

Kitchen Gardens That Bring Nutrition, Livelihood Support and Protect Seeds

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Examples from Jharkhand, Karnataka and other places make a strong case for kitchen gardens in more parts of the country.

A kitchen garden in Jharkhand (Representative image). Credit: YouTube

Pali Biruli lives in Gondamara, a tribal village in Saraikela district of Jharkhand. When we stepped into the courtyard of her home to have a glass of water, the beauty of the surrounding greenery surprised us. Within a small place, she and her family members had managed to grow papaya, mango, lemon, guava and diverse seasonal vegetables including chilly, kundru and beans. The kitchen garden provides her family with a steady stream of different vegetables and fruits, and adds greatly to their nutrition while also providing a little extra for sale to add to the family income. Shakuntla Saavaiyan is an anganwadi worker in Arjunvila village of the same district. She proudly shows us around her kitchen garden outside the anganwadi (Integrated Child Development Services) centre. Coriander, mustard, brinjal, chilly, papaya, banana, tomato, bitter gourd, local varieties of beans, lemon and guard have been planted here. The produce of this well-maintained and properly-fenced kitchen garden is used to provide extra nutrition to children. In addition, Shakuntla has planted another kitchen garden very close to her own home. The produce obtained here is for enhancing the nutrition of her family, Shakuntla is very conscious about nutrition, which was evident when she was talking to her colleagues about the special care a malnourished child under her care needed. It is this consciousness about nutrition that has led her to making a lot of effort to plant and maintain these two kitchen gardens. Several such kitchen gardens can be seen in Rajnagar block of this district, which are being encouraged in a systematic way under a project called India for Eco-Foods. This project, implemented by the Centre for World Solidarity, focuses on organic farming and traditional seeds. Among other uses, these kitchen gardens also help save traditional seeds of several vegetables and fruits. The concept of traditional seed protection is also built into the campaign of kitchen gardens in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka being implemented by an organisation called Vanistri. Sunita, the founder of Vanistri, says that women of these villages have natural skills for growing diverse vegetables, but the task of careful preservation of traditional seeds was not getting as much attention as was needed. Vanistri took remedial action to make protection of traditional seeds an integral part of kitchen gardens. It regularly holds bio-diversity fairs where women bring diverse produce and seeds from their kitchen gardens. First published by

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