

Banana brings bounty:

Farmers in tribal area of Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh make a living through cultivation of crops like millets, pulses and oil seeds, Wages from MGNREGA and also on harvesting and selling dwindling NTFP produces such as Bahumia leaves (Adda leaves), collection of Honey etc.

Generally a single crop is grown either in Kharif after the onset of south west monsoons (like millets, paddy, groundnut) or cultivate oil seeds in early September as a winter crops. Besides horticultural crops like vegetables, Turmeric, Zinger are also grown on small extents. After harvesting their kharief crops in December and January, farmers leave the cattle free for grazing. Because of this reason, Agriculture is limited to single crop and promotion of plantation was also a difficult task when **VIKASA** initiated Maathota programme in 2008.

As part of creating sustainable livelihoods through Maathota, bio-fencing with species such as agave, euphorbia, Jatropa, latena etc... was promoted to protect the land from free grazing cattle.

This protected piece of land brought in a visible and impressive change on the economy of that piece of land as well as in lives of the tribal farmers who had adopted this simple intervention.



“Maathota” / WADI is a tribal development programme supported by NABARD. VIKASA is implementing this project in 3000 acres with 3000 tribal families in Araku valley and Dumbriguda Mandals, to address sustainable livelihoods of tribal community in India. Development of orchard in one acre per eligible family is the core activity of the programme. Institution building, skill development for income generation and women empowerment are also part of the programme.

As most of the plots identified for Mathota were earlier unproductive lands with slope ranging from 5% to 15%, soil moisture conservation activities were largely promoted to conserve the moisture as well as soil.

When they made trenches along the slopes, in order to make best use of these trenches, plantation crops like local banana were encouraged. The local babana suckers were planted in the trenches and from the second year onward, farmers started getting weekly income from Rs. 300 to Rs.500/- by selling fruit banana in weekly shandy. Earlier banana used come from the plain areas into this area. As this local banana has a peculiar taste and cultivated without using any chemical inputs, sells as a hot cake in the weekly markets. **By seeing the economic benefits, about 2000 Maathota farmers started growing Banana on their farms.**

As part of “Maathota” programme, Majority of Maathota villages shifted from free grazing of cattle to controlled grazing of cattle. This also helped farmers to cultivate banana in trenches of other plots as well. **Farmers are now getting annual income of Rs. 15,000 to Rs.20,000 per annum from banana in SMC trenches.**