

17 October 2025

From Backyard ponds to Global Technical Recognition by United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (UN FAO): Scheduled Caste Women in Uttar Pradesh Turned Ornamental Fish into a Revolution of Empowerment by micro-entrepreneurship

Mission Navshakti, a journey of transformation, empowerment and skill building of Scheduled Caste Women under Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) of ICAR NBFGR gets global recognition by UN-FAO, during World Food Forum 2025 flagship event at FAO headquarters in Rome and online mode from October 10-17 celebrating FAO's 80th anniversary under the theme "Hand in Hand for Better Foods and a Better Future" for technical leadership, collaboration, innovation and best practices in transformation, showcasing exemplary contribution in Sustainable aquatic food systems.

FAO honors ICAR-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR) which marks a significant milestone for Mission Navshakti, a transformative initiative that has empowered more than 425 women from the Scheduled Caste community, equipping them with skills in ornamental fish rearing, maintenance, and aquarium fabrication through innovative work with hub and spoke cluster model. The work was conceptualised by Dr Poonam Jayant Singh, Nodal Officer SCSP and implemented with team support of Dr T T Ajith, Dr A K Pathak, Dr L K Tyagi, Sh Ravi, Sh A K Bisht, Sh Sanjay Kumar, Sh Vikas, Dr Arpita Batta, Sh Amarjeet Singh done in Collaboration with Hitech Fisheries lead by Dr Suresh Chandra and Dr A K Yadav, Aquaworld lead by Sh Indramani Raja, Safai Karamchari Andolan lead by Sh Bezwada Wilson, KVK Sitapur lead by Dr Daya Shankar Srivastava, KVK Unnao lead by Dr Archana Singh, KVK Kanpur Dehat lead by Dr. A K Singh and Dr Nimisha and OFTRI Udaipur lead by Dr A K Jain and Dr Abhinika.

Small landholdings and cycles of poverty confine Scheduled Caste (SC) women to the shadows of survival, a quiet uprising has captured the world's attention. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) shone a global spotlight on "Mission Navshakti" and its Navshakti Aquagiri Business Incubation Centre (NABiC), a grassroots innovation from India's ICAR-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR) funded under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (DAPSC-SCSP) of ICAR-NBFGR, this initiative will focus on income generation, skill development, and infrastructure enhancement to reduce poverty and enable socio-economic mobility, thereby improving livelihoods and bringing beneficiaries above the poverty line for members of SC Community

This SCSP-backed initiative has empowered over 425 rural and urban SC women, transforming household troughs and barren courtyards into vibrant micro-enterprises of ornamental fish rearing and aquarium crafting earning prestigious recognition for pioneering sustainable aquatic food systems. The milestone unfolded dramatically during FAO's GO08 Global Technical Recognition Ceremony, where Director-General Dr. QU Dongyu honored the program for its technical leadership, collaborative ingenuity, and best practices in uplifting marginalized communities. Held in hybrid mode at FAO Headquarters in Rome, the event was a centerpiece of the 2025 World Food Forum (WFF), a vibrant week-long gathering from October 10-17, under the theme "Hand in Hand for Better Foods and a Better Future." Amid FAO's 80th anniversary festivities, the GO08 sifted global submissions to celebrate SDG-aligned innovations advancing the Four Betters: production, nutrition, environment, and life. From Lucknow's SAH Abidi Committee Hall, a jubilant contingent of Team Mission Navshakti

including KVKs and SHG women from Unnao joined virtually from 9:00 PM to 11:00 PM IST (5:30-7:30 PM CEST), their cheers echoing the power of unseen hands.

Dr. QU Dongyu hailed the collaboration sparking systemic change for women and the marginalized. The mission is led by Dr. Poonam Jayant Singh, Nodal SCSP-Mission Navshakti Team Lead is a motivation for real ground workers. Mission Navshakti proves grassroots genius, systemic design thinking rewriting SC women's narratives from struggle to micro entrepreneurship. Dr J K Jena, DDG(fisheries) congratulated the team for their efforts in igniting a spark in lives of Scheduled Caste rural women

This journey, aimed at strengthening women's empowerment through sustainable community entrepreneurship in ornamental aquaculture, has not only provided these women with an alternative source of income, but also opened doors to a future, where financial independence is within their grasp. Many women had never ventured beyond household responsibilities, found themselves in a new world, where they could earn, create, and inspire.

