

Project Update: February 2018

The year began with Bonbibi Puja – the local festival for worshipping the forest deity Bon Bibi and the tiger God, Raja Dakshinrai. While making offerings to the deities, the villagers also pledged to protect the forest and tiger habitat.



FESTIVAL OF TIGER GOD & FOREST DEITY WORSHIP IN OUR VILLAGES

Our pilot project of cultivating Indian jujube apple (a seasonal fruit with good market demands) by the sides of our community ponds is bringing smiles to our beneficiaries. As a part of our continued effort to generate sustainable livelihood for our villagers, we began by planting their grafts by two ponds, costing Rs. 135- Rs. 140 each, we planted them close to the ponds to minimise extra efforts for irrigation.

An average area of pond is between 1800 – 2000 ft². We had planted about 30 grafts of the plant around each pond. The fruits begin to appear from November and last till March. An average tree yields between 12 - 14 kg each season, with each kg fetching Rs. 100- Rs. 120. The trees are distributed among beneficiaries who look after them and earn money from them. We plan to cover five or six more ponds by planting grafts of the plant, which will be ready next season.



CULTIVATING INDIAN JUJUBE APPLE BY THE SIDE OF OUR COMMUNITY PONDS

Our older community mangrove forests outside our villages are now drawing honey bees that are making hives on its mangrove branches. For those who enter the tiger habitat to collect wild honey risking their lives are getting involved with this emerging option for supplementing their livelihood.



WILD HONEY COLLECTION FROM BEE HIVES IN COMMUNITY MANGROVE FORESTS

In our effort to involve more beneficiaries in cultivation and agriculture, we organised two workshops recently, on organic farming of indigenous paddy and vegetables. It was conducted by the Forum for Indigenous Agriculture Movement (FIAM), a group of farmers practising similar kind of agriculture in northern parts of West Bengal. The beneficiaries were advised on the use of climate and soil specific native paddy seeds for better yields. They were also taught on how to make organic manure with the available resources. FIAM members presented a banner describing the manner in which such manure can be made. We encouraged participation of women in these meetings and workshops with the idea, that they can impress upon their family members to practice more agriculture as against forestry in the tiger habitat.



WORKSHOPS WITH OUR BENEFICIARIES ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE & ORGANIC MANURE PREPARED BY A BENEFICIARY AFTER TRAINING. HE DISPLAYS BANNER THAT EXPLAINS ITS PREPARATION

The members of FIAM also had an interactive session with our children too on how organic farming is not only good for environment but also for health. Moreover, it is a viable sustainable livelihood option, especially when practicing forestry is putting at risk the lives of their family members and disturbing the tiger habitat. This was a part of our awareness programme on tiger and its habitat with the upcoming generation.



ENVIRONMENT LESSONS FOR CHILDREN WITH FIAM MEMBERS