



## No. 4.5 Agricultural Programmes: Gardening Projects

### What are gardening projects?

Gardening is the cultivation of small plots of land with vegetables, fruits, also staple and medicinal crops. Gardening projects (sometimes referred to as ‘home gardening’ projects, as small plots are established in the vicinity of people’s homes) can contribute **substantially to meet household food needs and improve nutrition**, notably in terms of vitamins and minerals.

Also, when implemented in conflict zones, gardening projects can **decrease beneficiaries’ exposure to insecurity**, as travel times are reduced (i.e., food is harvested near the home rather than fields farther away).

The sale of garden produce can make an important **contribution to household income**, especially before the harvest of staple crops or during seasons when other sources of incomes are limited.

As well as receiving seeds, tools and other inputs, beneficiaries in garden projects may also receive training in agricultural and nutrition practices.

Gardening is a practice possible in both urban and rural contexts and even in dry areas by using appropriate soil management solutions for water storage.

Table 1 outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages or challenges of gardening projects.



**Fig. 1: Home gardens provided families in drought-affected areas of Cambodia with extra sources of food and income**  
(Credit: Jim Holmes/OXFAM)

### When is it appropriate to implement gardening projects?

Gardening projects can be appropriate to various humanitarian contexts and response phases. For instance, during the **acute phase** of the emergency, they can be used implemented (along with other projects) to cover immediate food and income needs. During the **recovery phase**, they can be used to enhance agricultural activities and improve nutrition. During the **preparedness and mitigation phase**, they can be used to improve nutrition and income.

**Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages or challenges of gardening projects**

Advantages	Disadvantages/challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable for both <b>women and men</b> to engage with</li> <li>• Provides an important <b>nutritional supplement</b> (vitamins and minerals)</li> <li>• Provides substantial <b>income complement</b></li> <li>• Suitable for areas <b>where land access/availability is low</b></li> <li>• Suitable for cultivation out of the main agricultural season</li> <li>• Decreases travel distances to harvest crops, helping to <b>decrease exposure to security threats</b> in conflict zones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can require <b>fairly high technical support</b>, if beneficiaries have limited agricultural knowledge/experience</li> <li>• Vegetable gardens are <b>sensitive to parasites and predators</b> and thus require protection</li> <li>• <b>Yields can vary</b> according to numerous factors (weather conditions, time available for tending crops, water availability, crop infestations, and so on)</li> </ul>

**Criteria that must be present for gardening projects to be appropriate and/or viable include:**

- There is access and close proximity to sufficient water sources;
- The intervention matches the agricultural calendar;
- Any crops used are adapted to local climate and soil conditions, and require minimum technical knowledge on behalf of the beneficiary households;

- Any crops used are adapted to local climate and soil conditions, and require minimum technical knowledge on behalf of the beneficiary households;
- The targeted population knows how to use and store (and commercialise, if a potential income source) the crops produced;
- There is high motivation among beneficiaries, and they have the time and capacity to tend to crops;
- Beneficiaries have access to other sources of food and income; and,
- Cultivation areas are protected from livestock and other physical threats.

### What procedures and resources are needed for gardening projects?

Box 1 outlines some of the requirements of gardening projects. Other activities that can be included in a vegetable gardening project include:

- Distribution of gardening tools (watering cans, hoes, rakes, etc), agricultural inputs (fertilisers, pesticides), and fencing materials (building fencing can be part of a food/cash for work project);
- Provision of water pumps (renting or purchasing);
- Payment of fuel for water pumps or to run boreholes;
- Supplies for micro-irrigation or micro-gardening (where crops are grown in small spaces in pots and containers); and,
- Training on sale/storage and/or drying of garden produce.

#### Box 1: Gardening projects: a rough checklist of requirements

- ✓ Beneficiaries with necessary motivation and time identified
- ✓ Locally-adapted crops and varieties chosen in a participative manner, with expertise and technical expertise ensured
- ✓ Certified seed supplied (helps guard against genetic degeneration and disease in uncertified local seed stocks)
- ✓ Cooperatives or committees established to facilitate implementation, training and monitoring/evaluation
- ✓ Technical training conducted, in conjunction with local agricultural bodies and prior to seed-tool distribution
- ✓ Land prepared
- ✓ Seeds (plus tools and other inputs) distributed to cooperative or individuals
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation (beneficiary list and post-distribution monitoring, post-harvest evaluation)

### What are the expected outputs or outcomes of gardening projects?

Potential outputs/outcomes of a gardening project include:

- Community diet and nutrition is improved thanks to substantial additional sources of vitamins, minerals, energy, micronutrients, etc.
- Vulnerable families and particularly women improve and diversify their sources of income

Some examples of gardening projects implemented as an emergency response by the Oxfam GB include:

- Mauritania (2005–2007)—As part of an integrated food security and livelihood programme involving vulnerable agro-pastoral communities of the Sahel, vegetable gardens for 25 women's associations were supported through the provision of seeds, pesticides, fencing and other tools, and technical training.
- Senegal—As part of an existing emergency preparedness programme, an emergency vegetable gardening project was implemented in 2005 to support the livelihoods of victims of a locust crisis in Region de Saint Louis and Matam.

### Where can I find further reading and more detailed information?

Oxfam EFSL Rough Guides:

- 4.1 *Agricultural Support Programmes*
- 4.2 *Seed and Tool Distributions*

Innovative example of micro-gardening, using old WFP grain sacks as pots: Radice H.W. 2005. Farming in bags: micro gardening in Northern Uganda. *Field Exchange*. Issue 26, p.3.

<http://fex.ennonline.net/26/farming.aspx>

### Who can I contact for more information and guidance?

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