

# Empowerment of Rural Women through Rearing of Charra Chemballi Duck.

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## Introduction :-

Rearing of ducks in backyard is a traditional income generating activity of the rural households in Assam. This is one of the sources of income for the rural women particularly those belonging to poor families. Indigenous pati duck of Assam lays around 40 eggs in a year. On the other hand the demand of egg is very high in the state. A large number of eggs are procured from outside the state regularly to meet the demand.

The State Institute of Rural Development, Assam made an effort to introduce an improved breed of duck having high egg laying capacity in the villages to make backyard rearing of ducks more profitable to the rural women. The institute took help of Kerala Agriculture University, Thrissur. The university and the SIRD, Assam made a joint study in Kerala and selected

Chara chemballi duck of Kerala. At the initial stage the SIRD brought ducklings from Kerala Agriculture University to undertake a field level experiment to assess the adaptability of the Chara Chemballi duck to the local condition of the state of Assam. The SIRD involved some SHGs for rearing Chara Chemballi duck on experiment basis. The SIRD found that within a very short span of time Charachambelli duck had got acclimatized to the rural condition of the state of Assam. The institute found the following main characteristics among the Chara Chemballi ducks for extensive rearing in the rural areas of the state. The advantages of Chara Chemballi ducks in comparison with the traditional duck are, as follows.

- a. Excellent adaptability to the local condition of the state.
- b. Laying capacity of Chara Chemballi ducks is 200 eggs per duck per year.
- C. The duck feed on food abundantly available in the water-bodies, marshy land, paddy fields of Assam.
- d. Maintenance cost is minimum.
- e. Mortality is less and resistant to diseases.
- f. Rearing method is almost similar to the one applicable in case of indigenous ducks.
- g. Number of ducks can be easily multiplied through indigenous hatching method.

## Introduction of Chara Chemballi ducks in clusters: On being satisfied with the field

experiment the State Institute of Rural Development, Government of Assam introduced Chara Chemballi ducks in selected cluster of villages in the state to give new face to the traditional activity of rearing ducks in backyard condition in collaboration with the Agricultural University of Kerala, Thrissur in 2003. Soon Chara Chemballi duck has become very popular among the rural women of the state because of its already mentioned characteristics. Two prominent characteristics of Chara Chemballi duck e.g. laying capacity of 200 eggs per year per duck and feeding on naturally available food have enabled poor women to maintain the breed without much investment, compared to the benefit that can be derived.

More than 35000 women have taken up backyard rearing of Chara Chemballi ducks so far under the special projects of SIRD.

**About the Gumoria cluster:** Gumoria is a cluster of four villages situated around 35 KM away from Dispur under Dimoria Development Block of Kamrup District. The cluster villages fall in Hahara Gram Panchayat. Other villages of the cluster are Chamata,

Sukoripara and Bejini. Gumoria being in the center, the cluster of the four villages has been named as Gumoria. The Gumoria cluster is 4 KM away from National Highway 37. It is inhabited by marginal and landless labourers.

Women in Gumoria village and their status before taking up the project: 500

women belonging to these families in the clusters were organized into 50 Self Help Groups through social mobilization process and training. The women in the village did not have any source of income before taking up the project. Women belonging to families of marginal farmers worked with their husband in the field. But the work done by the women in the field was not accounted for. Some of the women have also worked in their simple looms for making their own dresses in which the income was not reflected. Women belonging to households of landless labourers sometimes had to go out of their houses for earning daily wages. The women are still continuing to contribute in the field work of their husband as backyard rearing of the Chara Chemballi duck does not require extra manpower to take care.

**Assistance from Government:** At the initial stage all the 500 women belonging to 50 SHGs in Gumoria cluster were imparted training on group dynamics and rearing of Chara Chemballi ducks. Each SHG was provided with 150 ducklings, medicines and a working capital. Each member of a SHG developed a backyard unit of 15 ducklings. 500 backyard units have come up through this process. Intensive care of 15 ducklings by each member has helped in the good and quick growth of the ducklings. Though each of the members developed a duckery unit of her own, other activities of each SHG remained common and collective. Development of these small duckery units through initial support helped the members to transfer theoretical learning to practice. The SIRD also did regular monitoring of the groups for corrective measures. Local male pati ducks have been replaced to avoid degeneration of the high egg laying quality of the Chara

Chemballi ducks. The State Government as well as SIRD ensured proper veterinary aids, technical and managerial guidance in the field and marketing support.

