



Climate Resilient Local Seed System



Farmers' Group collecting seeds for establishment of Seed Conservation Center. Belaka Municipality, Udayapur

“ The model has an inbuilt mechanism for farmers and seed companies to receive and provide feedback. Many of the women farmers have emerged as Local Agriculture Resource Persons (LARPs) taking lead role in supporting women and other farmers to adopt climate resilient cropping practices. ”

1. Status of piloting and scaling of the model:

Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) is currently leading the scaling of this climate resilient local seed system model in collaboration with National Farmer Groups' Federation (NFGF), National Land Rights Forum (NLRF) and the private sector. Piloted in Belaka municipality, Udayapur,

the model is being scaled out to Dhangadhimai municipality and Bhagwanpur rural municipality (RM) of Siraha. The model has prioritised marginalised landless, small holder and women farmers as well as seed producers with high climate vulnerability as its impact groups. So far, 77 farmer groups are engaged in this model roll out.



Members of Ghumne Women Farmers Group having discussion on Agromet Advisory Services. Belaka Municipality, Udayapur

2. Collaboration with boundary partners:

Seed companies, agro-vets, seed producer groups and cooperatives are the key boundary partners in scaling this model. NFGF is gradually taking on leadership role in model scaling. Farmer groups interested in seed production have been identified, trained and engaged in exposure visits. Several local governments (LGs) are engaged in model scaling. Interested cooperatives and seed companies are gradually engaging in seed production and distribution process i.e. Anamol Biu of Chitwan, is already engaged in the process. They are supporting farmers to access quality seeds and are prepared to help interested farmers in producing climate resilient seeds. LGs and Agriculture Knowledge Centre (AKC) have important roles to play in the establishment of community seed bank.

3. Model scaling phase:

Scaling of this model is still in its initial phase. Since most of the activities related to scaling up this model require in-person interactions, many of the activities are currently on hold due to the ongoing pandemic. But still, the model has been adopted in seven wards of Belaka municipality, Udayapur and one ward of Dhangadhimai municipality and three wards of Bhagwanpur RM, Siraha.

4. Process adopted in model scaling:

The model was introduced to the LGs familiarizing them with its scaling process and benefits for climate vulnerable marginalised farmers. Based on an understanding with the LGs, information on seed market in the rural/municipalities concerned was collected. This resulted in preparation of a list of seed sellers, and registration of seed companies and agro-vets in the LGs. Identification of farmer groups and individuals producing seeds followed. They were briefed about the model; barriers and opportunities to promote climate resilient seed market and seed value chain in the LGs were discussed. Committees were then formed in the LG for monitoring the seed distribution and collection process and resolving farmers' seed related problems. This led to identification of groups interested in seed production; training for the groups; providing them technical knowhow; connecting them with trustworthy seed company; and preparations for conservation of plant genetic resources.

5. The model's added value and key outcomes

Promotion of climate resilient crop varieties: Given the growing climate and weather risks, initiatives have been taken to promote climate resilient seeds. The farmers are also encouraged to produce seeds. They are now using local and improved seeds they have preserved without depending on sub-standard seeds available in the market.

Possibility of developing community seed bank:

This model is encouraging and supporting farmers to develop community seed bank. Belaka has already started collecting seeds of local crop varieties for conservation. So far, it has collected 50 seed varieties including their detailed information. 32 Belaka farmers interested in development of gene conservation centers were taken to the community seed bank “Kanchan Jaibik Bibidhata Samrakshan Samiti” in Chandradangi of Jhapa. After the visit they collected seeds of about 20 landraces of rice and some vegetables and they plan to increase the number to more than 100 within a couple of months.

Collaboration among seed producers, cooperatives and seed companies:

Eight potential seed producers in Belaka have been identified and connected with a seed company for opening up two-way business relations between them. The seed company trained these groups in seed production. This has paved the way for seed producer groups and cooperatives to produce and preserve indigenous seeds and work for development of community seed bank.