The initiative, under the SCSP component of the ICAR-NBFGR, envisions bridging the gap between rural women and urban market demands in the ornamental fish sector. As part of their learning experience, the women were first exposed to different fish species and understood artistic nuances of aquarium decoration. The approach was learning by seeing, an experience that deeply resonated with them. The excitement and curiosity in their eyes as they saw possibilities unfold before them were nothing short of inspiring. For many of these women, life had been a cycle of struggle, limited by the constraints of small land holdings that provided minimal productivity. In this milieu, the Mission Navshakti gave them a new avenue to explore.

Women constructed backyard cemented ponds, transforming their courtyards into hubs of productivity. The shift is remarkable where once there was only barren space, now thrive colourful ornamental fish, representing hope and economic empowerment. The training was not just about business, it was about rewriting their futures. Women who once had no alternative sources of income now see a pathway to self-sufficiency without leaving their homes. Families that once relied solely on agriculture, struggling to make ends meet with small land holdings, are now discovering new possibilities through backyard ornamental fish culture unit.

The ornamental fish industry, long dominated by commercial players, now finds itself enriched by the hands of women, who were once on the periphery of economic participation. By keeping fish and rearing them with care at their homes, they are not only ensuring additional income, but also reinforcing their roles as entrepreneurs within their communities. ICAR-NBFGR and Aquaworld have committed to handholding these women, providing them with a safety net by buy-back the fish they rear, ensuring they have a guaranteed market. As they diligently worked on fabricating aquarium, the excitement was palpable. They received a complete package / input kit, including a fully equipped aquarium with a filter, air pump, LED light, FRP cover, background poster, plants, air stone, aeration tube, feed, and live ornamental fish everything they needed to start their entrepreneurial journey. But, beyond these materials, they received something far greater: the belief that they could shape their own destinies. Technology has played a pivotal role in keeping them connected. Further, a dedicated WhatsApp group was set up to provide continuous guidance and support, ensuring that they are never alone in this endeavour. This digital bridge has allowed them to seek help, share their progress, and celebrate their small victories together.

Among these success stories, two women from Unnao, Ms. Poonam and Ms. Sangeeta, stand as shining example from Unnao. Having undergone training in January 2025, they took the bold step of selling mini aquaria, proving that their skills could indeed translate into income. SCSP supported opening of two shops to create market linkages. Their journey, from training participants to aspiring businesswomen, is a testament to what Mission Navshakti set out to achieve. They also attended the online FAO award ceremony on 15th October 2025 from ICAR NBFGR at 9:30 pm

The Establishment of Collection and Point of Sale (C&PoS) Hub under Navshakti Aquagri Business Incubation Centre (NABiC) for enablement of Rural Village Social Entrepreneurship aims to empower Scheduled Caste (SC) women through sustainable market linkages for ornamental fisheries and allied agricultural sector. This initiative, implemented under a cluster-based hub-and-spoke model at Hitech Fisheries and Farmer Knowledge Centre, Barabanki, will serve as a C&PoS hub for facilitating the economic upliftment of SC communities in and around Dhankutti village. Funded under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (DAPSC-SCSP) of ICAR-NBFGR, this initiative will focus on income generation, skill development, and infrastructure enhancement to reduce poverty and enable socio-economic mobility, thereby improving livelihoods and bringing beneficiaries above the poverty line for members of SC Community. Navshakti: Aquagri Business Incubation Centre (NABiC), a centralized facility designed to serve as a marketplace for mini aquaria, ornamental fishes, and handcrafted baked clay decorative materials created by the SHG women from Unnao, Barabanki, Sitapur, and Kanpur Dehat has been established at ICAR NBFGR near the entry point of Ganga Aquarium. NABIC anchors it all as a hub-and-spoke powerhouse. This hub-and-spoke model will provide a stable foundation for their entrepreneurial ventures, ensuring that the women's efforts bear fruit on a much larger scale.

