

Floating Garden: Turning Crisis into Income Source for Women

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Abstract

To overcome the difficulties faced in farming due to natural crisis like cyclones and floods, people of coastal region of Odisha are now adopting the floating garden concept. It suppresses the weed growth due to flood water. It mainly helps women to grow vegetables and generate some extra income.

Introduction

In the last 22 years Odisha has encountered 10 cyclones and the frequency of such natural disaster is increasing. Among all the coastal states of India, Odisha is the most affected state where one-third of the cyclones of east coast landfalls. Balasore, Ganjam, Cuttack, Jajpur, Puri and Jagatsinghpur are the districts of Odisha which are more prone to cyclones. The major cyclones have occurred in the month of October and November which is the post monsoon time.

Due to the floods raised by frequently occurring cyclones and heavy rainfalls, the coastal Odisha farmers of districts of Puri and Ganjam are quitting farming as their fields are constrained by 6-7 months of water stagnation. These areas are infested with water hyacinth, which is a major fresh water weed and one of the most troublesome aquatic plants which forms dense colonies. People try their best to clean up but they keep growing. In some places it clogs the agricultural canals and attract birds which feed on paddy grains.

To solve the problem the Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC) team came with the 'Floating Garden' concept and told the farmers they could use the water clad land by raising floating gardens. The idea behind floating garden has long been witnessed at Srinagar's popular Dal lake.

How Floating Gardens are Made?



Bamboo beds with an average size of (20 x 5 x 1) feet are constructed and floated on the water bodies. At the bottom of the bed surface, dried water hyacinth is intertwined to form a mesh. On this mesh, a four-inch layer mixture of salt and chopped water hyacinth leaves is made. Above this a five-inch layer of mixture of silt, vermicompost, FYM and the upper most layer is packed with mixture of dry leaves and leguminous plants, soil and silt.

How is it Working?

Society of Women Action Development (SWAD) along with RCDC is promoting this concept among the women which is helping them to generate extra income for their family along with their own consumption. They are planting different types of local leafy vegetables like spinach, amaranth leaves etc. They are also growing coriander, fennel seeds, chili, tomato and some others. They sell these produces in the nearby market and houses. This concept was initially implemented in Odisha around 2010 and some women received financial support from RCDC.

Impact of Floating Garden-

A farmer of Dahana village, Puri lost his land due to floods, so now he works as a carpenter. His earning is not enough to support his family. Lakshmi, his wife once took part in Gram prayas committee meeting constituted by RCDC where RCDC showed documentary on floating garden concept and discussed the advantages.

In order to support her family Lakshmi contacted the RCDC staff for support and attended do it yourself training sessions organized by RCDC in the village. Now she produces vegetables not only for own consumption but also to sell it in market. In 2016, Jagannath Chatterjee of RCDC told in an interview that the campaign has a tremendous impact as they were able to reach around 15000 people in short period of time.

Conclusion

Floating garden concept came with an extra income source for women in coastal areas of Odisha. It encourages women empowerment and it is converting the crisis into a good opportunity. with time more people of coastal areas are adopting this technique, so government should look into setting up schemes to support this initiative.

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