

A Progressive Farmer -A Successful Tribal Farmer Conducting Aquaculture (Jharkhand)

Principal Investigator

Mr Ashish Kumar, Deputy Director
DOF, Ranchi, Jharkhand

A film documentary of this Case Study is included on the Project CD-ROM. The English version of the documentary's Hindi script appears on the following pages along with still photographs from

Origin

This Case Study from Jharkhand was proposed by Mr Ashish Kumar, Dr K P Singh, Field Specialist Aquaculture, GVT, Ranchi, Jharkhand, William Savage and Graham Haylor.

Duration

The Case Study began in September 2002 following its setting up in August. The fieldwork ran through February 2003, with opportunities to report progress and get feedback on two occasions: the State-level Workshop in October 2002 and the Stakeholders Workshop in January 2003. Final presentation of the Case Study was made at the Policy Review Workshop in Noida, Delhi, in April 2003.

Location

The location was Chhota Changru Village of Silli Block in Ranchi District, where government support has been available.

Key Informants

Key informants included Mr Ras Behari Baraik and fellow fishers of Chhota Changru Village, and the officer of the Fisheries Department.

Method

The Case Study methods were individual interviews and small-group discussions, around issues raised by villagers about how the successful venture has impacted on their livelihoods. As Principal Investigator, Ashish Kumar took charge of organizing and documenting the fieldwork. A professional documentary film-maker from the ETV channel worked with Mr Kumar on the storyboard for the documentary, using information from the interviews, which was drafted by October 2002 and presented at the State-level Workshop for comment and recommendations, supported by photographs. Following the workshop and amendments to the storyboard, the film crew commenced on-location filming and editing to produce a version in time for the January 2003 Stakeholders Workshop. Final editing and production of the film documentary followed.

Content

The focus of the Case Study was to:

- Document Ras Behari's success and show how tribal farmers can lift themselves out of poverty through their own efforts
- Understand why Ras Behari has been successful

The film documentary highlights his imperative need; his exposure to aquaculture and his education; how he acquired skills, such as the process by which he buys seed – knowing the size of the brooders used, his skill in identifying the species at small size; his acquired skills in husbandry and disease control; and his ongoing and future plans, including his breeding areas.

Also considered was his village's experience of government schemes including:

- Mechanism for provision of loans versus use of local moneylenders
- Process for supply of material inputs
- Mechanism for provision of training (and their views about access to proper training)
- Process for communicating (about government schemes and technical extension messages, any systems for feedback, cross-checking and streamlining the system)

Other issues discussed included marketing support and problems in marketing, networking and strategies, and the DOF's and banks' roles in decision-making about harvesting and their impact on market opportunities.

Film Documentary Script



It is said that where there is a will, there is a way, and nothing is impossible if one decides to do it. This is a story of Ras Behari Beraik who is a tribal farmer belonging to Chhota Changru Village of Silli Block of Ranchi District. Once a wanderer, his life has completely changed now and he provides employment for 50-60 families of his village today. He used to walk barefoot to the school, sometimes tying leaves on his feet to protect them from the hot sand. He became unemployed after passing matriculation. Then he joined his father in selling fish seed. His father used to buy fish seed from Purulia and Bankura of West Bengal and used to sell them to farmers of Silli. Somehow the family was sustaining.



Once, Ras Behari himself went to Purulia and Bankura. There he was surprised to see the huge market of fish seed. He enquired from one Mr Shyamal Bose, one of the leading fish seed sellers, whether he could grow fish seed at Silli or not. Shyamal Bose not only told him that it was possible but also taught him some techniques of fish seed production.



Ras Behari got one pond leased in his father's name and started the production of seed in it, and when ready, sold them to the local fish farmers. Ras Behari's efforts were visible. The seed sold by him produced good results in terms of fish production. The number of his customers increased.



