

One-stop Aqua Shops (OAS)

Aquaculture is easy. I rely on my own efforts. I work hard. - The difficult part was getting started.



I am new to aquaculture, and am trying to see someone at the Fisheries Department for some technical guidance. When I went last week the Extension Officer was not in town and everyone else was busy and could not speak to me, they said to come back.

It is difficult to travel sometimes from my village, the path is not good and in the rainy season there is little chance to move.



If I spend a day away from the village it is hard for my wife to manage, so my son stays off school to help, but then he misses his learning.

The officials were very helpful but I needed to return to my village to discuss with all those in our Self-Help Group. I had the right form but we filled it out wrong the first time and then had to go back again and then again to submit the right papers.

To get the fish seed we need means making repeated visits to a farm which is quite some distant. The fish trader brought seed to us once but they were so small that they hardly grew before the water



We are going to start fish farming, it looks like a good business for us, and our project proposal is finished and recommended for a loan and a subsidy. My friends expect it will still take a few more visits to the Department to get everything sorted.

When people talk about growing fish, many say their biggest problem was getting started. In Delhi in

April 2003 farmers and officials met with policy makers and said that one of their most pressing recommendations for change was to the way information is made available. They asked for a single-point, under-one-roof center, near to their place, where they could get much of what they needed. Policy makers in governments and NGOs listened. Some farmers, already in federations of Self-Help Groups, having identified the problem have decided to solve the problem themselves. A few years on, and nine so-called 'One-stop Aqua Shops (OAS)' have come up in Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

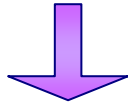


They aim to make it easier to start aquaculture, to get information, loans, grants and inputs.

The first OAS in the country



A One-stop Aqua Shop has many services.



- Application forms for bank loans
- Information about availability and rates of fish seed
- Information about fertilizers and other aquaculture inputs
- Technical literature in local languages
- Facilities for testing soil and water quality
- People to talk to and ask advice from

The first OAS in the country was established by the Department of Fisheries, Jharkhand, at the Fish Farmers' Development Agency in Ranchi on 7 May 2004.

There you can meet the Fisheries Extension Officer (FEO). The room is full of posters dealing with the different aquaculture technologies and the various activities of the Department especially the schemes meant for people from poor and tribal communities.

Application forms for bank loans and for government schemes for grants and loans from the Department are also available on payment of a token amount.

The price of different sizes of fish seed and where they are available, and the rates of other aquaculture inputs such as rice bran, oilcakes and lime are shown on a blackboard.

The farmers who visit the OAS are registered; their requests and the purpose of their visit are recorded. An attached verandah is available for the farmers to sit and discuss. The FEO can provide technical literature in local language and also advice. Facilities for testing the soil and water quality are made available on payment of nominal charges.

The second OAS: by a Federation of SHGs in West Bengal



The second OAS was set up in August 2004 in Kaipara Village of Purulia District in West Bengal, by Self-Help Groups involved in aquaculture. All the groups have invested money to set up the local information service which also rents out a large fishing net and other equipment.

Since opening, many people are coming to the village to provide services like training and banking facilities. The OAS seems to draw in the services that people need because bankers and extension officers know they can travel to the village to see many, not just one farmer at a time.

The President of one of the SHGs has provided rent-free accommodation in the form of a room and a big verandah for the establishment of the OAS. In addition to the posters and all other items available at the OAS in Jharkhand, there are two special features of this OAS, one is that almost all services are available free, and the second is that the OAS/Federation has taken a few ponds on lease for seed production. The OAS procures quality spawn for rearing in these ponds under expert supervision and the seed is supplied to its members at no-profit no-loss basis. The OAS plans to supply quality seed to all the fish farmers of the region in the next two years.



OAS development in Orissa

In 2004 a planning workshop for OAS was held in Ranchi, Jharkhand. The Director of Fisheries from Orissa at the time, Mr Satyabrat Sahu, asked if he could take part in the workshop and visited a local OAS. He considered the concept quite useful for the farmers and the Extension Officers. He promised to provide FEOs to staff OASs in the poorest districts of Nuapara and Bolangir if the Orissa Watersheds Development Mission would help with the buildings. The effort of the two institutions to link up to provide what farmers wanted has paid off. By the end of 2005 four OASs have been set up in the western Districts of Orissa by the government, and two more by NGOs associated with the Watersheds Development Mission. All the leaflets and pamphlets published by the Fisheries Department for extension and publicity are placed in each OAS. Facilities including telephone and computer are being installed.

The OASs are at Bolangir, Patnagarh and Kankelgoan in Bolangir district and in Nuapara, Khariar and Bilenjore in Nuapara district. The Agriculture Secretary-cum Commissioner in Bhubaneswar says that he would like to see much greater development of One-stop Aqua Shops in blocks across the state.



OAS Bilenjore Komna Block, district Nuapada

The OAS at Bilenjore (Komna Block, district Nuapada) is hosted by the NGO - Sahabhagi Vikash Abhiyan (SVA) right beside a hatchery for seed production which has also been established during the monsoon season of 2005. A network of Self-Help Groups in different villages is nursing the fish seed from the hatchery.

SVA already supports crop seed supply and small-scale processing, providing farmers with facilities for milling and oil extraction. It therefore also provides a plentiful supply of quality feed stuffs such as rice bran, oilcakes and toxicants (mahua oilcake) which are sold at half the market price.

Besides training facilities including boarding and lodging for 100 farmers at a time, SVA has a group of well qualified, dedicated workers including a fisheries graduate. A computer facility with internet connection is also available. The NGO has taken a large tank on 10-year lease just adjacent to its campus and has constructed three nurseries which are being further expanded and broodstock ponds have been planned. The OAS, hatchery and training center are a very useful location for farmers interested in producing fish



OAS Bolangir, district Bolangir

Role of STREAM-India Communications Hub

The STREAM Initiative supports communications and learning and had Communications Hubs in countries around Asia Pacific. STREAM-India's Communication Hub is in Bhubaneswar, Orissa since and shares knowledge and learning from other parts of India and also the Asian region with all the One-stop Aqua Shops through its recently launched One-stop Aqua Shop Information Service (OASIS). It is providing copies of a journal that is published every three months called the STREAM Journal in English, Hindi, Bengali and Oriya.

Through OASIS at One-stop Aqua Shops, farmers, fishers and their immediate service providers can:

- Access Better-Practice Guidelines (like this series)
- Visit the STREAM Virtual Library of computer-based materials
- Find out about suppliers of materials and services
- Get their questions answered both at the OAS and also by specialist through the internet

OASIS is helping link up the small-scale farmers in different parts of the world.



Useful Contacts

Other Better-Practice Guidelines

There are many more Better-Practice Guidelines in this series.

You can get more copies of this and other Better-Practice Guidelines from your local One-stop Aqua Shop, STREAM India Communications Hub, from the STREAM Regional Office or from the STREAM Website.

www.streaminitiative.org

We would like your feedback about these Better-Practice Guidelines. You can let us know by phoning, emailing or writing to the Communications Hub Manager at your STREAM Country Office.

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