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Backyard poultry: Livelihood source of resource-poor woman

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Abstract

The study was conducted by BAIF Livelihoods in the Deeh block of Raebareli district in Uttar Pradesh under the Focus Rural Development project sponsored by HDFC Bank. Thirty women participants were selected to enhance their knowledge and skills in different aspects such as housing, brooding, feeding management, and vaccination. After the training of these women and with the technical support of the BAIF team, mortality decreased from 70% to 6%, and knowledge about disease incidence increased from 33% to 92%, innovative housing from 10% to 100%, backyard poultry as a livelihood source from 17% to 100%, and income from 3K to 30K.

Before training, none of the women participants were aware of vaccination and deworming in backyard poultry, but after training, 100 women farmers were well aware of vaccination and deworming.

Keywords: Backyard poultry, mortality, income

Introduction

Backyard poultry is considered a techno-commercial industry in India for three decades. The basic concept of rural poultry involves the production of a coloured breed of chicken similar to desi or a local breed with more body weight and more egg production involving low input cost with advanced technologies.

Backyard poultry plays a key role in supplementary income generation and family nutrition to the poorest of the poor and contributed 20% of the total market share of Rs. 16,000 Crore. Around 30 million farmers engaged in backyard poultry production as per the 19th Livestock Census [1]. India's chicken meat consumption is only 3.2 kg /person/year compared to most of the countries at around 10-11 kg/ person/ annum according to a report by McKinsey and company [6]. In the most recent years, however, the Government of India has recognized the potential of small-scale poultry sector development for poverty reduction.

The agriculture and allied sector contribute approximately 17.32 percent to the National GDP, with an annual growth rate of 4.1 percent (as of the Economic Survey, 2016-17) [5]. Within the agriculture and allied sectors, the Indian poultry sector stands out with a robust growth rate of about 7-8% per annum, contributing about 0.7% to the National GDP. The growing demand for poultry products, particularly in urban areas, is driving the focus on the Indian poultry sector. Eggs and meats are staple foods for both urban and rural populations due to their high nutritional value.

The farmers reared generally fowls, ducks, and turkeys are the three common poultry birds in India, primarily reared either for egg production (layer birds) or meat production (broiler birds).

Eggs are highlighted as an economical source of high-quality protein, vitamins, and minerals. They contain additional cholesterol, fat-soluble vitamins, and essential fatty acids in the yolk. Poultry birds are also noted as a major source of lean meat with high nutritional value.

Farmers reared indigenous or desi poultry birds are typically in backyard farming systems or free-range systems, although these birds have comparatively low egg and meat production.

Basic training in poultry farming is crucial for making poultry farming economically viable in rural areas. Such training enhances the knowledge and skills of farmers, covering aspects like identification of improved backyard poultry birds, disease management, coping with climatic stresses, understanding feed ingredients, and managing poultry waste.

The promotion of innovative backyard poultry farming can help rural people generate self-employment, and additional income, reduce poverty, and empower rural women. The major challenges in backyard poultry rearing are high mortality due to improper housing, poor brooding, vaccination, and feeding management. It mainly happens due to a lack of knowledge and awareness.

Overall, the Indian poultry sector presents significant opportunities for economic growth and food security, particularly through targeted training programs to empower farmers with the necessary knowledge and skills for sustainable poultry farming practices.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Deeh block of Raebareli district in Uttar Pradesh during the year 2022–23. It is located 22 km from Raebareli, the district headquarters, near the point where the road to Parshadepur intersects the road leading from Jais to the Gukana ghat. The study aimed to strengthen the knowledge and skills of 30 women for taking up backyard poultry as a livelihood intervention in different villages in the Deeh block.

The baseline survey was conducted to understand the initial knowledge and practice of the women in the target area, which included information on knowledge about backyard poultry farming, management practices, relevant skills, income, etc.

The training was provided to the participants, and the BAIF team worked closely with them in the execution of all activities during the batch. After the training, 50-day-old Sonali breed chicks were provided to the trained participants. A questionnaire was developed for data collection, and interviews were conducted with participants before the project implementation. Backyard poultry data was collected after 120 days by the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) who were trained by BAIF and worked with the same participants. These trained CRPs visited women farmers who rear backyard poultry daily to offer support and guidance.

Results and Discussion

After receiving training, women participants demonstrated an enhanced understanding of innovative backyard poultry production. They subsequently implemented all practices related to housing, brooding, vaccination, deworming, and feeding. This implementation was supported under the FRDP project, funded by HDFC Bank, and implemented by the BAIF Livelihoods team. Before the training, only 33% of women were aware of the causes of disease incidence, 10% had innovative housing for poultry, and only 17% of women believed that backyard poultry could be a source of income and livelihood for them. They faced 70% mortality and earned only Rs 3k annually. None of the women participants knew about vaccination and deworming before the training.

It is evident from the table that the percentage gain in knowledge was maximum for the vaccination of poultry and minimum for disease incidence.

Table 1: Knowledge level of innovative backyard poultry rearing women (n=30)

Technology	Gain in knowledge (%)	
	Before Training	After Training
Disease incidence	33	92
Innovative housing	10	100
Livelihoods source for women	17	100
Vaccination	0	100
Chicks Mortality	70	6
Average income Rs /Family	3000	30000

It was revealed that after the training of these women and with the technical support of the BAIF team, knowledge of disease incidence increased from 33% to 92%. Innovative housing awareness also rose from 10% to 100%. The confidence of women in backyard poultry as a viable source of livelihood surged from 17% to 100%. Additionally, vaccination knowledge improved from 0% to 100%. These findings align with the studies by Ram *et al.*, 2017^[3], and Chatterjee *et al.*, 2015^[2], which emphasize the significance of farmer training. They state that success in poultry production depends primarily on the use of locally adapted birds, a favorable environment, and the availability of quality feed.

In the case of mortality, it has decreased from 70% to 6%, as clearly shown in the table. Additionally, there has been an increase in income from 3000 to 30000 per family per year after the successful adoption of innovative backyard poultry production techniques and vaccination. Similar findings are also supported by Verma *et al.* (2018)^[4].

Conclusion

From one cycle of the backyard poultry research study, it is concluded that training and technical support for backyard poultry lead to improved skills among women. This, in turn, results in reduced mortality through enhanced housing, vaccination, and deworming practices. There is also a decrease in feeding costs due to improved feeding and other management practices. This approach has emerged as a very effective model for backyard poultry production as a source of livelihood, particularly for resource-poor women. Such an approach can be promoted and scaled up as a reliable source of livelihoods for rural families.

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