The seeds of this transformation were first sown in Dhankutti village, Barabanki, where fifty women took the plunge into this new venture. Their success became the catalyst that inspired many more to join. The initiative soon expanded to Sitapur, Unnao, and Kanpur Dehat, with KVK Sitapur, KVK Unnao, and KVK Kanpur Dehat playing crucial roles. Even urban SHG women from Bangla Bazar and Valmikipuri were not left behind, receiving training in community entrepreneurship through ornamental fish rearing and aquarium fabrication. The reach of Mission Navshakti extended beyond Uttar Pradesh, touching lives in Veerpura village, Udaipur, Rajasthan. Many of them, who had never imagined themselves as business owners, now eagerly anticipate setting up their own ventures with the basic aquarium setup provided to them. The transformation taking place is more than just economic, it is social, psychological, and deeply personal. Mission Navshakti is not merely a project; it is a revolution in the making. It is changing the way rural women perceive themselves and their potential. It is proving that with the right opportunities and support, women from the most marginalized backgrounds can rise to become business leaders in their own right. The empowerment of these women through skill development is not just altering individual lives but reshaping entire communities. This collaboration between ICAR-NBFGR, KVKs, and the women of these communities has created a new model of capacity building, one that has the potential to change countless lives.

This movement is a testament to resilience, to the power of collaboration, and to the strength of women who refuse to be defined by limitations. Through ornamental fish rearing and aquarium fabrication, they are not just earning an income they are rewriting their stories, one fish, one aquarium, and one bold step at a time. As this initiative moves into its next phase, it carries with it the aspirations of hundreds of women who now dare to dream. By integrating traditional knowledge with modern skills, Mission Navshakti is doing more than just creating

livelihood opportunities it is rewriting narratives, fostering resilience, and shaping a future where rural women no longer wait for opportunities but create them. This is not just a project; it is a movement, a promise, and a testament to the incredible power of women when given the right support and belief in their potential. The appreciation by FAO for first ever Global Technical Recognition for Sustainable aquatic food systems is an icing on the cake to be cherished by our women.

प्रेस विज्ञप्ति

17 अक्टूबर 2025

घर के छोटे तालाबों से संयुक्त राष्ट्र की बड़ी पहचान तक: उत्तर प्रदेश की दलित बहनों ने सजावटी मछलियों से कमाई का नया रास्ता खोला, आत्मनिर्भर बनीं

लखनऊ। मिशन नौशक्ति ने दलित महिलाओं की जिंदगी बदल दी। यह आईसीएआर-एनबीएफजीआर की अनुसूचित जाति योजना (एससीएसपी) के तहत चलाई जा रही मुहिम है, जिसे संयुक्त राष्ट्र के खाद्य एवं कृषि संगठन (एफएओ) ने वैश्विक स्तर पर सम्मान दिया। विश्व खाद्य मंच 2025 के मुख्य आयोजन में 10 से 17 अक्टूबर तक रोम में एफएओ मुख्यालय और ऑनलाइन हुआ। एफएओ के 80 साल पूरे होने पर "हाथ मिलाकर बेहतर भोजन और भविष्य" थीम के तहत यह पुरस्कार सतत जल आधारित खाद्य प्रणालियों में उत्कृष्ट काम के लिए मिला।

