

# Backyard Poultry Farming and Women Empowerment in Garo Hills of Meghalaya- A Success Story

## Background

Egg and poultry meat production in North-East is largely dependent on backyard farming with indigenous chicken breed. The genetic potential of these local chickens for egg and meat production is very poor with annual egg production of 45-50 eggs per hen and low body weight gain. This is one of the main reasons for poor productivity of backyard farming or rural poultry farming. There is a huge gap between demand and supply. As the backyard farming is low cost and self- sustaining farming system which is least dependent on external inputs, there is only need to improve the productivity of backyard poultry by introducing suitable chicken varieties having more growth rate and egg production than *Desi* birds.

There are many improved chickens varieties with dual purpose producing more eggs and meats than local birds. They are relatively resistant to various poultry diseases; thrive well on locally available feed resources and good scavengers. Vanaraja, Srinidhi and Kuroiler are among them which are suitable for climatic condition of Garo Hills (already trial was done by KVK). Backyard poultry farming with these improved varieties has potentiality to bridge the protein supply gap and to improve the livelihood of the tribal farmers of the region.

## **KVK intervention**

The Study shows that majority (84.44%) of the backyard poultry keepers in West Garo Hills (WGH) district were middle-aged women and they played a significant role in backyard poultry production that contributes towards their family's subsistence. These women need to be encouraged, motivated and educated through capacity building programmes to increase their efficiency in poultry farming. KVK, West Garo Hills implemented backyard poultry farming with different improved poultry varieties like *Vanaraja*, *Srinidhi* and *Kuroiler* birds and provided the chicks to the women of different villages of the district.



Chicks of *Srinidhi* were provided to the members of the one women SHG (10 members) in Aminda Rangsa Village of West Garo Hills district for rearing in backyard system as subsidiary income generating activity. Twenty nos chicks were provided to each member of the

group. Aminda Rangsa village was adopted by the KVK, WGH as model village for “Doubling Farmers’ Income (DFI) by 2022”. *Srinidhi* are dual purpose poultry producing more eggs and meats than local birds. Birds were reared in backyard / free-range system with the provision of night shelter. Houses were constructed with locally available materials, such as bamboo and wood. Birds were released early in the morning and left for scavenging in the surroundings of the house, gardens, fields etc. from where they fulfill their requirement of feed. During scavenging, the birds generally fed on kitchen waste, earthworms, insects, green grasses, leafy vegetables, seeds etc. In addition to scavenging, women offered broken rice, and boiled rice to their birds. KVK conducted training programmes for the members of the group on all managerial aspects of poultry farming including disease control measures. Deworming and vaccination were done regularly by KVK personnel.

### Output and outcome

*Srinidhi* birds on backyard system performed well at the farmer’s field. The average body weight gain by *Srinidhi* poultry at 8 weeks and 20 weeks were recorded as 805g and 1.90 kg respectively whereas body weight gain in 40 weeks is 2.8 kg which is increased by 107% than local chickens. The annual egg production by *Srinidhi* bird is 128 nos /year/bird whereas egg production in case of local chickens is only 42 nos /year/bird. The average egg weight of *Srinidhi* is 52g which is 62.5% more than egg weight of local birds. The eggs were used for family consumption and rests were sold @Rs 10/egg. Unwanted male birds were culled at 20 weeks of age with average body wt of 2.0 kg and sold @ Rs250/kg live bird. The average annual net income received by individual women was Rs 14868. These women were able to generate income for their household purposes. Other farmers in the village were motivated to rear *Srinidhi* birds. They approached KVK to get chicks.



**Vaccination of the birds by KVK personnel**





**Garo Women with their *Srinidhi* birds**

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