

Peermade Development Society, a leading NGO in south India with experience in promoting farmer innovations, designed this project to create market value for local and farmer-developed crops. This meant exploring and exploiting existing market demand by making planting materials available and training local people to establish village-level enterprises for production and marketing of farmer-developed and traditional crop varieties. Planting material and seeds of these varieties have been distributed to different farmers to study the adaptability of these crops in their respective farms. Some farmers already have reported drought resistance of some varieties of cassava.

In addition to the cassava production of the women's self-help groups, other farmers in Kerala who are beneficiaries of the project increased their incomes by cultivating and selling ash gourd and cardamom seeds. On a larger scale, the project has set up an agricultural infrastructure to introduce farmers to the importance of local varieties, trained them in how to cultivate and also conserve genetic diversity of these varieties through model plots and nursery developments, and set up village-level enterprises that will enable the local people to take ownership of their developments and improvements as they share them with farmers in other areas. The project also works with the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) which provides training in developing value-added products in cassava and yam and has transferred technologies to project participants.

In just one year ...

Project objective I: Develop enterprise models for wider-scale dissemination of farmer-bred varieties among farmers and women's groups. The project has:

- ◆ established self-help groups for 80 women farmers in two remote villages, offering training in value-added production of cassava, yam and ash gourd,
- ◆ supported women in establishing an ambakkadan cassava cultivation enterprise, initiated yam cultivation and extended cultivation of ash gourd,
- ◆ ensured that project participants have more food for their families and profit from sale of both the planting materials and the crop production.

Project objective II: Train farmer groups and other stakeholders in cultivation and propagation techniques for facilitating diffusion of varieties. The project has:

- ◆ identified individual farmers cultivating local varieties and collected planting materials from them,
- ◆ trained 100 farmers in propagation techniques of farmer-developed varieties,
- ◆ established 10 model plots in the project's two districts and selected 14 farmers from other Kerala districts to set up plots in their areas,
- ◆ produced training materials on propagation and cultivation technologies in local language and disseminated them to farmers beyond the project area.

Project objective III: Develop standardized packages of practices for the cultivation and propagation of farmer-developed varieties. The project has:

- ◆ visited individual innovative farmers to study their area-specific cultivation practices,
- ◆ collected accounts of indigenous cultivation practices from farmers, women self-help group members and task force members.

Still to come...

- ◆ Increase number of enterprises for farmers to propagate and sell planting materials, meaning increased income for producer and wider dissemination and use of local crops.
- ◆ Expand linkages with state and national governments, including the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources and Indian Institute of Spice Research to register the local varieties.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla • 00153 Rome • Italy
Tel: +39 0657053554 • Fax: +39 0657053057 - E-mail: pgrfa-treaty@fao.org

www.planttreaty.org