एफएओ ने आईसीएआर-नेशनल ब्यूरो ऑफ फिश जेनेटिक रिसोर्स (एनबीएफजीआर) को सम्मानित किया। मिशन नौशक्ति ने 425 से ज्यादा दलित बहनों को सजावटी मछली पालन, देखभाल और एक्वेरियम बनाने का हुनर सिखाया। हब-एंड-स्पोक मॉडल से यह संभव हुआ। डॉ. पूनम जयंत सिंह ने योजना बनाई। टीम में डॉ. टी.टी. अजीत, डॉ. ए.के. पाठक, डॉ. एल.के. त्यागी, श्री रवि, श्री ए.के. बिष्ट, श्री संजय कुमार, श्री विकास, डॉ. अर्पिता बता, श्री अमरजीत सिंह शामिल। सहयोग में हाईटेक फिशरीज (डॉ. सुरेश चंद्रा व डॉ. ए.के. यादव), एक्वावर्ल्ड (श्री इंद्रमणि राजा), सफाई कर्मचारी आंदोलन (श्री बेजवाड़ा विल्सन), केवीके सीतापुर (डॉ. दया शंकर श्रीवास्तव), केवीके उन्नाव (डॉ. अर्चना सिंह), केवीके कानपुर देहात (डॉ. ए.के. सिंह व डॉ. निमिषा), ओएफटीआरआई उदयपुर (डॉ. ए.के. जैन व डॉ. अभिनिका) ने साथ दिया।

छोटी जमीन और गरीबी ने दलित बहनों को बंधे रखा था, लेकिन यह मुहिम ने चुपचाप क्रांति ला दी। एफएओ ने मिशन नौशक्ति और नौशक्ति एक्वागिरी बिजनेस इंक्यूबेशन सेंटर (एनबीआईसी) को वैश्विक पटल पर दिखाया। यह एनबीएफजीआर की ग्रामीण पहल है, जो एससीएसपी फंड से चली। इसका मकसद कमाई बढ़ाना, कौशल सिखाना और सुविधाएं देना है, ताकि गरीबी से ऊपर उठें और दलित परिवार मजबूत हों।

इस योजना ने गांव-शहर की 425 से ज्यादा बहनों को ताकत दी। घर के खाली आंगन और नालियों को सजावटी मछलियों के छोटे कारोबार में बदल दिया। सतत जल खाद्य प्रणाली में अग्रणी काम के लिए GO08 वैश्विक तकनीकी सम्मान मिला। एफएओ महानिदेशक डॉ. क्व डोंगयू ने रोम में हाइब्रिड समारोह में इसे तकनीकी नेतृत्व, टीमवर्क और गरीबों को ऊपर उठाने के लिए सराहा। यह विश्व खाद्य मंच का मुख्य हिस्सा था। एफएओ के 80वें साल में SDG लक्ष्यों और चार बेहतर (उत्पादन, पोषण, पर्यावरण, जीवन) को बढ़ावा देने वाले नवाचार चुने गए। लखनऊ के एसएचसी अबीदी हॉल से टीम नौशक्ति, केवीके और उन्नाव की स्वयं सहायता समूह (एसएचजी) बहनें रात 9 से 11 बजे तक ऑनलाइन जुड़ीं। उनकी खुशी अनसुनी मेहनत की ताकत बयां कर रही थी।

डॉ. क्व डोंगयू ने महिलाओं के लिए बड़ा बदलाव लाने वाले सहयोग की तारीफ की। डॉ. पूनम जयंत सिंह नेतृत्व कर रही हैं, जो जमीनी कार्यकर्ताओं के लिए मिसाल हैं। यह मुहिम साबित करती है कि गांव की बुद्धि और सिस्टम सोच से दलित बहनों की कहानी संघर्ष से उद्यमी बनने तक बदल सकती है। डॉ. जे.के. जेना, डिप्टी डायरेक्टर जनरल (मत्स्य) ने ग्रामीण दलित बहनों में नई चिंगारी जगाने पर बधाई दी।

सजावटी मछली पालन से बहनें उद्यमी बनीं। घर से ही कमाई शुरू, वित्तीय आजादी मिली। जो बहनें कभी घर से बाहर न निकलीं, वे अब कमाती, बनाती और दूसरों को प्रेरित करती हैं। योजना ग्रामीण बहनों को शहर के बाजार से जोड़ती है। पहले मछली प्रजातियां दिखाई, एक्वेरियम सजाने का कला सिखाया। देखकर सीखना उनके मन में उतर गया। आंखों में चमक आई जब नई राह दिखी। छोटी जमीन से पहले मुश्किल थी, अब नया रास्ता मिला।

