

Research Title:

Floriculture in urban areas of India - Income generation activity for poor women

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Introduction

Women in urban areas in India suffer due to unemployment. Income is vital for Women empowerment. Many avenues of income are available for poor women in urban areas. Working as labor, servant or house maid is popular among poor urban women as it's easy to find a job & located in the neighborhood. But, instances of abuse, low wages & insecurity is rampant. This research studies floriculture as a means of sustainable livelihood income generation for poor women in urban areas in India.

Objectives

The goal of this research is to examine the impact of floriculture by women in mitigating poverty. The intervention consists of two components: promoting floriculture & sustaining for the long term. This research and evaluation study is confirmatory & will use qualitative methods to assess need, affordability & sustainability of floriculture by women.

Methods

Literature analysis from local & international sources will be reviewed with regard to floriculture as a tool to eradicate poverty. Case study from the local area will be analyzed for affordability, need & sustainability by the women in floriculture.

Use of Findings

Based on information regarding the floriculture as a income generating activity, it will be validated as a system of offering regular income for poor women in urban areas.

Research question

The central research question that this study aimed to answer is:

Hypotheses: *Can floriculture help in income generation for poor women in urban areas in India?*

Background & Literature review

This section reviews the relevant literature in order to demonstrate gaps in available information on floriculture. Information on results & outcomes of the research is then presented in order to measure the variables.

Agriculture is considered as a potential source of livelihood in India. Floriculture has been neglected or rather not focused on.

'The potential of floriculture as an industry has not been exploited properly in India. Floriculture is an intensive type of agriculture & income per unit area from floriculture is much higher than any other branch of agriculture'. (Randhawa & Mukhopadhyay, 1986)

Women in urban areas can cultivate cut flowers such as roses, gladiola, gerbera, anthurium, orchids, birds of paradise, eloquina, jasmine, carnations etc which have high demand. What is essential is some space in the backyard or anywhere in the household. Even pots in the terrace is a good option, which has been successfully demonstrated for cultivation of vanilla in India.

There is immense potential for floriculture in urban cities in India. Marketing of cut flowers will not be a problem, as the demand for flowers is huge.

'Marketing of cut flowers in India is very unorganized at present. In most metropolitan cities, with large market potential, flowers are brought to wholesale markets, which mostly operate in open yards. A few large flower merchants generally buy most of the produce and distribute them to local retail outlets after significant mark up. The retail florist shops also usually operate in the open on-road sides, with different flowers arranged in large buckets. The government is now investing in setting up of auction platforms, as well as organized florist shops with better storage facilities to prolong shelf life'.(www.fao.org)

But, India has to learn from the Israeli experience, where flowers are grown on rented green houses.

'Although the number of flower growers has decreased by more than half in the last few years (5000 to 2,300), production has risen steadily to around 1.5 billion flowers a year. This is due to technological advances and an intensive system of production. Some 50 per cent of all flower produce is grown in ultra modern computerized green houses, with approximately 12 per cent grown under netting. The latest innovation is the setting up of the first of several 'greenhouse parks', based on industrial parks in which farmers grow flowers in rented green houses with all infrastructure and services supplied'.(Agro Tour, 1998)

'In the past 25 years, agricultural output in Israel has grown 12-fold with hardly any increase in the amount of water used. All the yield growth was a result of technological advances'.(Agro Tour, 1998)

The government has set up rented green houses for floriculture near Pune following the experiences from Israel. This system can be set up in every city. Plots measuring less than an acre or above are leased to individual farmers. They in turn have to pay a monthly lease rental for using the facilities in the greenhouse. This concept is very effective as the individual farmers cannot put up greenhouses, which are very expensive. A greenhouse may cost more than Rs 2000/sft, which poor farmers cannot afford.

This concept of shared greenhouses can be implemented in poor urban areas. Government or NGOs can set up greenhouses, which can be leased to individual women. They will be more useful if they are located near urban slums. The women can make use of the green houses by paying monthly lease rentals to the NGOs or government. It is out of question for the individual women to put up even small green houses in their backyard. They suffer both from adequate space and money to set up such infrastructure in their backyard.

A women can earn Rs 100 per day from cut flowers, which is a little less can the earnings from working as a servant. But, this is not a full time activity. The women will have enough time to earn from other sources, as floriculture requires less time, may be an hour in the morning.

`Flowers are also used for extracts for perfumes and natural dyes. Dry flowers are used for decoration. One can earn Rs 1 lakh per hectare per year from dry flowers. Nursery business - growing plants in pots and in production of seeds are also popular'. (www.karnataka.com)

One popular case study of floriculture is Udupi Mallige (*Jasminum sambac*). Cultivation of this variety of jasmine started in Shankarapura town in Udupi district, Karnataka state about 100 years ago. It was promoted by a Christian priest to help poor women in the area to earn income.

`It is found extensively in Bhatkal, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada, and has been found more economically viable among all the three varieties. The flower is in high demand in places such as Mumbai, besides the coastal region. Every home in this region has 0.5 to 1 acre (2,000 to 4,000 m²) of land in front of the house for Jasmine growing'. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysore_mallige)

Local traders collect jasmine from the farmers directly. Prices are decided at the auction centre in Shankarpura daily. According to local women, who works at the Jasmine Land Flower Stall in Udupi, the price of one "atte" (800 flowers make one chendu and four chendus make one "atte") of jasmine was hovering between Rs. 300 and Rs. 400 till October. Since then, the price of one "atte" of jasmine has been hovering around Rs. 700. It touched Rs. 1,000 an "atte" during October end. (www.thehindu.com)

When poor women in Shankarapura town have successfully used floriculture as an income generating activity, poor women in other cities across India can adopt jasmine cultivation as an activity to earn income and eradicate poverty. Moreover, this activity takes place early morning and the women are free to undertake other work during the day.

Floriculture should not be seen in isolation as income generating activity for poor women. It is supplemental to their existing income. The women can attend to their daily work like household maid or labour. What requires is some extra time & effort to earn some extra income.

There are many projects which focus only on agriculture in urban areas. Usually the agriculture in urban areas is restricted to growing vegetables. It is popular anywhere in the world to grow vegetables on terrace or in the backyard. But, the boom in price of vanilla was an incentive for many women in urban India to cultivate vanilla on their terrace using green house technology. The objective of this research is to view cultivation of floriculture in urban areas by poor women using the same approach of vanilla cultivation on the terraces.

Conclusion

India has a long floriculture history and flower growing is an age old enterprise. What it has lacked is its commercialization. The growing demands of flowers in the domestic as well as the export market will require a concerted effort on the part of the government as well as the private entrepreneurs to develop floriculture on scientific lines. Paying attention to the input needs, better resource management and making various policies entrepreneur friendly would lead to a balanced growth of the industry. This will help the urban poor women to take up floriculture as a sustainable livelihood income generating activity to mitigate poverty.

The need for floriculture is more in urban slums where women suffer due to lack of income and end up doing undignified jobs. The Israel model & the Shankarapura experience of floriculture should be adopted by urban women to overcome poverty.

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