim of this business is to provide one stop service points and solutions for aquaculture problems to the people who are living in remote areas and have less access to these services. Their main revenue generating services include providing seed and feed, aqua medicinal products, testing kits and services, adding additional value with advisory services. There are 8 other youth team members who are supporting and implementing the activities.
- Another youth partner is providing a consultancy service to promote bio-floc based aquaculture systems. A demo bio-floc has been established in support of this initiative. There are 3 other youth team members who are working to make this business a successful one.

2. Youth engagement as component of private sector partner engagement

Opportunities for youth engagement have been identified from BAA's private partners' interventions. These interventions show scope for viable and sustainable engagement of young people;

- The private organization, ENLIVEN, is working in developing individual business profiles and providing guidelines for the women in the aquaculture sector for the entrepreneurship creation
- KNB Agro Industries Limited are working with LSPs (Local Service Providers) for marketing and distribution channel of feed
- Bank Asia Limited has introduced a formal financial package for smallholder farmers and aquaculture market actors.
- The City Bank Limited on are providing financial management services.
- Mukti Cox's Bazar is providing micro-finance services for dry fish business.
- Shushilon is working toward promoting nutrition-sensitive aquaculture through microfinance support

These interventions are not solely targeted at youths but clearly deliver opportunities for young people to engage more fully in the aquaculture sector, particularly in the areas of access to finance, where they can address their lack of available assets, and gain entry to the aquaculture business environment.

The Youth inclusion plan for year 5

Given the response from the previous year's solicitation process, another ToR was published nationally in Year 4 to gather more ideas from young people. In response to this, a total of new 25 business ideas were received, and five have been shortlisted for further review and carry forward in Year 5.

The five ideas are as follows:

Processing and marketing of ready to cook (RTC) fish through youth entrepreneurs

The main objective of this task is to support the fish supply and processing business for RTC products. This partnership will focus on the marketing of their business to increase sales. This will also be a replicable intervention for the other youth entrepreneurs.

Partnering with youth entrepreneur to scale up the dry fish powder business

This initiative will support a youth entrepreneur in expanding the business of selling dry fish powder which has a demand countrywide. BAA will provide support to market the product and to create a more efficient and effective supply chain for the dry fish powder.

Youth engagement in the modern fish farming; bio-floc initiative

Through this activity BAA will be providing support to expand an already established bio-floc business throughout the overall harvesting and processing activities during a season.

Quality Aquaculture Inputs and Expert Guideline Services

This is the continuation of Year 4 task. The main purpose of the task is to provide quality inputs and expert guideline services in the remote areas of Chattogram and Bandarban regions. The services are being provided through both physical and online platforms. The physical platform is known as FishBooth where aqua medicinal products, feed and disease testing kits are kept and seeds are being supplied depending on the requirement from the consumers. The targeted farmers are both large scale and small scale farmers who mainly sales their fish to local market and arot. Through this new partnership, the focus will be given more on the marketing and promotional activities side of the task to capture more customers and popularize the service.

Production and market-oriented business platform for aquarium fish

The main objective of this activity is to produce and market ornamental aquarium fish throughout Bangladesh. This activity will focus on culturing the ornamental fish locally given the fact that the aquarium fish business is dominated by imported fish. They would also provide the aquarium set up services including feed and eventually create a proper supply channel for this kind of fish.

In addition to the above tasks, there will be a business skill development training for the future generation of hatchery and nursery owners. The main idea is to provide business skill development training for the children (age 15-29) of the Hatchery and Nursery owners to prepare the potential future generation who are interested to work and carry on the hatchery and nursery business going forward.

Scope for replication

The interventions that are being mentioned above will be used to test the concepts outlined, with a view to taking the learnings in order to drive replication of successful models for youths in the aquaculture sector. The models need to demonstrate profitability and sustainability that is at

least comparable to existing channels in the value chain, in order for them to be embraced on a wider scale by the private sector. Alternatively, the initiatives may show new channels of opportunity for the private sector that specifically benefit from the inclusion of youth.