

Creating livelihood out of incommodious water hyacinths

Water Hyacinths, floating aquatic plants, are found in abundance in South West Garo Hills District, Meghalaya. They are found in every pond and stagnant water bodies in the region and have long been a nuisance to the people as they cover up the whole water space. However, the people of Purasingga village under Betasing C&RD block in South West Garo Hills began to look at these bothersome water plants as a source of livelihood with the intervention of North East Region Community Resource Management Project for Upland areas (NERCORMP), under International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in 2012.

The Chijongjang Natural Resource Management (NarM) Group, from Purasingga showed keen interest in the art of creating handicraft products out of water hyacinths and NERCORMP sent about 15 members from the Group for training on Thai Technology at NEDFi, Khetri in Assam, where they were trained in making handicrafts from water hyacinth like decorative items, handbags, purses, hats etc.

Today, Chijongjang Narm Group is earning a decent amount from this activity by selling them at different levels of markets according to the demand in the market. They have also participated in various industrial exhibitions at District, State and National levels. It was a zero investment for them as raw materials in the form of water hyacinth were easily available in plenty.

This year, in the month of April, Basin Development Unit, South West Garo Hills, sent 20 partners from the district to NEDFi R&D Centre, Khetri, Guwahati, for Skill Up-gradation Training from 20th to 29th April, 2017, where they learnt advanced craft making. In this training, NEDFi has given looms and equipments to Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, free of cost, which will be utilized by the Group in partnership with MBDA.

On completion of their training course, they brought back - 10 sets of Water Hyacinth craft loom with reid; 2 nos of Water Hyacinth Flattening machine and 2 lots of Moulds.

At present, apart from MBDA and NEDFi, Water Hyacinth Handicraft has invited interest from prominent industrial promotion agents like IIT, Guwahati and District Commerce & Industries Centre (DCIC), Ampati. While IIT, Guwahati has submitted a project based on Water Hyacinth Handicrafts to the Government for review and approval, DCIC, Ampati is on the process of construction of Common Facility Centre at Purasingga, which will start as soon as the land agreement process is settled, for which Smt. Mimosha R Marak from Purasingga has gifted a portion of her land.

Chijongjang Narm Group of Purasingga has come a long way in generating income from water hyacinths - naturally available resources, which has shown them a different way. They have a long way to go with a bright future ahead.

