

“I can now realise my dream of making my son a doctor”

Md Gias Uddin Khan

Cultivating new fish species brings extra income



Md Gias Khan had been a fish farmer for 23 years, cultivating carp species like rohu, catla and mrigal. In July 2011 he took part in a training session on improved fish cultivation techniques for new fish species such as mono-sex tilapia, pangas (yellowtail catfish) and koi, held in his hometown of Mirpur, Kushtia in western Bangladesh. The training was organised for 40 selected customers by aqua chemicals company Fishtech in collaboration with Katalyst and its co-facilitator Innovision Consulting.

During the training, Gias learnt about cultivation techniques, such as the importance of keeping the pond clean, elevating the embankment so that the pond water does not overflow, and using feed correctly. Shortly afterwards, as part of an exposure visit also organised by Fishtech in association with Katalyst and Innovision, Gias visited Jessore in southwest Bangladesh, to see how fish farmers there were using the knowledge they had acquired from training sessions. Inspired by their success, Gias started cultivating mono-sex tilapia in a leased pond of 60 *decimals* (just over half an acre). He invested BDT135,000 (USD1,800) in 15,000 fingerlings, of which only five per cent died (for carp the rate can be as high as eight per cent). Gias made BDT90,000 (USD1,200) profit, which is 10 times more than he made from cultivating carp.

These increased profits were partly due to increased productivity - Gias can cultivate three batches of mono-sex tilapia per year, compared

to only one batch of carp. Cultivating more frequently also spreads the risk of loss from the fish being washed away by rain or flood water.

In 2013, Gias leased four ponds for fish cultivation, with a combined area of more than 1,250 *decimals* (12.5 acres), and by August had made almost BDT1.70 million (USD22,400) profit. His success has inspired other farmers who attended the Fishtech training to cultivate mono-sex tilapia.

Gias believes that fish farming can be very profitable, provided farmers get access to financial support from government. He re-invested some of his income into the business and has started to rear cows. He is also building a bigger brick house and plans to send his son to medical school.

By December 2013, more than **7,500** fish farmers are expected to use their knowledge of improved aquaculture techniques to start cultivating new fish species such as mono-sex tilapia, koi and pangas, to increase their income.