Basant Singh Munda, farmer and customer of Ras Behari: *I take seed from Ras Behari-ji of Chhota Changru Village because profit is more and he is from our neighboring village ... so our confidence is more on him ... if the fish don't grow well, he assures to replace them.*

Ras Behari says that the main reason for his success is that he tells the customers what he is giving them.



Ras Behari Beraik: *There is more demand here because we work with enthusiasm, and whatever we say to the customer, we say honestly. We also weigh the seed correctly and if we claim that there is more Catla seed, we also give them more Catla seed. If I don't do this, then the poor farmers will incur loss ... and if it happens ... then I also take the responsibility.*



Most of the seed sellers give Catla fish seed in less number, which is more in demand. Catla grows faster and for breeding also Catla should be more than 3 kg in weight. Most of the seed sellers cheat the farmers, which they come to know later. Ras Behari also takes precaution in buying fish spawn. He enquires about the size of the brooder fish before buying the spawn. He can very well recognize fish spawn. He takes the spawn in a metal bowl and listens, and when sounds like that of a chicken come, he recognizes them as that of Catla.



Ras Behari Beraik: *I take the seed in a bowl and take it near my ear and listen to it carefully and can identify whether Catla spawns are there or not.*

He has good knowledge for the control of fish diseases too. The Department of Fisheries of the government helps him. Lease of ponds, techniques of seed production and feed are provided by the department. Time-to-time training is also imparted to farmers like Ras Behari. He tells that although DOF gives short-term training, if they are sent to institutes in Barrackpore or Bhubaneswar, then they can learn more and earn more from this business.



Ras Behari Beraik: *There is a proposal in the government to send us outside the state ... but so far it has not been done ... recently we had a seminar in Ranchi and another is going to be held in Delhi soon. We will have a meeting in Delhi.*

The DOF is always helping the farmers. This is the reason that the department maintains contact with the farmers. The officials of DOF visit the farmers and inform about seed distribution. Any information is stuck on the notice board of the Block Office. Maintenance of good communication with the department helps the farmers, as Behari tells that due to this there has been transparency in the government schemes. The DOF supplies net, seed and feed from time to time. Ras Behari says that due to departmental supplies the quality of the inputs are maintained and farmers have confidence.



Ras Behari Beraik: *Last year, I got net and two nursery ponds in which I grow fish seed... this scheme is very good ... If I get 10-15 ponds more, it will be very good for me ... These days I hire ponds at far-off places ... then I'll have all the ponds in my village ... and seed production will be easier for me.*

Although there is provision of loans for the farmers, people like Ras Behari hardly get any benefit from it. Banks don't sanction loans in time and there are lots of formalities to be completed.



Ras Behari Beraik: *Loans? ... We don't get loans from banks ... we take from local people at 5% interest rates (monthly) ... Banks ... It's not sure when the bank will open ... When the manager will come ... then they want a guarantor ... and land to be mortgaged ... it's not easy ... to take loans from banks.*



Due to these problems, the seed growers of this area have lots of expectations so that their basic needs can be fulfilled. Following are their main demands:

1. License should be issued for seed or fish transportation so that trucks are not stopped unnecessarily at the police stations.
2. Smaller ponds should be constructed to increase seed production.
3. Ponds should be leased to those already in this business.
4. Ponds should be earmarked for fisheries.
5. Drugs should be developed for transportation of seed to longer distances.
6. Large dams should be constructed.
7. All fish farmers should be enlisted.



DOF also informs the farmers about marketing and taxation, like where to sell fish and seed. On the advice of DOF, Ras Behari purchased a small truck with a loan. He sells 50-60 qtls of seed every year. For providing oxygen, legs are used in the containers.

This business has changed the lifestyle of the villagers. Local fishers take seed from Ras Behari and vend to different villages.



Nabarsi Beraik: *I buy seed from Ras Behari ... no ... no ... complain ... I sell Rohu and Mrigal ... I go to far-off places ... like Bundu ... Sonahatu ... and all the neighboring villages.*

Other villagers also want to join this business. Ras Behari has shown a new path to the villagers.