The model has helped improve the knowledge of quality seeds among individuals and groups. They are now able to distinguish quality seeds from substandard ones, and are using local and improved seeds.

Leadership of model scaling has been shifted from LI-BIRD to NFGF. It is now working with all governments, civil society and private sector stakeholders for the expansion of this model on scale, while several LGs are interested to adopt the model. However, COVID 19 lockdowns have currently put the scaling process on hold.

Monitoring mechanism:

Based on an agreement among agro-vets, seed producers, NFGF, LI-BIRD and Belaka municipality, the LG stopped purchasing and distributing agricultural inputs. It transferred the responsibility to the agro-vets. The agro-vets provided the details of what they have in their shops to the LG for follow up and monitoring. The LG will now regularly collect farmers’ feedback on the quality of seeds provided by the agro-vets as part of monitoring. The agro-vets will sell the seeds produced by local farmers and a Pokhara-based private packaging company (Annapat) has taken the responsibility of seed and other agriculture production related transactions.

Model’s contribution to building climate resilience of

landless and marginalised farmers:

The model is promoting use of climate resilient practices for seed production. Technical support to farmers is aimed at enabling them to produce and use climate resilient seeds and sell the surplus to the companies directly or through the cooperatives. The model aims to ensure LG leadership in development of climate resilient local seed bank.

Model’s contribution to promoting inclusion and governance:

This model prioritizes climate vulnerable small holders, women and marginalised farmers. Most of the farmer groups with whom this model is working with, are led by women. Increased out-migration of males has left the women with the entire responsibility of farming and ensuring the families’ food security, which is based on agriculture, a highly climate sensitive sector. So, this model is supporting women farmers to use climate resilient seed varieties, buy seeds from trustworthy agro-vets or seed companies, etc. Women are now taking decisions on matters related to seeds. Some of them have also started working for producing and preserving indigenous seed varieties. The model has an inbuilt mechanism for farmers and seed companies to receive and provide feedback. Many of the women farmers have emerged as Local Agriculture Resource Persons (LARPs) taking lead role in supporting women and other farmers to adopt climate resilient cropping practices. Quarterly meetings are being held engaging the representatives of LGs, agro-vets, farmers, and supporting organisations



A farmer in his fenugreek seed production plot.
Dhangadimai Municipality, Siraha

(LI-BIRD and NFGF) for discussing and resolving seed related problems facing the farmers. One of the recent meetings decided to promote indigenous crops like buck wheat and millet. It has already been included in Belaka municipality's plan for FY2021/022.

Multi-stakeholder participation:

The model has facilitated effective collaboration among LI-BIRD, NFGF, LGs, agro-vets and seed companies in model scaling. It has created an opportunity for LGs to demonstrate accountability by supporting farmers to access quality seeds, monitoring the seed system and ensuring its best performance. Agro-vets have been connected with trusted seed companies that have pledged to make available only seeds with high quality, farmers are getting quality seeds from the agro-vets and seed companies have also increased their outreach.

6. Good practices and learning

Good practice:

The practice of bringing government, CSO and private sector (agro-vets, seed companies, cooperatives) actors on board to develop and sustain climate resilient local seed system is highly promising. Unlike previously, when LG took the sole responsibility of purchasing and distributing seeds to farmers, it (i.e. Belaka) has now decided to only play facilitative and monitoring role and transfer the seeds distribution responsibility to local agro-vets. As per the new practice the agro-vets buy seeds produced locally with the technical support of trusted seed companies, which will also buy the locally produced surplus seeds. This practice has helped streamline the seed value chain and promote production, use and conservation of indigenous and improved seeds.

Learning

- Marginalised farmers with high climate vulnerability become interested to promote the use and conservation of indigenous and improved seeds instead of hybrid seeds, if they are provided necessary support.



Fenugreek seed production plot. Dhangadimai Municipality, Siraha

- Collaboration among local governments and the private sector such as cooperatives, agro-vets and seed companies is possible on condition that they mutually benefit from such collaboration. Agro-vets have already been connected with a seed company and they are collaborating well with Belaka municipality.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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