**Enlargement of the size of the units:** Members of the SHGs, having seen the egg laying capacity of the Chara Chemballi ducks, wanted to enlarge the size of the units by adding more ducks. The UCO Bank, Rajgarh, Guwahati sanctioned loan to all the 50 SHGs supported by backended government subsidy to increase the size of the units. Size of the each backyard unit has also increased through local hatching method.

**Duck population in the cluster:** Women have been maintaining 15000 to 20000 ducks on an average in the cluster depending upon the fluctuation of various seasons.

**Incremental income of the members of the groups:** With the increase in the size of the duckery units there has been a corresponding increase in the level of income of each member of the SHG since inception. During a participatory assessment of the income level of the members, each SHG submitted the level of income of each member. An analysis of the information / data submitted by the groups shows the following trend in the incremental income within three years since inception. It may be mentioned that the SHGs started rearing ducks from the last part of the year 2003.

**Incremental income by selling eggs only in the initial three years from 2003.**

Year	Average income per member per month	Annual income per member approximately
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Rs. 450.00	Rs. 5,400.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Rs. 600.00	Rs. 7,200.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Rs. 852.00	Rs. 10,200.00
Total		Rs. 22800.00

**Total income of the groups against investment:** All the 50 groups have earned more than Rs. 1.00 crore in the initial three years as shown above against the total investment of Rs. 26.00 lacs only which includes the bank loan of Rs. 7.50 lakhs.

**Additional sources of income:** The women of the cluster are found to be sincere, hard working and committed. With the income of the duckery units, some of the women members of the SHGs have undertaken different income generation activities. They are piggery, goatery, dairy, handlooms, petty shops, male ducks.

**Selling of excess male ducks:** Being a natural phenomenon around 50% of the hatchedout ducklings are invariably male. Members sale the excess male ducks for meat purpose. Duck meat being very popular in the state, selling of male ducks also enhanced the income level of the members.

**Selling of ducklings:** The activity has created a demonstration effect and women from other villages come to Gumoria cluster for purchasing ducklings. Women in the cluster sell ducklings @ Rs. 40/- per pair. This has also enhanced the income level of the members.

**Nutrition:** The egg production has added to the nutritional level of the children in the villages. The women are very happy to give egg daily to their children.

**Marketing:** The eggs are sold in the local market. Some businessmen from Guwahati are also collecting eggs from the village. The SIRD has been procuring quality eggs for hatching in the poultry hatchery besides local disposal.

**Monitoring and guidance:** The women have been rearing Chara Chemballi duck in a scientific and systematic manner under the guidance of the State Institute of Rural Development. Regular monitoring is done in the field by the Faculty Members of the Institute.

**Evaluation by Kerala Agricultural University & Government of India:** Centre for Advanced Studies in Poultry Science, Kerala Agriculture University, Thrissur has done concurrent evaluation of the performance of the Chara Chemballi ducks in Assam. Dr. A. Jalaluddin, Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in Poultry Science, Kerala Agriculture University and other professors of the Kerala Agricultural University described the performance of the Chara Chemballi ducks in terms of adaptability to the local condition, egg production, enhancement of the income to the activity as excellent particularly in the Gumoria cluster. National Level Monitor of Government of India also gave commendable remarks about the impact of the special project taken up SIRD, Assam for rearing of Chara Chemballi ducks in backyard condition. (Evaluation report is enclosed).

**Gumoria cluster – a centre of attraction of dignitaries:** Impact of the activity of rearing Chara Chemballi ducks in transforming the quality of life of the women in the Gumoria cluster has become visible. Members of SHGs from different places, representatives of NGOs, Community Based Organisations, institutes, officials frequently visit Gumoria to see the transformation. Teams of academicians, officials, entrepreneurs from other states also visits Gumoria. Important personalities like Minister for Panchayati Raj, Government of Goa, Deputy Director General, National Institute of Rural Development, team of Hon'ble MPs, MLAs and other dignitaries visited Gumoria. Recently the members of the SHGs placed a demand of that a collection and marketing centre should be set up in the cluster to facilitate marketing of eggs. In response to the demand the SIRD is setting up a collection cum marketing centre in the cluster.

## Conclusion :

This small project has enabled the women in the village to earn on their own. The women spend their income in education, health care of their children and their own requirements besides regular savings, which was not possible before taking up the project. In certain cases, the income of the women has become a major contributory factor in maintenance of the families.

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