Hope shines among the flood-hit farmers of Gorakhpur

Smt Koila Devi, an elderly marginal farmer of a tiny village in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh, had given up hopes of earning a decent living from the produce of her agricultural land.

Like many farmers’ in northeastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, floods and associated water logging for more than three to four months affected her agricultural produce severely each year. Apart from this, the rising cost of seed, fertilizer, and pesticides reduced her income over the years. She had been scouting for alternative income options when help came in the form of Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG), Gorakhpur, UP, a core support group under the TARA Scheme the Science for Equity, Empowerment, and Development (SEED) Division, Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India.

GEAG provided her with technical support on effective farming planning like gradient-based cropping system, multi-layered farming with time and space management, appropriate crop combination, raised bed low tunnel poly house, and appropriate utilization of weather advisory. Such support at the systemic level has helped and empowered the 64 years old from the village Rakhukhor of Jungle Kaudiya block of Gorakhpur district to cultivate 20 crops in a single year, thereby raising her annual income by 30 percent.

Using her homemade organic compost, biopesticides, and other technical mechanisms, she has harvested 220 kg of wheat in 266 sq m of land (82.52 Quintal/Hectare), the highest yield amongst the farmers who were provided seeds of DBW 187 for demonstration in Uttar Pradesh. These S&T based interventions have helped her to reduce market dependency on agriculture inputs like seed, fertilizer, and pesticides.

Smt Koila Devi is one of the several model farmers of flood-affected areas under the Core support project, TARA scheme of DST, which empowers communities through scalable technologies and transformation at the rural level ensuring forward & backward linkages being facilitated by GEAG, Gorakhpur, UP.

A total of 36 model farmers and more than 2200 other small and marginal farmers have adopted flood resilient techniques of farming developed along with 9 community institutions on cluster level during the last two and half years with facilitation and handholding support under the Core support projet being implemented by GEAG. This has shown a new direction towards flood-resilient livelihoods and also transformed the flood-risks into an opportunity with socio-economic gain. Since the inception of the project in 2018, proper facilitation and handholding support for adopting these resilient farming technique packages compatible with local situations has increased the average income of small and marginal farmers by 37.5 per cent by lowering the input cost (30-35 percent) in the farming system.

GEAG, a Core Support Group, has acted as a bridge between nearby R&D institutions and target beneficiaries and helped build local capacities in effective farming planning in scientific way with customization, demonstration, and adoption of proven technologies at the scale by the farming community.
Such S&T-based interventions like flood resilient farming practices and related technologies are inspiring the farming community to bring about a transformational change at the local level and encouraging the locals like Smt. Koila Devis of the area to uptake additional activities like managing millet processing unit as a group enterprises in the flood-prone area.

Empowering Communities in Flood Affected Areas for Livelihoods Gain: Technological interventions on effective farming planning like gradient-based cropping system, multi-layered farming with time and space management, appropriate crop combination, raised bed low tunnel poly house, and appropriate utilization of weather advisory.