

Film text: “Learning with the Climate Crisis - Resilient agriculture in Bangladesh”

In terms of climate change Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. The intensity and number of natural disasters that include drought, unusual cold weather, waterlogging from heavy rains, cyclones and river flooding are growing rapidly.

The northern belt of Bangladesh is well known for the agricultural success of its rice fields, but recently the agricultural sector and those who are solely depend upon agriculture have been suffering under the dire consequences of climate change.

In 2020 five consecutive floods drove the people of Raninagar and Atrai into a state of despair. And the inhabitants of Dimla have suffered on numerous occasions from waterlogging and seasonal floods, because of the combination of heavy rainfall and the enormous volume of the water carried into the region by the river Tista. The severity and number of floods is increasing day by day, leading to irreversible loss of agricultural land. The farmers in this region are struggling for their livelihoods.

Morsheda Bibi, Kalikapur:

“Due to the flooding, we cannot go outside and so we cannot get any food”.

Fulbanu, Gayabari:

“When river erosion took our land, I came with my children to live by this dam”.

Shiraj Uddin, Dimla:

“When the river water increases, it does so excessively. When it decreases, then it nearly dries up. At the moment, the level of the river water is very low”.

Buli Begum, Kalikapur:

“The flood waters returned five times and all our houses were destroyed. Here you see a wall that is still standing. We are dying because of the flooding, the fog and then the drought. We cannot cultivate our land. The cycle of flood and drought is a real danger”.

In particular the farmers who have no own land and are socially and economically disadvantaged often face great challenges to adapt to these regional effects of the climate crisis. However, the same people demonstrate their creativity in adapting the methods employed to maintain and improve their livelihoods when given the opportunity. Non-governmental organizations such as DASCOH Foundation, POLLISREE and NETZ Bangladesh provide trainings so that the local people can take appropriate action to strengthen the basis for their income from agricultural sources.

Climate and Justice.

Materials for Development Education

Joyonti Rani, Technical officer (training), POLLISREE:

“Once they join the project, we can provide a range of training courses. One of the courses deals with “Climate Smart Agriculture”. During the course, we teach the participants how to cultivate a range of vegetables on small area of land of their home-yard. Furthermore, we explain how they can cultivate vegetables in a bucket or a plastic bag. This method of cultivation means that during the rainy season families can keep their vegetable plants inside their homes or take them to the safe, higher ground dam when they have to leave their houses”.

Md. Ashraful Mandol, Kalikapur:

“Our houses can be submerged. So we plant seedlings on the roof. We can then continue to grow fresh vegetables and fruits to eat ourselves or sell at the market”.

Khateja Khatun, Gayabari:

“I put the seeds in the coloured bottles. Then I grind Neem leaves, put them in the bottle and close it. When the flooding is over, I can open the bottles and immediately plant the seeds”.

Bashanti Bala, Balapara:

“I kept the seeds in clear plastic bottles, earthen pots and white glass bottles, but not all the seeds sprouted. The training taught me to keep the seeds in dark glass bottles so that they aren't exposed to sunlight. Now all seeds sprout and grow into plants”.

Rahima Bibi, Kalikapur:

“During the flooding I planted this seed in this bowl and put the bowl up on the roof. Once the flood ends, I will plant the seedling outside”.

Md. Moniruzzaman, Programme Manager NETZ Bangladesh

“To tackle the impact of climate change, the people are taking self-help initiatives. So the training we offer is geared to their needs. The courses we offer add to the people's capabilities and opportunities to pursue climate resilient farming. The women and their families have started numerous income generating activities. Everyone in this village is involved. In this way the local population can address their disadvantages and take action to compensate for flood damage, hunger and other consequences of these natural disasters. At the same time, the people are advancing towards sustainable development”.

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On Example is Mrs Fatema Banu from Atrai Upazila of Nagaon. Last year her low lying fields and crops were badly damaged by flood waters, so this year she has raised the level of her cultivated land to mitigate the effect of the flood waters. She also uses organic fertilizer to reduce production costs whilst protecting the environment.

Fatema Banu, Chapra:

“When the plants are covered by water, they can’t grow. Therefore, we cultivate higher places. We all agree the best place for everyone to grow crops so we have enough food. In times of shortage, we can sell the crops or we can eat them. At other times we store the crops for our family’s future needs”.

“I keep domestic cows, goats, ducks and chickens in my home. I collect and store each animal's dung separately. When the dung has turned into organic fertilizer, I spread it on my land”.

Ratna Begum, Chapra:

“During winter, various sicknesses can affect the seedlings. We mix ashes into the water with which we washed our vegetables and water the plants with it. The ashes stay on the plants and are not flying away in the wind. Through this process, the bugs and other insects on the vegetable trees die rapidly and the trees can grow up healthily”.

“Once the flood waters recede, we plant the crops that grow quickly. We can rapidly grow and harvest potato, mustard, chilies, onions and other winter vegetables before the rice planting season starts. In this way, we can double our income”.

Geeta Rani, Gayabari:

“We are two sister-in-law and we have developed a plan. We were walking along the road when we had the idea to erect a roof between the trees to grow plants. We planted seeds of red chilies in a sack and then carefully put the sack on the temporary bamboo roof. We use sacks and broken buckets so that the plants will stay on the roof. It is okay if it rains heavily because the plants are unaffected by the storms. We have taken care to plant chilies that grow during all seasons of the year”.

Aroti Bala, Balapara:

“To name but a few I have planted potato, turmeric, sweet pumpkin and gourd, I do not need to buy or use any chemical fertilizer as I also rear cows and goats and get the organic fertilizer from the animals. I collect droppings, process it and then use it as an organic-fertilizer instead of buying a chemical one”.

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Mrs. Monira Khatun, coming from the banks of the Tista River, is a disaster volunteer. She tells the people about the special safe places prepared on high ground where they can take shelter when the flood waters come.

Monira Khatun:

“I told my uncle that the water level may rise tomorrow. I asked him to use the mosque’s microphone at the end of prayer, to announce the news that tomorrow the water may rise and that everyone should please be careful. He met my request and warned everyone to be careful. If there are any pregnant women then I sent them beforehand to the dam on banana floats or on the boats that they can be kept safe”.

People who are often called powerless can become active in a world crisis. They are flexible and creative cooperating to bring about food security during climate change. Together, they build a sustainable future for their children.