बहनों ने घर में सीमेंट तालाब बनाए, आंगन उत्पादक बने। जहां सूना पड़ा था, वहां रंग-बिरंगी मछलियां तैरने लगीं—आशा और कमाई का प्रतीक। ट्रेनिंग सिर्फ बिजनेस नहीं, भविष्य बदलने वाली। बिना घर छोड़े आत्मनिर्भरता। कृषि पर निर्भर परिवार अब घरेलू मछली इकाई से नई उम्मीदें पाल रहे।

सजावटी मछली बाजार पहले बड़े व्यापारियों का था, अब बहनों के हाथों फला। घर पर मछलियां पालकर बेचतीं, उद्यमी बनीं। एनबीएफजीआर और एक्वावर्ल्ड खरीदारी की गारंटी देकर साथ निभाते। एक्वेरियम बनाते समय उत्साह साफ दिखा। पूरा किट मिला—फिल्टर, पंप, लाइट, कवर, पोस्टर, पौधे, फीड, मछलियां। इससे ज्यादा, आत्मविश्वास मिला कि भाग्य खुद गढ़ेगी।

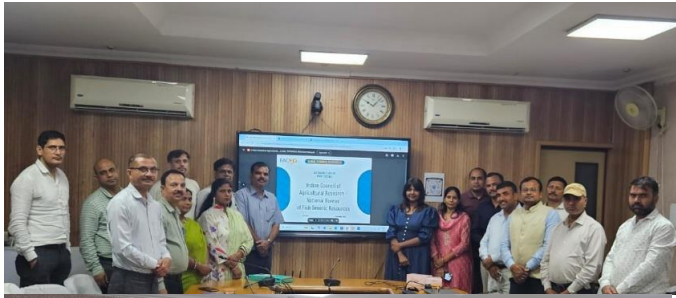
सफलता की मिसाल उन्नाव की पूनम और संगीता। जनवरी 2025 ट्रेनिंग के बाद मिनी एक्वेरियम बेचा। एससीएसपी से दो दुकानें खुलीं, बाजार जोड़ा। ट्रेनी से बिजनेसवुमन बनीं। 15 अक्टूबर रात 9:30 बजे एनबीएफजीआर से ऑनलाइन पुरस्कार देखा।

एनएबीआईसी के तहत कलेक्शन एंड सेल हब से ग्रामीण उद्यमिता मजबूत। सजावटी मछली और कृषि उत्पादों के बाजार लिंक। बाराबंकी के हाईटेक सेंटर में हब-स्पोक मॉडल। धनकुटी गांव के दलितों को फायदा। फंड से कमाई, कौशल, सुविधाएं—गरीबी मिटाओ। एनएबीआईसी गंगा एक्वेरियम के पास बाजार है—मिनी एक्वेरियम, मछलियां, मिट्टी की सजावट। उन्नाव, बाराबंकी, सीतापुर, कानपुर देहात की बहनें बनातीं। हब मॉडल से बड़ा फायदा।

शुरुआत धनकुटी से, 50 बहनें जुड़ीं। सफलता से और आईं। फैला सीतापुर, उन्नाव, कानपुर। केवीके ने साथ दिया। बांगला बाजार, वाल्मीकि पुरी की शहरी बहनें भी ट्रेनिंग ली। राजस्थान के वीरपुरा तक पहुंचा। जो कभी दुकान का सपना न देखा, वे अब सेटअप लेकर शुरू करने को तैयार। बदलाव सिर्फ पैसे का नहीं—समाज, मन, जीवन का। यह क्रांति है। बहनें खुद को नया देखतीं, हाशिए से नेता बनीं। एनबीएफजीआर-केवीके-बहनों का मॉडल लाखों बदल सकता।

यह हिम्मत, टीमवर्क और सीमाओं तोड़ने की ताकत दिखाता। एक मछली, एक एक्वेरियम से कहानी नई। अगले चरण में सैकड़ों के सपने। पुरानी विद्या-नई स्किल से अवसर खुद बनाएं। एफएओ का पहला वैश्विक सम्मान दलित बहनों की जीत है।



















Visiting Villages Barakheda and Unchdwar at Unnao to understand ground level problems



Local design studio session with sustainable materials to create prototypes for custom made mini aquariums

