

Introduction of Home Gardening to a Fishery Village-Gandara Experience

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Home gardening, apart from an alternative source of income, plays several other roles also in fishery based communities. Diversity of food along with income resources could be considered as the main buffers against the vulnerability of these communities. Impacts of introducing home gardening to a Tsunami affected fishery village in Southern Sri Lanka are discussed in the present paper.

The home gardening program was introduced to the village in 2007 as a community development project in order to improve the food and nutritional security of the community under the CIDA restore project. Initially thirty families were selected for the home gardening program based on their interest. They were given basic training on home gardening at the Faculty of Agriculture with some practical exposure and provided them planting materials. Their gardening was routinely monitored and regular guidance and assistance were given as needed. Before the program was implemented, majority (57%) of the selected families was totally depended upon the market for their vegetables and none of them consumed homemade vegetables. As the home gardening program progressed, the vegetable production at their own home gardens was gradually increased and some of the farmers shared their excess vegetables with neighbours (32%) and started to sell the excess (4%), earning an extra source of income. However, as most of the gardens (79%) are relatively small (> 0.25 Ac), market oriented farming seemed to be difficult in this village. Majority (93%) of the involved people believed that home made vegetables are more tasty and healthy; and thus the time spent on gardening was found to be increased gradually. Most of them (93%) also believed that home gardening can improve the family harmony as they work together (86%) and share experiences (39%). A close association between gardening and other family activities could also be found among most of them.

Results further revealed that house wife and children have mainly been involved in gardening (57%) and thus introduction of home gardening could strengthen the role of women in the society. Most importantly, the involved people, though initially knew nothing (29%) or little (68%) on gardening are now confident that they could act as model farmers (89%) and other farmers those who have not interested in home gardening initially, now become interested home gardening (86%). Finally it can be concluded that introduction of home gardening in fishery villages in Southern Sri Lanka is viable project to improve the community development through food and nutritional security as well as social harmony. As there is a great potential for home gardening to improve the livelihoods of people in these communities, continuous assistance and monitoring are needed for these communities to make the program sustainable.