

REAP Helps Farmers Produce More Food from Fallow Land of Pond Dikes

Winrock International

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Nazrul Islam harvests snake-gourd from his pond-dike garden. The Winrock-implemented REAP project allowed Nazrul to raise additional income and provide better nutrition for his family.

“It is giving us additional income and food.”
- Nazrul Islam

In Bangladesh, most rural farming families have ponds for raising fish and the pond dikes have traditionally remained untapped resources during aquaculture activities.

Farmers have, understandably, been more attentive to the fish in their ponds, but the Rural Enterprise for Alleviating Poverty (REAP) project implemented by Winrock International and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) showed members of farmers' associations better ways to utilize pond dikes for land-based cropping. Through the demonstration of horticultural cultivation on dikes, farmers learned how to bring additional in-

come from crops without affecting fish culture.

Seeing the results of the interventions, about 1,500 farmers under REAP undertook dike cultivation where feasible. Usually, the farmers grew bottle gourd, snake gourd, sponge gourd or papaya on their pond dikes, because they have short growing periods – leaving pond aquaculture unaffected by the land-based activities.

The best part, however, is that farmers were able to earn additional income out of fallow land. On average, each pond had 5-6 decimals (0.05-0.06 acre) of land available for planting. A total of about 80 acres of land in the project area was used by the farmers for additional crop production. This land would have otherwise remained fallow. Through the process of crop rotation and with two crop cycles per year, about 600 metric tons of vegetables can be produced by farmers on pond dikes in the project area annually.

In all, more than 1,500 farmers took up the practice after seeing the successful results. Nazrul Islam and Motiur Rahman are two of those successful farmers.

Nazrul, of Fulbaria sub-district, planted snake-gourd, ridge gourd and bottle

gourd on his pond dike. He produced 654 kilograms of snake and ridge gourd in a 2-month cropping period, which earned him an additional income of BDT 12,470 (US\$182) selling the product. Moreover, his children and other members of his family received better nutrition through increased availability of nutritious vegetables.

Nazrul is extremely thankful that REAP showed them how to utilize the untapped resource: “It is giving us additional income and food. Thanks to REAP and thanks to USDA.”

A member of a farmers’ association, Gouripur sub-district resident Motiur cultivated papaya on his pond dikes alongside the prawn culture in his pond. With the assis-



Produce grown on previously fallow pond dikes allowed small farmers to earn supplemental income.



Motiur Rahman maintains a pond-dike papaya garden.

tance of REAP, he was able to produce 874 kilograms of papaya in a 5-month period in four decimals of land. He earned BDT 10,743 (US\$ 156) as supplemental income and used the extra income to improve the lives of his children. He said that the crop not only fetched extra income but also added more nutrition to his children’s diet.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.